COMMUNITY
AS MISSION

The Church Mission Society as Gift and Call in an Individualised and Globalised World

BERDINE VAN DEN TOREN-LEKKERKERKER

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Gemeenschap als Zending

De Church Mission Society als Geschenk en Roeping in een
Geïndividualiseerde en Geglobaliseerde Wereld

(met een samenvatting in het Nederlands)

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Tweede promotor: Prof. dr. Kirsteen Kim

For

the women and students of the École Biblique et Promotion de la Femme at FATEB, in Bangui (CAR).

You have taught me that theology starts

with 'a song and a dance.'

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A poem by Karlie Allaway –
former student at the CMS Pioneer
Mission Leadership Training [1]

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[1] Jonny Baker, "Yes to Mission Spirituality," *International Review of Mission* 104, no. 2 (November 2015): 401, 402.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A question people ask me is: "Where do you feel the most at home?" And my honest response is: "I don't know. It depends when and where you are asking this."

Having lived for extended periods of time in the Central African Republic, the United Kingdom and, of course, the Netherlands, I experience each of these places as a home, a place where I have been welcomed, where we shared our life in both joy and pain and where people by their very being have shaped me to be the person I am today. The other side of this experience is that, to a certain extent, I remain an outsider in each of these homes: a person from another world.

This experience of relationships, a sense of belonging across boundaries and the wealth of diversity that is connected to it is at the heart of this book. To quote Bennett, Graham, Pattison and Walton, each of the homes has been a "home which dwells in us, and in which we dwell." At the same time, it has been a home "that needs to be critically interrogated."   And I am deeply grateful to all the different people, themselves part of the different homes in my life, who have knowingly or unknowingly contributed to both the experience of 'dwelling' and the 'critical interrogation', to my search for understanding and insight, as well as to the actual writing of the book.

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Whilst sitting in the lobby of a hotel in Hungary during the IAMS assembly 2008, in conversation with Mechteld Jansen, to my own surprise I asked about the possibility of doing PhD research. To my even greater surprise she encouraged me and later supported me in the start of the project. For this, and for believing in my capacity to do this project well, I am deeply grateful.

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To the many women whom I have met at the École Biblique et Promotion de la Femme at FATEB: to you I dedicate this book, for the inspiration you have been to me. Living in a situation of economic and social insecurity, in a context of war,

you taught me that in the midst of pain, fear and fragility, where everything can shift from one moment to the other, we still live in hope because – as one of your songs says – Jesus lived among us and God does not change. You have taught me that life starts in worship; in looking beyond the immediately visible; in seeing the other and thereby discovering a sign of love and hope.

My life started in the home of my parents. This was a warm and safe place. I am grateful for the love and care, for the support they gave even when I made choices that they could not agree with. They lived their life in faith and in loving service to their neighbour, an example that will never leave me. And later I found in Papa and Mama van den Toren second parents. I thank you for your deep and faithful love.

Wiger, Derk Anne and Marten: it was not your choice to spend your childhood in so many different places or to live in a place of violence and war. This was a choice made by Benno and me that has been costly for all of us. Your ability to continue to see the beauty and the good in our experience has been an important encouragement for my research project, as an example that confirmed my growing understanding that in the complexity of life the recognition and acceptance of ambivalence can lead to a creative and transformative life. I am grateful, and I am also proud of you.

And Benno, we have been together now for so many years, we have lived through so many times of joy and of pain, discovered so much and undertaken so many adventures together; you are my closest friend, strongest supporter, and most critical conversation partner. I thank you for your love and ongoing encouragement; your patience with my doubts and insecurities; the fun surprises you organised; the many roses you bought for me and for the way your love for God shapes your daily life and work. We have found a home in each other, and we have built a home together, in which we love to welcome many. I pray that our home will continue to be a gift to the world.

Our home as mission.

INTRODUCTION

Upon entering the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies, one autumn morning, a fellow researcher from Nigeria, currently living and working in Birmingham (UK), greeted me with the question: "How are my people?" For me, this was a confusing question. To whom did he refer as 'his people'? Did he think of my personal (nuclear) family, my friends, students, and colleagues in the Central African Republic, or did he just refer to me personally in the plural? It never crossed my mind that he was talking about my colleagues at the Church Mission Society (CMS). For this student, anybody related to CMS is part of 'his people' since CMS has played such an important role in Nigeria and the Church of Nigeria. And since CMS is present and works all over the world, for him anybody related to CMS is part of 'his people' worldwide. The meeting of one member of 'his people' anywhere in the world makes the worldwide community real and tangible.

But how can we speak of a worldwide mission community, where distances are so long and when there are so many differences and divisions – theological, political, socio-economic, and cultural? Is it more than 'a warm fuzzy feeling' when we meet someone from somewhere else? Do we really meet? Are we really part of the same community? Is community not a concept which can only become a reality in a local and confined context? Is community not maintained and nurtured through its local members, who put energy and effort into the community and its members? Is therefore community not by definition a confined group existing through inward energy?

If community and mission indeed do represent opposing movements and goals, then the idea of worldwide community becomes impossible. Where community

needs boundaries, mission seeks to cross boundaries. Where community becomes possible through inward energy, mission energy goes outward. Is worldwide community a self-contradicting term?

Andrew Walls, strongly believing in the church as a worldwide community, starts his article "The Gospel as Prisoner and Liberator of Culture" with a story of an extra-terrestrial being visiting different churches in different times and places.[1] During this visit they experience for example the differences between a church in Ireland in the Middle Ages, where a group of monks is gathered, and a church in Africa in the post-colonial time. Walls reflects on what unites these churches and mentions the worship of Jesus and the ritual use of water, bread, and wine. The unifying factor is that both of these churches, with all their differences, see themselves as part of the community of the church worldwide and of all times, starting with Pentecost, established on the foundation of Israel as the people of God. Walls writes:

> *There is, in all the wild profusion of the varying statements of these differing groups, one theme which is as unvarying as the language which expresses it is various; that the person of Jesus called the Christ has ultimate significance. In the institutional sphere, too, all use the same sacred writings; and all use bread and wine and water in a special way. Still more remarkable is the continuity of consciousness. Each group thinks of itself as having some community with the others, so different in time and place, and despite being so obviously out of sympathy with many of their principal concerns. Still more remarkable, each thinks of itself as in some respect continuous with ancient Israel, even though only the first have any conceivable ethnic reason to do so, and though some of the groups must have found it extremely hard to form any concept of ancient Israel, or any clear idea of what a Jew might be or look like.*[2]

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[1] Andrew F. Walls, "The Gospel as the Prisoner and Liberator of Culture," *Faith and Thought London.* 108, no. 1–2 (1981): 39–52; a slightly revised version appeared as Andrew F. Walls, "The Gospel as the Prisoner and Liberator of Culture," *Missionalia* 10, no. 3 (November 1982): 93–105; Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 3–15.
[2] Walls, "The Gospel as the Prisoner and Liberator of Culture," 96.

The apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 12 describes the church as the Body of Christ – a body with different members, with different abilities and tasks, spread out in the world, but united in Christ. Paul made this community a tangible and lived reality across boundaries and cultures through the collection of money for communities in other countries based on the belief that they were in fact one community (Romans 15:22-32).

Yet, the question is still out: what does community then mean and how does it navigate this tension between unity and diversity, globality and locality?

This book is a description of an empirical qualitative research into the lived reality of community across boundaries of place and difference, starting with a description of my personal lived experience and the questions that it raised. That has been the origin of and motivation for this research. The introductory chapter will also describe the relationship between the research question and the research method, and how this has shaped the structure of the book. Important concepts are defined, and finally the limitations, relevance and objectives of the research are described.

1.1. Experience as Motivation for Research

My personal interest in the topic of community as an expression of God's mission has grown over many years. First, I grew up in a small rural community, where the influence of modern individualism was very much muted by the care for and interest in each other's lives and needs. It has always intrigued me how this community on the one hand had a strong conforming and restraining influence on its members, but at the same time unconditionally accepted those in their midst who were different, who made different life choices. The lived reality was complex, sometimes positive, sometimes negative, but always tangible and real. Decisions were made with the community in mind – as was expected – but any decision made that did not conform to or support the community would not exclude the person who made that decision. Members of the community would talk about this, they would strongly disagree and show their unhappiness, but exclusion was almost never an option. The community would continue to support that person and work around this recalcitrance to make the best of the situation. And any member of that community, who might

have left a long time before, could come back and be taken in again, without hesitation. This does not mean that community was only a positive experience. Community values risked becoming a straitjacket, and individuality, experimentation and creativity were clearly discouraged. Safety could become oppressive. This experience raises several questions for me. What does this say about unity and diversity in community? How is membership defined? How does the community form and influence its members' life, well-being, and relationships? What values and objectives sustain this community? And how does it relate and contribute to the wider society? How does the wider society relate to and contribute to the community?

Secondly, for eight years I lived and worked with my family in an African community in the Central African Republic. On the one hand, that experience made real to me the clash between mission vision and the harsh reality of power and resource inequality. This was because of the difference in access to material and educational resources and the related attitudes of paternalism and resentment. The experience generated for me a new set of questions: how can we take the pain and injustice of the colonial history seriously, and at the same time find new ways of relating and working together? How can we learn to recognise each other's gifts across the boundaries of difference, and material and educational inequality? How can we learn to walk together, be open with each other and learn from each other?

On the other hand, it showed me a new way of life in community. We lived in a community where value is not placed first and foremost on the individual, but on the community. At this time we were in a for us completely new and different culture and on a continent that was not familiar to us. This cultural difference made me more aware of the depth and influence of our Western individualistic thinking, including our ideas about God and how we relate to God and to each other. The Central African women caused me to reflect on my deepest understanding of who I am as a relational being.

And thirdly, as I am currently working in CMS, I have been made more acutely aware of the complex struggle to develop a new vision and strategy for mission in a globalised and post-colonial world. This includes responding to its mission call to be a blessing to the nations, now as part of the Body of Christ worldwide.

Through these three experiences run the themes of community commitment, unity and diversity, and relationality to which both humility and self-confidence are crucial. These life experiences invited me to a theological reflection about community and mission on the worldwide and the local levels, to how these two relate and how they impact and enrich each other, in today's world. In the following section, I describe in more detail how these reflections and the experience of becoming a member of the CMS community led me to the question that has guided the research described in this book.

1.2. The Question

In the year 2007, I became an employee of CMS. It was the year that the CMS office moved from London to Oxford. It was that year that the process for CMS to become an acknowledged community in the Church of England was officially announced.[3] The following year, the CMS Mission Network was started, creating a network in which the different sister CMS organisations participated, and promising the establishment of independent CMS organisations in Africa, Asia, and Europe.[4] "Community" and "network" were buzz-words in the office, in the CMS communication materials, and in strategy meetings – words that seemed to raise a sense of expectation and energy as well as eyebrows and critical questions. The words expressed a new understanding of mission and missional living, and a new and better way of shaping our relationships with people and churches in Africa and Asia. But some also wondered if this was the right approach, if it would be possible to come to more equal relationships, or even, if it was necessary at all.

Having lived in the Central African Republic, I had become deeply aware of the difficulty and injustice of unequal relationships in mission. And it seemed to me, upon joining CMS, that they were asking the questions I had asked so often before. Beyond that, these new colleagues were reflecting on creative ways of

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[3] See chapter 2.
[4] "Network Mission Explored." https://churchmissionsociety.org/our-stories/network-mission-explored/ Accessed 18/08/2020, Under the name "Interchange Network," CMS Africa, CMS and SAMS signed a "Statement of Purpose, Identity, Ethos, Principles and Values," on 26 November 2008. See also chapter 2.

engaging these questions. In a way, it felt like coming home. In the office, friendships were established, and the office practices of shared lunches, regular prayer and personal attention given by both managers and colleagues, along with meeting partners from around the world, reinforced in me this sense of finding a home. And I was not alone. Other people also used the word "family," when they were speaking of the CMS community.[5]

At the same time, moving from the Central African Republic to Oxford in the UK, from a place where I had been shaped by a culture that emphasises community, to a culture where privacy and personal freedom and autonomy seemed to me to be priorities, I realised the power of individualism as well as globalisation. I noticed the material wealth in society, while in that same society some of the people had few economic opportunities or personal choices. People spoke of charity and helping others but, in my view, did not express a desire to truly *live* together. This was epitomised in a conversation with a friend coming from Ghana. She said that she was happy that I was making important sacrifices to help Africa, because the church in Africa needs much help. This comment stopped me short. Even my friend, who herself came from Africa, experienced her own home church and culture as less capable than the Western church and culture. And in doing so, I felt, she underestimated the strength, the wisdom, and the relationships that had shaped me into the person I had become, and for which I was so grateful.

My experiences led me to appreciate the path CMS was taking, but they also raised questions about the possibilities of this approach. Was it not too idealistic? Was it based on a longing for community as it had existed in the past, yet would never be realisable in our current society? Would people be able to live with diversity within the community, which inevitably comes through relationships with people from around the world? What about the diversity in ideas and values? And how would the diversity in the availability of resources and power play out in such a community? Would a community be possible across boundaries of place, culture, and the diversity of life experience, which is shaped by history, tradition, politics and economics? Could truly reciprocal relationships become a reality? Or was this a dream, too beautiful to realise? And so, the research question was born: *In an individualised and globalised*

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[5] This also shows in the interviews of this research. This is taken up in chapter 4.

world, how is an organised Christian community, that has local and worldwide dimensions, experienced and how can these experiences be understood and shaped? A case study of CMS Britain.

To seek a response to these questions, I have tried to rediscover what community means in our time and society, where individualisation creates a fluid society and culture (Zygmunt Baumann)[6] and where globalisation creates a "network society" organised globally around and through flows of power and resources (using social media and communication technologies) which at the same time focuses on the seemingly contradictory development of nationalising and localising dynamics and interests (Manuel Castells).[7] The ongoing post-colonial dynamics, the inequality of access to resources and the resulting imbalance in power-distribution, will also play a role in understanding this community.

Rather than longing for a community as it was and trying to rebuild the past, I suggest that we need to rediscover the meaning and possibilities of community, by bringing these sociological insights into conversation with a theological understanding of the lived experience of community, with the Christian Scriptures, and with tradition. How can this effort help us (re)discover a fruitful interaction between the local and the global in the Christian mission community?

An important element in this conversation is a case study of CMS, as a community of mission. CMS began as an English mission community but now sees itself as worldwide, consisting of a network of different regional groups.[8]

The question is not *if* community exists, but how it exists – locally and worldwide and the relationship between the two. Further, what is the purpose of the

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[6] Zygmunt Bauman, *The Individualized Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001); Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012).
[7] Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, 2nd ed., vol. 1, The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2000); Manuel Castells, *The Power of Identity*, 2nd ed., vol. 2, The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2010); Manuel Castells, *End of Millennium*, 2nd ed., vol. 3, The Information Age: Economy, Society, and Culture (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2000)..
[8] Asia CMS, CMS Africa, CMS Ireland, NZCMS New Zealand, CMS Australia, and CMS Britain.

community for CMS? And next, how can it be shaped in such a way that it facilitates the purpose for which it exists?

All these different elements have led me to choose an empirical qualitative research methodology.

1.3. Answering the Question and Structure of the Book

Based on my personal experience and the questions this has raised, and on the recognition that there is (some sort of) community, I decided to take an open approach of listening to what people expressed as their experience of community and how that experience relates to their expectations. The assumption that community is a reality is also a theological assumption, as I have encountered it in the community discourse (the stories told) and in my own lived experience.

To answer the research question, which is based on the experience and the practical reality of life in a mission community, qualitative research in the form of a case study is used. More recent sociological reflection on community is also taken into account, since sociology as the reflective study of human life in society brings together the real-life experience – which is often messy and sometimes seems contradictory – and structured reflection. And theological reflection and understanding of the worldwide Christian mission community, both within CMS and in the wider theological conversation, is explored. These elements taken together will create a conversation, a mutually critical dialogue,[9] between the lived reality and the theological and sociological reflection.

The case study will focus on the Church Mission Society as an acknowledged community of mission in the Church of England, looking at its experience and understanding of community, both worldwide and local, and how these relate. How does this understanding shape its mission and its daily praxis and what is the significance of this for the individual member?

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[9] Stephen B. Bevans, *An Introduction to Theology in Global Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2009), 166.

Through this case study it becomes clearer how the different groups and representatives of the CMS community respond to these questions. This takes place through focus-groups, semi-structured and in-depth interviews, and research of the CMS literature and communications.[10] People interviewed are leadership and non-leadership members, in local churches linked to CMS, working in the CMS office in Oxford, and in the wider CMS Mission Network (Africa, Asia). The literature research is based on the community's vision and ethos documents, its own description of its history and theology, and its public relations materials.

Analysing the case study data, and in conversation with social theories as well as the wider theological reflection, a theoretical description of the CMS community is developed. This leads to further theological reflections on the idea of 'community as mission' and what it takes to realise such a community in a world of diversity and inequality.

Bringing all these research elements and outcomes together in this book, the structure of the research process itself is followed. Part I starts with an introduction to the context in which the research in chapter two has taken place, chapter three introduces the Church Mission Society, the community that is explored and encountered in the case study. An important consideration for the case study is the fact that I, as the researcher, am part of the community, which I consider to be both an advantage for the research and a fact that calls for reflexivity and attention to bias. Chapter four, therefore, describes the methodology of the research and reflects on the possibilities and challenges of doing case study research as an insider. As both an insider, and an insider living at a distance, I engage in a conversation with members of the community, to discover the lived reality and the lived theology of the community.

Part II starts with chapter five which gives a first overview of this case study, based on the discourse within the CMS community. It describes the CMS community as a 'relational event,' with an emphasis on people and relationships

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[10] Martyn Denscombe, *The Good Research Guide: For Small-Scale Social Research Projects*, 4th ed. (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2010); Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005).

that is related to its understanding of the Scriptures and of God, as well as to its history and tradition. It describes an experience of commonality, shared values, vision, and action, based on its shared purpose, contextually shaped in relationships and practices. This description shows how CMS is a community with high values and expectations; these are values and expectations that are not always realised. This description of CMS, therefore, also gives a first introduction to the experience of ambivalence in the community. The different elements of CMS as 'relational event,' are brought together in 'the circle of shared existence,' a diagram that visualises the community experience and the mutual relationships.

Each of the following chapters gives a more in-depth description and analysis of each of the elements of the lived experience and lived theology of the community, in conversation with more theoretical reflection and related to the socio-cultural context and to the theological reflection within CMS and beyond. In chapter six, the focus is on the active realisation of the mission of the community as a community of purpose. Chapter seven describes what people see as the foundational story (and stories), that has shaped the purpose of the CMS community; this is the story of God as it is revealed in Scripture as well as of the CMS history, its heritage and tradition. Living as a missional community is described as participating in this ongoing story of the mission of God. Chapter eight then explores how people belong and why they come to belong to this community, explaining its official and non-official membership, local and around the world. This belonging is experienced positively but also as a painful reality. Identity and individual choice, including a choice for the other and the common good and for committed relationships, play an important role. How this choice to commit to the community, the people, the values, its mission purpose, is realised and embodied, is explored in chapter nine. It describes the practices and structures that reflect and create, develop and facilitate, but also hinder and frustrate the relationships of belonging and commitment; it reflects on community as a 'distinct Christian practice.'

This in-depth description and analysis of the lived experience and theology, and the conversation with voices from both social sciences and theological reflection, give insight into how an organised mission community, such as CMS, is experienced and shaped. It seeks to show how it is realised and how CMS is

believed to be an expression of the understanding of God within the community, shaping its values, vision, and purpose in today's world.

Part III then develops this further in a reflection on what is needed for a community, that sees 'being community' as its mission calling, functioning in a world of individualism, diversity and inequality with broken and fallible people.

Throughout the CMS discourse run the threads of purpose, values, belonging and commitment, with all the expectations that they carry. Yet, another thread has also emerged, that of ambivalence which includes disappointment at values not realised, priorities not shared, relationships not experienced as safe and welcoming, equal and in partnership. In chapter ten some of the stories of ambivalence are shared, with the purpose of reaching a deeper understanding of its place and function in the community experience. The ability to live with ambivalence is described as a Christian virtue necessary for the realisation of community living in a world of inequality and diversity, a world with broken and fallible people. Recognising and creatively living with ambivalence is necessary for the community to be able to face the complex reality of daily life while not losing sight of the hope; this hope is based on the mission of God and the Kingdom of God that is already and not yet realised. This will shape the mission, purpose, and lived reality of the community in the local context and around the world.

1.4. Definition of Concepts

Concepts central to this book are globalisation, mission, and community. Because of the many different uses of each of these terms, I will give a short description of how I use them for the purpose of this research.

1.4.1. Mission

The Bible's grand narrative can be understood as a story of mission. It starts in the being of God, the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, three persons relating to each other and yet one. As God – the Father, Son and Holy Spirit – created this world out of their relational character, so is humanity created in the image

of God (Genesis 1 and 2), and therefore relational at the core of its being.[11] Created in the image of God we human beings are called to participate in God's creating mission, to nurture and develop this world.[12] Being created in the image of God also means that all human beings are addressable by God and accountable to God. All human beings have dignity and equality and the biblical gospel fits all. Created in God's image, human beings are created for a task – caring/nurturing and developing – and also created for relationship. Invited into God's mission, human beings are placed into community and called to work for relationships, within the whole of creation.[13]

This understanding of the 'Missio Dei,' grounded in the nature of the Triune God, became more defined in theological thinking after the World Council of Churches Assembly of 1952 in Willingden. [14] While this concept created discussions about how wide and broad mission is and who sets its agenda,[15] it also brought an understanding of unity in mission, since mission is not a human enterprise but ultimately God's. The most important actor in mission is not the missionary, but God. It also follows that mission is not only done by missionaries, specifically sent out for the mission task and setting their own agenda, but that

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[11] Karen Kilby, in her article *Perichoresis and Projection* warns for a circular description of God as a Social Trinity that is a projection of the human understanding and lived reality of relationality, which then is pronounced to be central to the being of God, and therefore also becomes a direct link and appeal to the organisation of human relationships. She highlights the mystery of God that is beyond human understanding. Karen Kilby, "Perichoresis and Projection: Problems with Social Doctrines of the Trinity," *New Blackfriars* 81, no. 956 (October 2000): 432–445. While heeding this warning, we are not necessarily silenced in our speaking about God as Trinity, since we can encounter and recognise God through God's revelation in Scripture, in Jesus, and the tradition of the Christian Church of all times and all places. Through faith we can recognise and encounter God as active in the world and in our life. Yet, we do realise that our speaking about God is always tentative and partial. See chapter 7.4.

[12] For a short description of the term "Missio Dei," see: David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission : Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 389–393.

[13] Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 421–428.

[14] L. Pachuau, "Missio Dei," ed. John Corrie, *Dictionary of Mission Theology: Evangelical Foundations* (Nottingham: IVP, 2007), 233.

[15] J.C. Hoekendijk believed that since mission is God's mission, it is much wider than the church. We need to work where God works, to establish shalom. Therefore, the world sets the agenda. John A. McIntosh, "Missio Dei," ed. A. Scott Moreau, *Evangelical Dictionary of World Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 632.

all children of God are called to be part of God's mission in the context where they are placed.

This does not mean that there is no place in the 'Missio Dei' for the specific sending of people. As Monika Hellwig pointedly writes: "in its general sense mission refers to the sending of someone to do something on behalf of another."[16] The traditional biblical references to mission clearly include sending and going: Matthew 28:18-20, John 20:21-23. People are sent out, to cross borders and boundaries, following a God who constantly crosses boundaries, in order to reach out to the other, to share what they have received from God. Therefore, in mission there will always be a "dimension of difference."[17] Mechteld Jansen, in her inaugural lecture, spoke about God on the border, but also warned about a crossing of boundaries that is not good, or leading to what is good, because of power inequality and abusive boundary crossing.

> *Ten opzichte van zowel grensoverschrijdende kwade handel als grensoverschrijdend kwalijk gedrag heeft missiologie als taak te onderscheiden tussen grensoverschrijdingen die scheppend, en grensoverschrijdingen die schendend zijn.[18]*

> *Concerning both unethical boundary crossing commerce and unethical boundary crossing behaviour, missiology has the task to discern between creative boundary crossing and destroying boundary crossing. (Translation BvdTL)*

She saw here an important role for missiological reflection, that of helping the mission practice to remain faithful to God's desires.[19]

God's mission is ultimately revealed in Jesus. Crossing the ultimate boundary between God and humanity, Jesus reveals God to us in his incarnation, and he announces the presence of the Kingdom of God. (Mark 1:14, 15) Creation, fallen

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[16] Monika Hellwig, "Mission," ed. Michael Glazier and Monika Hellwig, *The Modern Catholic Encyclopaedia* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1994), 575.
[17] Titus Presler, "Mission Is Ministry in the Dimension of Difference: A Definition for the Twenty-First Century," *International Bulletin for Missionary Research* 34, no. 4 (October 2010): 195–204.
[18] Mechteld Jansen, *God op de Grens: Missiologie als Theologische Begeleiding bij Grensoverschrijding* (Utrecht: Protestantse Theologische Universiteit, 2008), 12.
[19] Ibid., 11.

and broken, is and will be redeemed and finally fully restored. From the Old Testament prophets to the book of Revelation we find glimpses of what that will look like; it will be where the leopard, the goat, the calf and the lion will be together and be led by a child (Isaiah 11), where war and injustice will be finished, where Christ will be King eternal over all and everything, where creation, including humanity, will be fully redeemed and restored (Revelation 21, 22). This is the framework into which our mission calling is placed. As God's children we are agents of the Kingdom already here, but not yet fully realised, and we invite each other into participation.

Out of this understanding the Anglican Communion has framed their mission calling in the 'Five Marks of Mission':

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom.
2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers.
3. To respond to human need by loving service.
4. To seek to transform unjust structures of society.
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.[20]

This holistic mission statement brings the old polarities of preaching the Gospel and social action[21] together.

Stephen Bevans, in his lecture at the Edinburgh 2010 conference stated that God is mission.

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[20] The Five Marks of Mission originated from the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC6), "Bonds of Affection," 1984, 49.

[21] Where for long the World Council of Churches and the Evangelical mission movement disagreed on the priority in mission of the proclamation of the Word or social action, Rene Padilla, a progressive Evangelical theologian from Ecuador, coined the term 'Integral Mission'. John Stott had an important reconciling influence by stating that evangelism and social responsibility are partners in the missionary task, and so promoting a holistic approach, 'integral mission'. See also 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 (April 2016): 351–371.

> *Not that God has a Mission, but that God is Mission. This is what God is in God's deepest self: self-diffusive love, freely creating, redeeming, healing, challenging that creation.[22]*

And later he linked this mission of God with the calling and purpose of women and men.

> *Mission is first of all God's: God inside out in the world through the Spirit, God in Jesus teaching, healing, including, suffering. Almost incredibly – as an act of grace! – God shares that mission with women and men. Mission calls the church into being to serve God's purposes in the world.[23]*

The high calling of joining into God's mission in this world cannot be realised through individuals by themselves. First, it is in community that God's character and will, as revealed in creation and in Jesus, become clear. Children of God cannot exist alone, for they need each other to know themselves and God. And it is together that they will be able to become an alternative community – a prophetic community – sent by God to proclaim and to be a sign of the Kingdom of God.[24] Secondly, as such a community, the church does not just send people out into mission, the church itself is sent. As in the Old Testament Israel was called to be a blessing and a light to the nations, so now the church as a whole is called to be a community conformed to Christ and pointing to the Kingdom of God.[25] Stephen Bevans finished his lecture at the Edinburgh 2010 conference stating that it is not that the church has a mission, but that the mission has a church.[26] Without mission there is no church. The church only exists as part of God's mission.

Thirdly, the church then is sent out into the world, entering differing cultures and contexts and inviting people to find Christ present there. This calls for an

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[22] Stephen B Bevans, "The Mission Has a Church, Perspectives of a Roman Catholic Theologian," in *Edinburgh 2010 Conference Resources*, 2012, 3. Accessed April 17, 2020, http://edinburgh2010.org/en/resources/papersdocuments.html.

[23] Ibid., 11.

[24] Lois Y. Barrett, "Defining Missional Church," in *Evangelical, Ecumenical, and Anabaptist Missiologies in Conversation: Essays in Honor of Wilbert R. Shenk* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006), 177.

[25] Ibid., 183.

[26] Bevans, "The Mission Has a Church, Perspectives of a Roman Catholic Theologian," 11.

open encounter and a listening attitude, modelling the incarnation of Jesus. There is no 'one Christian culture fits all.' Christ enters into each culture specifically and speaks his word of love, grace, justice and restoration into each of them.[27] And this word will be both affirming and critical of the existing culture and its practices, to the end that each culture and context will be healed and redeemed and be represented in the Kingdom of God; it is where all nations and languages will come together to the glory of God. (Revelation 7:9,10)

Fourthly, it is based on and flows out of a mission spirituality. The mission community's relationship with God defines its identity and fuels its mission. Whereas, before God, it recognises its own needs as well as the needs of the other, it also recognises the image of God in self and other. And out of these an attitude of humility, grace, and reconciliation is born. This results in sharing, learning, growing, and acting together where people meet; it becomes a prophetic community living out of, and towards the Kingdom of God.

> *All mission starts with God's grace. God is the first missionary, and all of us are recipients. We continue to be recipients even in our own participation in God's mission. Even our acts of mission and solidarity with others are never one way streets; they function as means of grace, as channels through which God's grace comes back in our lives.[28]*

To summarise, the defining characteristics of mission, as God's mission, are first that it is Christ-centred, and secondly, that it plays out in the "dimension of difference," in the crossing of boundaries, and as such makes the community in mission a sign of God's Kingdom, a blessing and a light to the nations.

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[27] Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Prophetic Dialogue: Reflections on Christian Mission Today* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), 69–70.
[28] Joerg Rieger, "Theology and Mission Between Neocolonialism and Postcolonialism," *Mission Studies* 21, no. 2 (2004): 220.

1.4.2. Globalisation

In defining globalisation, global relatedness and the interconnectedness of communities and individuals in the world take centre stage. Living in complete isolation, has become (nearly) impossible.[29]

> *Globalisation can [...] be defined as the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring miles away and vice versa.*[30]

> *Globalisation refers to increasing global interconnectedness, so that events and developments in one part of the world are affected by, have to take account of, and also influence, in turn, other parts of the world. It also refers to an increasing sense of a single global whole.*[31]

Media, internet, and global travel have been important vehicles of globalisation, bringing the "far" "near," linking them up and creating this "increasing sense of a global whole." This interconnectedness expresses itself in economic, social, intellectual, political, and cultural spheres.

This trend is evaluated both positively and negatively. On the one hand it brings new opportunities for discovery and creative new avenues in the different spheres of our lives, as well as a sense of responsibility for that which is beyond our immediate context. On the other hand, as several people have pointed out, not all in the world benefit equally from this globalisation. Zygmunt Bauman describes this in his book *Collateral Damage: Social Inequalities in a Global Age.* He points out how in Bradford, a city in the United Kingdom, youth delinquency is a social problem which is related to "the consumerist life philosophy propagated and instilled under the pressure of a consumer-oriented economy and politics." This economy and politics results in an ever-widening gap between

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[29] Countries such as North Korea try to be completely isolationist, but with great consequences.

[30] Anthony Giddens, *The Third Way: The Renewal of Social Democracy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), 64.

[31] Richard Tiplady, *One World or Many?: The Impact of Globalisation on Mission* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2003), 2.

the rich and the poor. Yet, this social problem cannot find an answer in the local context, since it is globally driven.

> The links to the Bradford phenomenon extend far beyond the confines of the city. The situation of youth in Bradford is a collateral casualty of profit-driven, uncoordinated and uncontrolled globalization.[32]

Robert Schreiter strongly believes that it is mainly the rich and powerful who benefit, especially in a world where the defining aspects of being human are narrowed down to production and consumption. He therefore describes globalisation as a new form of colonialism. Globalisation does not have a centre in space, nor in a hierarchy comparable with traditional colonialism. Neither is it state centred; it has no clear boundaries. Yet, it 'invades', changes, and sometimes takes over local life.[33]

Peter Berger disagrees with this idea of new colonialism, stating that, even though globalisation very much looks like 'Americanisation' it is not coercive in its influence. There is always an element of free choice. This is proven by the fact that cultures may adopt certain American influences, but they never adopt the total American culture and influence, and what they adopt, they adapt into their own culture and context. New influences are always mixed with personal values and cultures, forming a new, unique, and emerging culture.[34]

Yet, the question can still be raised how much of this freedom of choice and change is available to the minorities in society and those who are at the margins. How much of the freedom rests mainly or only with the rich, the educated, and the powerful?

On the one hand, in Christian communities and in mission too, we can find excitement about the new opportunities in this globalised world. Reaching the ends of the world seems to become easier. The media is a great tool to inform

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[32] Zygmunt Bauman, *Collateral Damage: Social Inequalities in a Global Age* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011), 4.
[33] Robert J. Schreiter, "Globalization and Reconciliation: Challenges to Mission," in *Mission in the Third Millennium*, ed. Robert J. Schreiter (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001), 127–132.
[34] Peter L. Berger and Samuel P. Huntington, eds., *Many Globalizations: Cultural Diversity in the Contemporary World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 3, 4.

us about the gifts and needs of people and communities far away, through which compassion and a willingness to share can grow. Social networks worldwide connect us and invite us to participate in each other's lives.[35]

Tim Dearborn, on the other hand, also signals a shrinking of the sphere of concern. The global world has become so big, containing so many appeals and needs, that local churches and communities feel overwhelmed.[36] They react by focussing on their local context and shy away from global engagement. They look for the known and familiar rather than engaging with the different.

This is what Anthony Giddens, in his BBC Reith Lectures, described as beleaguered tradition and communities. He emphasised that globalisation should not be seen mainly as economic, but also as political, technological, and cultural. Our daily lives are impacted if we want it or not. This impact includes our experience of social relationships and interdependence, our sense of identity and our identity construction, and our community and society construction. Yet, this is a change fraught with anxiety. Giddens talks about our "Runaway world" and the experience of lack of control. He states: "This is not – at least at the moment – a global order driven by collective human will. Instead, it is emerging in an anarchic, haphazard, fashion, carried along by a mixture of economic, technological and cultural imperatives."[37] He uses the lectures to call for realism about change, for facing that reality and then to work democratically with what emerges in order to shape it, through participation and perseverance.

According to Manuel Castells, in this 'Runaway world', which he calls a "network society," such participation takes shape through communication, by being an active part of the information sharing network community/communities.[38]

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[35] An important example of this is: Clay Shirky, *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing Without Organizations* (New York: Penguin Books, 2009); David Singh Grewal, *Network Power: The Social Dynamics of Globalization* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008).

[36] Tim Dearborn, "Conclusion: A Global Future for Local Churches," in *The Local Church in a Global Era: Reflections for a New Century*, ed. Max L. Stackhouse, Tim Dearborn, and Scott Paeth (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2000), 212.

[37] Anthony Giddens, "Globalisation," *Reith Lectures* (London, 1999). http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/static/events/reith_99/. Accessed 26/08/2014.

[38] Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, 1:500.

For the mission community worldwide this means that it will have to account for the "collateral damage" of globalisation, keeping its focus on those who experience globalisation as invasion, as a reality that leaves them no choice. The mission community needs to recognise this as a reality that excludes people, even while they also celebrate the opportunities of connection and exchange.

When talking about communities in the globalised world, I will mainly use the term 'worldwide' community, rather than global community, as an indicator that the mission community is not globally present. It is present worldwide, but not everywhere, and in some places only as a minority or on the margins. And where it is present, it is not as a unified global entity but rather in localised particularity and diversity.

1.4.3. Community, Communion, Group, Society, Movement, and Network

As described earlier, the idea of community, though used often, is complex and contested. Anthony Cohen, therefore, writes that the definition of community, in "modern times and urban places," should be described by the use, and the meaning given to the community, rather than seeking a clear and theoretic description.[39] It is one of the objectives of this research to gain more clarity in this field. Concepts related to community are communion, group, society, movement, and network. For the purpose of this research, I will use the word 'community' for a group of people who belong together in an immediate and relational way – be it through kinship, place or choice – and who give meaning, are committed to, and are shaped by this community, its members, and its purpose.

The concept of 'communion' is used in the Anglican Church as a concept that describes the relationship between the different churches and communities around the world, belonging together by commitment in a shared faith and mutual relationships, within an organisational structure. The website of the Anglican Communion uses the word "family," to describe this relationship: "a

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[39] Anthony P. Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community* (Chichester: Ellis Horwood Ltd., 1985), 12, 20.

family of churches in more than 165 countries." [40] The World Council of Churches, bringing churches from around the world and from different denominations together, uses the words "fellowship," and "community," emphasising the shared faith and quest for unity in worship and calling:

> *The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures, and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is a community of churches on the way to visible unity in one faith and one eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and in common life in Christ.[41]*

Yet, this interdenominational "fellowship" or "community" does not have the organisational (clerical) structure that the Anglican Church does in its Communion.

A community can consist of many different groups, each with their own focus, character, or purpose. For the purposes of this book I use the term 'group' for a 'group' of people who are linked by having something in common, such as work, place, gender, interest, etc., but with a different level of commitment, without the necessity of entailing the whole of life, or long-term personal relationships. [42] A group can be seen as more functional in its purpose and at times even rather random. At work, people meet, work together, but do not necessarily have personal relationships with one another. It is even possible to describe as a group people who come to the same place at the same time to do their shopping in the same shop, possibly waiting together for the doors of the shop to open.

A 'society' – which is not necessarily the same as a nation – also consists of a group of people who are in some way linked together. This can be through family, class, religion, an interest-group, etc. The relationships within the society are structured, related to its purpose which can be material, political or legal. Ferdinand Tönnies described society with the German word *Gesellschaft,*

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[40] http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ Accessed 21-04-2020.
[41] https://www.oikoumene.org/en/about-us Accessed 21-04-2020.
[42] Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community*, 12.

expressed in convention, legislation, and public opinion. In such a society, structures of authority, accountability and responsibility are clearly described.[43]

A 'movement' is more fluid and even more purpose driven. Manuel Castells describes a movement as a social entity that is built around identity, introducing "from the outset, an alternative social logic, distinct from the principles of performance around which dominant institutions of society are built."[44] Their purpose is collective action leading to the transformation of society. [45] Andrew Dawson describes it as a collective endeavour (of variable size) organised around the common interest or goal. Its structure serves the purpose of the movement, is not set, and as such is action oriented rather than oriented towards its own structure and existence.[46]

Castells describes a "network" as a set of interconnecting "nodes," related to each other through communication, and in an open dynamic structure. People can connect to, and participate in, different networks and hubs within networks, giving them access to information and thus to power.[47] Jared Looney, quoting Michael Rynkiewich, states that "a 'social network is not a group, but rather a series of links between people that a person may use to mobilize small groups, gather information, or obtain resources.' […] A network is essentially a web of social resources connected to an individual."[48]

It can be said that a network is centred on the individual and his or her relationships, described above as "social resources." Community on the other hand has a group focus, where the individual exists because of the other. The focus is on the relationships in which the individual and the group exist and participate. This participation can be experienced as both positive and negative. The community can be a reality that allows the group and the individual to flourish, but it can also become a limiting and dominating reality for both the individual and the group.

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[43] F. Tönnies, Community and Society (1963) in Gerard Delanty, *Community*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2010), 22.

[44] Castells, *End of Millennium*, 3:382.

[45] Ibid., 3:370–371.

[46] Andrew Dawson, *Sociology of Religion* (London: SCM Press, 2011), 122.

[47] Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, 1:501.

[48] Jared Looney, *Crossroads of the Nations: Diaspora, Globalization, and Evangelism*, vol. 1 (Portland, OR: Urban Loft Publishers, 2015), 213.

While CMS can be seen to have characteristics of both a 'movement' and a 'network', it describes itself as a 'society' (as reflected in the name, and with a constitution) and a 'community.' And it functions within the Anglican Communion.[49] This is why I also use the term 'organised community.'

1.5. Limitations

Combining mission and community is not new. The church is broadly recognised as a worldwide organisation or movement that consists of missional communities. The special assembly of the Synod for Roman Catholic bishops for Africa in 1994, even used the paradigm of family to describe the church and its mission.[50] The Anglican Communion and the World Council of Churches also emphasise the necessity of togetherness and unity for the fulfilment of the mission of the church worldwide.[51]

This research limits its description of the worldwide community to CMS as a mission community with both a local and worldwide character, rather than an understanding of the church as worldwide community. CMS is characterised by the commitment of its members to each other as part of the community and to mission as a community, making CMS a sodality (community of choice with a specific purpose) within the modality of the church.[52]

And secondly, this research will not focus on local missional communities, church planting and Fresh Expressions of Church as mission in our own European context. It focusses primarily on mission and the worldwide mission community

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[49] http://www.anglicancommunion.org/community/organisations.aspx Accessed 21-04-2020.
[50] Francis Appiah-Kubi, *Église, Famille de Dieu: un chemin pour les Églises d'Afrique* (Paris: Karthala, 2008).
[51] Jooseop Keum, ed., "Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes: With a Practical Guide" (World Council of Churches Publications, 2013); Huibert van Beek, *Sharing Life : Official Report of the WCC World Consultation on Koinonia, Sharing Life in a World Community* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1989).
[52] Ralph D. Winter, "The Two Structures of God's Redemptive Mission." http://www.movements.net/wp-content/uploads/2009/04/two-structures-gods-redemptive-mission-winter.pdf. Accessed 18/04/2012.

and how that relates to the local, how it involves and impacts the individual, and how it has a place in the world.

The research approach of this project is multi-disciplinary, in the sense that it combines theological reflection in conversation with existing social and organisational research and with the qualitative research on the lived experience of a mission community. The danger of such an approach is a possible superficiality of research in each of the separate disciplines used in the project. This problem is addressed through the conversation with broadly recognised leading thinkers and the overview of the subject which they have given. The worldwide mission community as the central subject of the research question calls for an inter-disciplinary approach for the reason that it is a complex reality with multiple entities, where lived experience, theology and social reality, vision and practice meet, inform and shape each other.

Since I, the researcher, am an active member of the CMS community, I will have the advantage of insider understanding and knowledge of the community. Yet, I had to put clear boundaries and processes in place to safeguard academic rigour and honesty in the case study.[53]

1.6. Relevance and Objectives

Reflecting on the occasion of the centenary of the Edinburgh 1910 conference Norman Thomas writes:

> *One certainty is that societies in coming years increasingly will undergo accelerating rates of change. While modern communications and economics will increase human interactions, facilitate relationships, and create interdependencies, the global human family will remain pluralistic in cultures, religions, values, and lifestyles. Mission in the twenty-first century, to be most effective, will need to embrace such pluralisms and offer timely and*

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[53] This will be described in more detail in chapter 4.

relevant responses if the good news of the gospel is to be known, received, and transmitted by word and deed to others.[54]

It is important to look back to history, reflect on where we have come from, yet with a view toward the future, that does not ignore or deny today's realities. By embracing today's world, and learning the lessons of the past, responses can be envisaged that take both seriously and work with them toward the future.

Tony Blackshaw, in his overview of community studies in sociology,[55] also points out that the past will not come back. He describes how the pre-modern concept of community, with its direct relationships in a clear locality and local structure, is lost because of modernity's emphasis on the individual and individual freedom and autonomy. This leaves a void and people are yearning for the security and warmth of community. Yet, he states, this will always be unfulfilled. Freedom has ended this.[56] Where freedom and autonomy are basic values, loneliness, and boundaries in relation to other people's rights become places of contestation. Blackshaw's argument throughout the book is that we should not just look back with longing and try to recreate the past, but that we should creatively work with the now and find new forms of community. He calls for 'hermeneutic communities', communities who creatively reinvent themselves, in conversation with their context, leading to something new.

The development of social networks through the internet can be seen as an expression of a new search for relationships and community, without necessarily completely replacing those that are face-to-face. Simon Jenkins in a column in the Guardian Weekly about the post-digital world states that people are searching for real-life relationality, and that they are using the web to organise and realise this desire. Online services are used to point people to real events, meetings, or happenings. He writes:

Ultimately, we want to be where it is in person [...] the post-digital age focuses on personal contact. Post-digital is not pre-techno but

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[54] Norman E. Thomas, "Springboards for the 21st Century Mission: Celebrating Edinburgh 1910," *Missiology: An International Review* XXXIX, no. 2 (April 2011): 153.
[55] Tony Blackshaw, *Key Concepts in Community Studies* (London: SAGE Publications, 2010).
[56] Ibid., 24.

exploits technology for a civilising purpose, human congregation and intercourse.[57]

The interest in community and community development in the missiological literature may well be related to the interest in community in Western society as a whole.

At this moment in Western society, we see two movements related to community. First, there is a movement towards more communication and information and therefore more (global) interdependencies. Secondly, we see, facilitated by the first movement of communication and information, more stress on the individual and individual autonomy and freedom of choice.

This research is placed within the tension between these two movements, both in society and in the mission community. It seeks to ground the theology of mission and community in the reality of the current society and context and offer to the social reflections a perspective for community building. This might be less fragile and more holistic, since meaning and identity are not just given or created by human beings as individuals, but also received (a gift) from the o(O)ther.

Secondly, this project seeks to be a response to the uneasiness in mission movements and organisations as to what is their mission calling in this post-colonial, globalised world as they search for new appropriate relationships, objectives, and strategies. On the international level, can the community model contribute to a new mission paradigm, in which the historical baggage of colonialism and paternalism is taken seriously and where ongoing post-colonial inequality is exposed, and relationships are transformed? Is it possible that the realisation that we are all one in Christ, living by the same grace, created in the image of God and as such called to be God's representatives in this world, can unite us and help us to share the particular gifts that we have received? Further, if in community the primary emphasis is on 'our' rather than 'mine', will we become less focussed on giving and more on sharing, less on teaching others and more on learning together, less on helping others and more on journeying

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[57] Simon Jenkins, "A Route Map Back to Reality," *The Guardian Weekly*, December 9, 2011, 19.

unitedly? In short, what does a theology of community as mission look like and what attitudes will be nurtured through that theology?

At the local level, can the community model help churches and communities find new relevance both for their own local context and for their worldwide identity and belonging? Can the community members come to a fuller understanding of self as part of the Body of Christ and the mission of God? And both at the international and local levels, can a better understanding of community, its identity and development contribute to the discovery of new community possibilities relevant to our time and society while grounded in their God given identity?

This research brings the academic theological reflection on the worldwide mission community into conversation with relevant sociological perspectives and current life experience, in order to come to a practical-theological description of the lived experience of a mission community in a globalised world, in an era of information and individualisation, and of competition and inequality. This community description aims to clarify the relationship between the worldwide and the local, the inclusive, and exclusive nature of the worldwide community and the place of the individual within that community and its purpose.

In this way, the objective is to contribute to the theory development around community and mission, giving a description of a practice of community development in an individualised and globalised world, and conceptualising this lived experience of community both locally and worldwide. This will happen by testing theories of community in today's world based on this lived community experience, and by developing a vision for, and practical approach to, community as a missional practice.

Bennett et al. describe practical theology as a discipline that studies and describes practices,

> *both as fundamental human activity and as the means by which*
> *we inhabit the life of God. Practical theology is practice-oriented*
> *discourse that describes, regulates and stimulates committed*

practice towards those ends. It emerges out of, and is orientated towards, questions of life.[58]

In describing the practices of the community and the lived experience, as human activity and therefore as practices in a broken world lived out by fallible and fragile people, I am also describing them as practices conceived and realised on the basis of the community's understanding of and encounter with God. I am describing them as practices that grow out of the desire of the community and its members to live and participate in the story and the mission of this God. This is not just a description for its own sake, but it also has the aim to encourage and support such a community which desires to participate in the mission of God. Henk de Roest takes this still a step further by stating that practical theology itself has a place in the mission of God. He writes

> *…understanding and renewing missional practices is part of practical theology, and thus, I would suggest, the practice of practical theology itself has a place in the missio Dei. […] Therefore, practical theology is grounded in God's liberating and redemptive practices, and is consequently connected to the world; not only the wellbeing of Christians, but the wellbeing of all, the bonum commune.*[59]

My desire for this book is that it will contribute to a better understanding of the possibilities and limitations of a mission community as part of God's mission in today's world. My intention is to contribute to a wider conversation in which each specific context and particular community adds to a wider and fuller understanding, that can be creatively embodied again in each context in its particular and appropriate way. Hopefully it might contribute, even in its humanness and its fragility, in such a way that it mysteriously becomes revelatory of God.

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[58] Zoë Bennett et al., *Invitation to Research in Practical Theology*, First Edition. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), 62.
[59] Henk de Roest, *Collaborative Practical Theology: Engaging Practitioners in Research on Christian Practices*, Theology in Practice, volume 8 (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 159, 160.

PART I

EXPLORATION OF THE CONTEXT

Before looking at CMS and the lived experience of community in CMS, this chapter explores the context in which CMS functions. First, it looks at the changing context of mission, where the majority of Christian churches are now in and from the Global South. Secondly, the social context of mission will be explored, with a special focus on the individualisation and globalisation dynamics that can be found especially in Western Europe and North America. These dynamics influence both the self-understanding and the mission practice of CMS. Therefore, the third part of this chapter will describe how in this context theological reflection connects mission and community.

2.1. Changing Context of Mission

In 1910, at the Edinburgh mission conference, the chair of the conference, John Mott, spoke of "the evangelisation of the world in this generation." At the time this meant that the evangelisation would be done by missionaries from Europe and North America and that the 'to be evangelised areas' were to be found in the Global South. Yet, in the post-colonial time churches in the Global South grew fast and in 1961 the World Council of Churches decided to no longer use the distinction between 'younger churches' and 'older churches.' The mission

was now understood to be needed on six continents, including Europe and North America.[1]

Reasons for this change in mission understanding are to be found in the fact that the churches in the Global South are growing fast, whereas Europe in particular is becoming a post-Christendom continent.[2] The fact that the churches in the Western world are facing decline brings about a crisis in their self-understanding and hope for their future existence. For example, the vision document in the Protestant Church in the Netherlands: "De hartslag van het leven" displays this struggle with decline, describing it in the introduction to the document (p. 10). Just before this description, the document states that the Protestant Church in the Netherlands is not a church on its own. She sees herself as part of the worldwide church (p.9). In a later section the document describes various things that the church in the Netherlands can learn from the worldwide church for her encouragement (p. 26). Yet this is not translated into any language of mission and how the church can be part of God's mission both local and global.[3] This, together with the feelings of guilt towards the Majority World because of the colonial heritage, brings uneasiness within the mission movement of Christian churches and their mission organisations. Should Western Christians not focus on the 'mission field' in their own context? And how can they assume the spiritual duty of mission in the Majority World when they have lost moral dignity through their colonial history? Most countries and areas now have their own churches, which could much better take on this task of mission in their culture and context.[4]

Churches and mission organisations which are taking these changes seriously, are rethinking their mission understanding and strategy. Some organisations decided not to send so-called missionaries to the Majority World anymore, but

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[1] Kirsteen Kim, *Joining in with the Spirit: Connecting World Church and Local Mission* (London: Epworth Press, 2009), 10.
[2] This is why in the context of the church worldwide the term Majority World is used rather than Global South.
[3] Arjan Plaisier, *De hartslag van het leven: Visie op het leven en werken van de Protestantse Kerk in Nederland* (Generale Synode van de Protestantse Kerk in Nederland, November 2011).
[4] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 3, 4.

rather resource financially local projects throughout the world that are developed and managed by local people. At the World Mission Conference of the World Council of Churches in 1972/1973 in Bangkok, the participants decided on a moratorium on the sending of money and missionaries from the Global North. Out of this conference came also the transformation of the Paris Mission Society into a community of churches in mission (CEVAA), where churches from the Global North and South work together on an equal footing and contribute together to the joined mission calling.[5] Others decided to focus more on Europe as the context of their mission call. A more critical appreciation of this trend is given by Stanley Guthrie, when he writes: "Such calls have been especially attractive to Western Christians, who find themselves increasingly inward-looking and financially pressured."[6] Still others, such as the Church Mission Society (CMS), a mission organisation within the Anglican Church and based in the United Kingdom, also the subject of this research, continue to send people on the basis of requests of local churches as well as focussing more on the European context. They now operate and strategize on the basis of the belief that Christians, as brothers and sisters and members of the one body of Christ, are called to be a worldwide as well as a local community, consisting of a network of local communities, and that within that worldwide community mission happens from everywhere to everywhere. Members of this community are called to participate fully and share their different gifts and resources with each other in order to answer the call of mission, the call to be a blessing to the nations.

David Bosch, in his book *Transforming Mission*, looks at the mission history and describes the different eras with different mission paradigms.[7] He states that we are now in a period – a time of testing – in which we will have to find a new paradigm for mission. He calls for repentance and a rediscovery of the essence

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[5] http://www.oikoumene.org/en/handbook/global-bodies-and-mission-communions/cevaa.html
 Accessed 10/02/2012. See also: "Report of the CEVAA, CWM, and UEM Joint-Consultation, Wuppertal, Germany, 1-6 February 2000" in *International Review of Mission*, (vol. LXXXIX, No. 353), pp. 217-228.
[6] Stanley M. Guthrie, "Globalization," ed. A. Scott Moreau, *Evangelical Dictionary of World Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 395.
[7] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*.

of the church's missionary nature and calling, quoting D.M. Paton: "A call to repentance is not a call to drop important work, but to do it otherwise. The Mission of the Church abides."[8] Bosch then describes (in his chapter twelve) different elements of an emerging paradigm, such as, for example, "Mission as Church-With-Others," "Mission as Missio Dei," "Mission as Mediating Salvation," "Mission as the Quest for Justice," "Mission as Contextualisation."

In 2013 two important documents were published: *Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes,* a statement written by the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME), and presented at the 10th assembly of the World Council of Churches at Busan, Republic of Korea. And secondly: *Evangelii Gaudium,* an apostolic exhortation by Pope Francis. Where in *Evangelii Gaudium* a great emphasis is placed on the "Joy of the Gospel"(opening paragraphs, par. 84, and 288), Pope Francis also emphasises that this joy is lived out in the church as community, in the human relationships that bring healing, liberation, and peace (par. 89). These relationships also become revelatory of Christ: "it means learning to find Jesus in the faces of others, in their voices, in their pleas." (par. 91)[9]

In *Together Towards Life* a step further is taken where the writers state that this mission of the church, which embraces the "fullness of life" as described in John 10:10 (par. 102), is not a mission *to* the margin, but also a mission *from* the margin. People on the margins because of poverty and structures of injustice become agents of mission, rather than objects of mission (par. 6). People lacking power evangelise the powerful in a mission leading to justice and inclusivity, healing and wholeness (par. 36-54).[10]

The centre of the Christian church is not to be found in the Western world anymore, and mission is not exclusively in the movement from North to South, from the centre to the margin, but in a movement from everywhere to

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[8] Ibid., 365.
[9] Francis, "Evangelii Gaudium : Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World," November 24, 2013.
http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html. Accessed 23/04/2020.
[10] Keum, "Together towards Life."

everywhere and, what is more, with a special emphasis on the movement from the margin to the centre. The question remains if this movement is recognised in the lived reality of the people on the margin.

Having looked at the changing context of mission, the following paragraphs will explore the place of community in the current social context through the voices (mainly Western) of some important scholars in sociology, with a focus on community as it is understood and lived in a globalising world, where the individual takes more and more the centre stage.

2.2. Sociological Reflections on Community

When on the 11th of September 2001 the Twin Towers of the World Trade Centre in New York were attacked, through television and other media, around the world we were all in the first row, watching the events unfold. It was not just New York that was attacked; we felt that it was the wider Western community and our values and structures. Tony Blair, in his speech at the Labour Party Conference that year, spoke of the "world community" that now needs to come together and act together in order to defend our values and freedom and to create a new order in which we seek prosperity for all.[11] The years following have shown that this world community has been fractured and has disagreed on which values to defend, and how to defend them. And what does prosperity for all mean, when sanctions bite, but not in all places to the same extent? And why is it that we hear little talk about world community from the Western political leaders, when the subject is the so-called refugee crisis, with refugees from other parts of the world knocking on the doors of European communities? Why is it so difficult to come together as countries and communities around the threat of climate change and the measures that need to be taken to slow the global warming?

In the following paragraphs the concept of community in today's world will be explored, looking at the social context as it is related to the questions around community, individualisation and globalisation, and as it is understood by two

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[11] Delanty, *Community*, 123–125.

leading sociologists who have researched these questions in depth. The first is Zygmunt Bauman, who focuses on the place of the individual in modern and post-modern times, and on the liquid society. The second is Manuel Castells with a view on the globalising world. Castells wrote the seminal trilogy *The Information Age,* about the "network society."[12] Based on these reflections, the concepts of locality, identification, belonging, and commitment will be further explored, in conversation with other voices from the social sciences.

For many, the word community is linked with concepts such as belonging, safety, care for each other, working together, and standing strong together. These concepts had a place in the pre-modern communities, where belonging and identity were a given and where work and care were organised within the community. But since the quest for individual freedom and autonomy, as started in modernity, community has become fractured and fragile. Anthony Cohen therefore states at the beginning of his book *The Symbolic Construction of Community,* that it is impossible in modern times and urban places to give a definition of community.[13] Community is a pre-modern concept which is linked to space, kinship relationships, and institution; it may carry a grand narrative. Beginning with the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution there was a shift to the individual and to individual freedom and power of choice, with the result that these communities vanished or changed in such a way that the definition of community can no longer be based on them. Individual freedom and choice question communal commitment. And authentic individual identity questions the development of identity within community.

The pre-modern concept of community resided, according to Tony Blackshaw, in the unconscious of its members. It was there, taken for granted, yet shaping the people who were part of it.[14] Yet, through the development of individual freedom and choice, people realised that they had left community behind. Personal autonomy and community cannot go together. It is only after the end of this unconscious experience of community that we can now reflect on it.

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[12] Manuel Castells, *The Information Age: Economy, Society, and Culture: Trilogy* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2010).
[13] Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community*, 12.
[14] Blackshaw, *Key Concepts in Community Studies*, 23.

Yet, Zygmunt Bauman, quoting Eric Hobsbawn states that:

> *Never was the word 'community' used more indiscriminately and emptily than in the decades when communities in the sociological sense became hard to find in real life*[15]

And in his later book *Liquid Modernity* he writes*:*

> *Community is these days the last relic of the old-time utopias of the good society; it stands for whatever has been left of the dreams of a better life shared with better neighbours all following better rules of cohabitation.*[16]

Though the concept of community may have lost its real life existence, according to Bauman, it has not yet lost its appeal. People continue to long for community as it was before, even though it is an impossibility in the present.

Both Tony Blackshaw and Gerard Delanty give a good overview of this process of sociological reflection on community.[17] Locality, identity, belonging, and commitment are recurring themes in this reflection. Before these themes are explored, a description of how Zygmunt Bauman and Manuel Castells evaluate the role of community in our current world and society will be offered. I have chosen Bauman, focussing mainly on his books *Liquid Modernity* and *The Individualized Society,* because of his exploration of individualisation in a changing society and of the consequences of individualisation for our self-understanding and our relationship with the other. Castells describes in his trilogy *The Information Age: Economy, Society, and Culture*[18] the dynamic of globalisation in our world and the influence and importance of communication technology which creates a world where community becomes a "network society" interconnecting the global and the local. Both sociologists reflect on the context and changes in a comprehensive way, looking at the whole of society

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[15] Eric Hobsbawn as quoted by: Bauman, *The Individualized Society*, 151.
[16] Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, 92.
[17] Blackshaw, *Key Concepts in Community Studies*; Delanty, *Community*.
[18] Castells, *The Information Age: Economy, Society, and Culture: Trilogy*.

(for Bauman mainly Western) through specific cases and situations. This brings them to a theoretic understanding of the underlying dynamics within society.

The description of their understanding of today's society is followed by an exploration of four foundational elements of community – locality, identity, belonging and commitment – comparing the insights of Bauman and Castells with some wider sociological thinking. This brings us to a description of a sociological understanding of community in an individualising and globalising world.

2.2.1. Zygmunt Bauman (1925-2017)

Bauman describes the first decade of the 21st century as a time of interregnum: the old ways don't fit anymore, but the new ways have not yet been found and established.[19] Rather than using the word post-modern to describe the culture, Bauman uses the term "liquid modernity," which is "the growing conviction that change is *the only* permanence, and uncertainty *the only* certainty."[20]

In pre-modern society, life and labour were connected: identity, role and belonging were a given. A person was born into a family, was part of a community, and her life would develop according to the rules and expectations of that community.[21] Modern society wanted to do away with these "pre-modern solids," to replace them with new, better, lasting and rational "solids," free of family and household duties, free of limiting and confining values and obligations.[22] Yet, even though people could now choose their role and work, they still expected to work lifelong for the same company, in the same job. The social framework and expectations of the chosen role and work were still set by society and culture.[23] At the same time, after industrialisation labour became connected to wealth, rather than livelihood, and was a commodity to be exploited. Well-being became defined mainly in economic terms. Now, in the post-modern context, we are fully moving away from the "solids," into "liquid

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[19] Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, vii.
[20] Ibid., viii.
[21] Bauman, *The Individualized Society*, 19.
[22] Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, 3, 4.
[23] Bauman, *The Individualized Society*, 19.

modernity," where "pre-allocated reference groups" have become history, and where we now live in a world of "universal comparison," with no option but to choose and to create our own identity, role and social life.[24]

The result is a "liquid" society, meaning that the freedom for individual choices has led to flexibility as one of the most important values: something better may always be around the corner. Therefore, one should never try to hold on to what is because of the risk of losing out on new opportunities. Jobs and commitments become short-term; relationships become "weak ties" or "fleeting forms of association."[25]

> *What makes modernity 'liquid', and thus justifies the choice of name, is its self-propelling, self-intensifying, compulsive and obsessive 'modernization' as a result of which, like liquid, none of the consecutive forms of social life is able to maintain its shape for long.[26]*

Consequently, the quest for freedom has resulted in a world full of insecurity. Change and flexibility do not just bring development, creativity, and new opportunities, they also bring competition, uncertainty, and insecurity. Deregulation also means giving up control and can lead to unpredictability and even polarisation, opposing the freedom of one person against the other. Relationships in family and neighbourhood that were formerly lasting and stable can no longer provide the security they did before, for they too have become optional and often temporary.[27]

The quest for freedom has led to a world where there are only individuals. No one can tell you what to do or choose. There are other individuals whom you can choose as your examples or models, but they will not carry any responsibility for the choices you make. The full responsibility for success and wellbeing now rests on the shoulders of the individual and his or her choices and actions.[28] And

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[24] Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, 7.

[25] Ibid., 23–25.

[26] Zygmunt Bauman, *Culture in a Liquid Modern World*, trans. Lydia Bauman, First Edition. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011), 11.

[27] Bauman, *The Individualized Society*, 83–87.

[28] Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, 30–32.

this responsibility is ongoing. Choices need to be made repeatedly. Relationships and contracts can be broken unilaterally when one of the partners sees better options.[29] Again, one can only be an individual in a shifting and liquid world.

It is in this world of insecurity that the individual needs to construct his or her own identity. And this identity has now changed from one which was received at birth to a task which cannot be avoided. The individual carries the sole responsibility for this task, both for the process and for the outcomes (intended or not). Individual autonomy, therefore, may only be "*de jure,*" rather than "*de facto.*" [30] It is now considered a right and a strongly desired and expected possibility. That does not mean, however, that everyone is able to become fully autonomous in his identity formation. The society in which the individual seeks to establish his identity and autonomy is a dangerous place, with risks, competition, polarisation, and even physical insecurity. Some will be able to live the life they choose and have the resources to do so, but many have not.

A globalised and connected world, where the choices seem endless, makes this even more difficult. The fear is not only to know what identity to choose, but also when it is time to choose another identity for the old one does not work anymore. Identity becomes fragmented and is lived in episodes.

> *Perhaps instead of talking about identities, inherited or acquired, it would be more in keeping with the realities of the globalizing world to speak of identification, a never-ending, always incomplete, unfinished and open-ended activity in which we all, by necessity or by choice, are engaged.[31]*

From the outside the identity may seem solid, but when experienced from the inside it is fragile and vulnerable. Yet, showing this vulnerability is dangerous and therefore image becomes important. Our identity becomes a work of art, individually created, and presented to the world as a tool in the struggle of life.[32]

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[29] Bauman, *The Individualized Society*, 157.
[30] Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, 31.
[31] Bauman, *The Individualized Society*, 152.
[32] Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, 82, 83.

Facebook and fashion are examples of such image carriers. They facilitate the presentation and the fluidity of identification.

In the introduction to his book *The Individualized Society,* Bauman discusses Durkheim's belief that submission to society is a liberating experience. The individual becomes a part of a bigger whole and so receives a taste of immortality.[33] Traditionally, an individual received a past, present and future, through family and community links. However, in submitting to the society, the individual is not only set free of the unavoidable and risky task of choice, but she also loses the freedom to choose. Throughout history, people have sought the freedom to choose. Yet, the freedom achieved may only be a "negative freedom" (freedom from), rather than a "positive freedom" (freedom to).

Community and the community experience are the consequences of this enormous change. Freedom from authoritative meaning and values leaves a plethora of values and meanings without a standard for choosing good over not good. For example, the freedom of choice in the economy – consumerism – is not based on our needs, but on our desires. And there are no normative regulations for our desires.[34] If identities can be chosen and let go, then there is little drive for commitment and the need to accept consequences, and even less is there a commitment to a common cause.[35] If some people seem to be unable to form an individual identity and autonomy, this is their own responsibility. Solidarity is not a natural result of individual responsibility, though indifference and inaction could be.[36] In his book *Collateral Damage,* Bauman points out that it now is seen as impossible to avoid that some people become victims of this situation. They will fall off the bandwagon; inequality within society will grow. This may be unplanned and unintended, but it is also unavoidable.[37] The only way out of this situation is through solidarity.

> *[…] the task of making individual liberty genuine calls for a strengthening, rather than a weakening, of the bonds of*

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[33] Bauman, *The Individualized Society*, 2.
[34] Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, 74, 75.
[35] Bauman, *The Individualized Society*, 148, 149.
[36] Ibid., 121.
[37] Bauman, *Collateral Damage: Social Inequalities in a Global Age*, 3–5.

interhuman solidarity. The long-term commitment which strong solidarity promotes may seem a mixed blessing – but so does an absence of commitments that renders solidarity as unreliable as it makes it inhibiting."[38]

Community now comes after, not before, the individual's choice. It is a project rather than a reality.[39] Bauman names these communities of choice, "peg communities." Here people seek others who live with the same fears and anxieties and with whom they can resist these fears together. They are communities of like-minded people, coming together around a shared subject, goal or opportunity.[40] Yet, these communities may have a short-term life expectancy, because at a later point in time some or all of the members might choose to become part of another community. Bauman also calls these "cloakroom communities." People come together for a period of time around a specific spectacle. During this time, people will focus their attention on the spectacle and put their other interests – which might divide them rather than unite them – aside.[41] Another community type is the "carnival community" or the "explosive community." They are not just temporary; they can be better described as events which break the monotony of the daily individual life, creating an opportunity to let off steam and to gather new strength for the normal life to which one has to return to after the fun is over.[42] Fairs and festivals are examples of such communities.

Community participation is therefore not only temporary, but it also partly results in a fragmented identity. A person can be part of several different communities at one time. Bauman does not speak of hybrid identities. He sees the fragmentation in community participation more in an episodic form, one after the other. But his description of the 'cloakroom' community builds the foundation for such possibilities as hybrid identities.

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[38] Ibid., 93.
[39] Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, 169.
[40] Bauman, *The Individualized Society*, 152.
[41] Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, 200.
[42] Ibid., 201.

To summarise, Bauman argues that in a globalised world, where every individual is presented with a myriad of choices, identity is not a given anymore, but a task. This is an unavoidable task in a world where norms and values become personal and relationships temporary. Community therefore becomes a project of choice, only for a limited period, and is both fragile and temporary.

This view of community raises several questions. I wonder if in the end Bauman himself also somewhat idealises the 'community before choice,' when he states that in the new communities of choice one of the big losses is solidarity. Was solidarity really a given in the pre-modern communities? Was this solidarity not sometimes also crushing solidarity at the cost of the wellbeing of its members? And what makes community a lived reality? Is the fragility and temporality of community, because of the perceived dichotomy between choice and belonging, the only reality? Can they relate in a more constructive way? What other elements of community contribute to its realisation? Is it possible to give more meaning to the network community, than Bauman does?

In the following paragraph we will look at the way Manuel Castells understands this liquid modernity, and how the liquidity allows for new ways of coming together, maybe not in a community, but surely connected in a "network society."

2.2.2. Manuel Castells (1942)

Castells starts his overall conclusion to the trilogy *The Information Age: Economy, Society, and Culture* with the following poem:

This means to say that scarcely
have we landed into life
than we come as if new-born;
let us not fill our mouths
with so many faltering names,
with so many sad formalities,
with so many pompous letters,
with so much of yours and mine, with so much signing of papers.

I have in mind to confuse things,
unite them, make them new-born,

mix them up, undress them,
until all light in the world
has the oneness of the ocean,
a generous, vast wholeness,
a crackling, living fragrance.

Pablo Neruda, fragment of "Too Many Names," *Estravagario*[43]

And indeed, in this work, Castells seeks to describe today's society in an all-encompassing and holistic way – as a positive description over against the "post-descriptions" meaning post-industrialist, post-modern, post-nationalist, etc.[44] According to Felix Stalder: "Castells applies the logic of networking to his own theory: it is flexible, without fixed hierarchy, with no clear beginning or end, contains not one but many points of view, and is easily reconfigurable, with elements to be dropped or added ("disposable theory"), yet it is still integrated and comprehensive." [45] His methodology follows the 'grounded theory', in which his theoretic understanding derives from, and can always be corrected by the specific case studies which are used. Castells states: the "overarching purpose of its endeavour [is]: to propose some elements of an exploratory, cross-cultural theory of economy and society in the Information Age, *as it specifically refers to the emergence of a new social structure."[46]* His summarising conclusion at the end of the trilogy then is that "our societies are constituted by the interaction between the 'net' and the 'self', between the network society and the power of identity."[47]

According to Castells, in the "network society" there is opposition between two spatial logics: first, the space of flows, which is organised through communication and information technologies, and which influences social practices, the concentration of wealth, power and information; and second the

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[43] Castells, *End of Millennium*, 3:366.
[44] Felix Stalder, *Manuel Castells* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006), 199.
[45] Ibid., 200.
[46] Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, 1:26.
[47] Castells, *End of Millennium*, 3:383.

space of places, where social interaction and institutional organisation exist in a physical locality.[48]

The first, the space of flows, functions and exists globally. It is constituted by the ongoing and global sharing and finding of information. Centre stage in this space of flows are the relationships of production. The ultimate goal is productivity, competitiveness, innovation and flexibility and the accumulation of wealth. To be able to participate in this flow, one has to be educated to know how to get to the information needed, how to acquire new skills and how to enlarge one's capacity for change.[49]

This results in a change in the power structure of a society and in the relationships of power. Power no longer resides with the local elected politician only. The flow of information and its ability to capture the attention of people, their emotions and ideals, makes power available to those who know how to use this medium to mobilise people, not just locally, but also regionally or globally.[50] This power could manifest itself in the economic domain, the political domain and in the cultural domain, where the cultural battles are fought out. Think, for example, of the battles in the USA for the freedom to carry a gun or the battles for or against abortion.

The social movements which have come into existence through information technology have, in their turn, brought an ongoing transformation of the experience of relationships. None of the relationships in family, marriage, and neighbourhood are the same since the movements of feminism, women's struggles, and sexual revolution in the 60s. This is even more true since information technology has been able to share these struggles and values throughout the world. A redefinition of gender relationships and of sexuality is happening in many places around the globe. Because of the information and experience shared, people do not have to follow set models of behaviour anymore. The negotiation and construction of social interaction can now take place based on the actual lived experience of the relationships.[51]

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[48] Castells, *The Power of Identity*, 2:181, 182.
[49] Castells, *End of Millennium*, 3:372.
[50] Ibid., 3:379.
[51] Ibid., 3:379, 380.

Secondly, where the space of flows changes society and its relationships of production, power and experience, the space of places functions locally. Where the dominant processes, which concentrate power, wealth and information are based in the space of flows, most of the human experience and 'meaning making' are still based locally.[52] This can result in a disconnect between the places of power and the 'meaning making' community, and create a yearning for the local and the small-scale. Yet, sometimes, the local is taken up in the global, bringing authentic experience and local reality into the global flows of information, grounding the relationship of experience in a lived reality. So could the particularly local movement "Not in My Back-Yard" give moral and emotional value and meaning to an environmental movement operating globally.

For a specific description of the space of places for the local, Castells seems to find mainly negative examples. In the relationships of production, one needs to be flexible and highly educated to be able to compete in the ongoing change within the information society. The people who are not so highly educated, but rather trained in generic skills which are not reprogrammable, will continue to be confined to the local and ultimately be replaceable and dispensable.[53] This leads to an increased social inequality, since the globalisation of the economy also brings the demise of the welfare society on which those who are local and who have become dispensable depend. This is even more tragic since the work that is available locally becomes more and more occasional, flexible, and temporary.[54] A downward spiral becomes apparent.

Who then is the individual participating in this "network society" and how do the net and the self relate? Castells writes: "In a world of global flows of wealth, power and images, the search for identity, collective or individual, ascribed or constructed, becomes the fundamental source of social meaning."[55] And this search for meaning and identity happens within a culture, or on the basis of cultural values, to the exclusion of other values and social structures.[56] Identity

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[52] Castells, *The Power of Identity*, 2:182.
[53] Castells, *End of Millennium*, 3:372.
[54] Ibid., 3:375.
[55] Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, 1:3.
[56] Ibid., 1:22.

formation is the recognition of self over against the other. This individual choice for a meaningful identity needs to be understood especially in the context of the collective, the social struggle, the social movement and the community. Focussing on the collective, Castells then distinguishes between three forms of identity: legitimising identity, resistance identity, and project identity.[57]

The *legitimising identity* is formed within dominant institutions, rationalising and supporting their structure and their power within the society and over those within or related to these institutions. This supports or creates civil society.[58] The *resistance identity* as a collective identity creates communes or communities of resistance. People understand themselves as opposing the oppressing power, power which is based on values other than their own, and come together in the resistance of the other and support for each other.[59] This may be the most important identity in our society. The *project identity* is created and formed in order to transform society. The origin of the project identity may be a resistance identity, which then develops into an identity with the positive goal of transformation of the situation or society.[60] Castells finds examples of such a project identity in the fundamentalist movements, both Muslim and Christian. Even though they seem to go back to traditional values and culture, their identity is not just based on history. They work with the traditional materials, integrated with the new values and tools, creating a new mix of godly life over against a secular, liberal, uncontrollable and unpredictable society.[61] The goal of this identity is the change of society, the creation of the Muslim 'Ummah', or a society run according to Christian values.

Feminism is another and important example of a project identity. It is not only an identity which creates a movement strongly united around the principles and values of their self-definition, it is also an identity which brings people together with a view to the transformation of the overall pattern of social relationships within society, while at the same time leaving space for diversity.[62] One can be

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[57] Castells, *The Power of Identity*, 2:6–12.
[58] Ibid., 2:8.
[59] Ibid., 2:9.
[60] Ibid., 2:10, 11.
[61] Ibid., 2:21, 29.
[62] Castells, *End of Millennium*, 3:382, 383.

a Christian feminist, a Muslim feminist, an atheist feminist. The methods and the ways in which the identity is worked and lived out may differ according to the different values people have. But the self-definition as feminist, meaning working towards an equal society where gender will not be a source of oppression and inequality, remains such a strong identity "at the source of their existence," that the movement continues to exist and function in a united and transformative way. "The strength of identity-based social movements is their autonomy *vis-à-vis* the institutions of the state, the logic of capital, and the seduction of technology."[63] Where Bauman indicates that within a "network society" identity is not the result of belonging but comes before belonging,[64] Castells shows that identity, especially project identity, is of central importance. It is foundational for the development and existence of social movements and community. Castells defines social movements as the: "purposive collective actions whose outcome, in victory as in defeat, transforms the values and institutions of society."[65]

Castells shows that this identity can also be shaped by local belonging. As an example, he describes the movement of the Zapatistas, an indigenous people group in Mexico fighting for land rights, who were the first to use communication and information technology in their struggle against the new global order. This was played out in Mexico, with the exclusionary modernisation in the economy and the inevitability of capitalism, bringing their local struggle for land to the world stage. Information became a strong 'weapon'. The world was watching.[66] Identity and struggle became the locally rooted project in a global struggle against the capitalist world order using information networks.

Another example is the Al Qaeda movement, which resists the Americanisation of the world and seeks to establish the worldwide Ummah and the purity of the geographically local holy sites. Communication and information technology play an important role here too, connecting people around the world, creating a

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[63] Ibid., 3:383.
[64] Blackshaw, *Key Concepts in Community Studies*, 15.
[65] Castells, *The Power of Identity*, 2:3.
[66] Ibid., 2:75–86.

flexible organisation of highly motivated and committed people who are willing to die for the cause.[67]

And so, comparing social movements one can say that they exist to resist, they appeal to authenticity and principled identity (culture, or values, or control over destiny), they are often reactive and defensive. The use of new communication technology is fundamental to their existence, and they affect "society in the making." Yet, it is only those which have developed into global movements with a unified identity and goal that continue to exist over against opposition.[68]

According to Castells, the Anti-Globalisation movement therefore will not be able to become a social movement with a project identity, even though it exists to resist, uses communication technology, and affects society. The members of the movement have a strong resistance identity against capitalism and globalisation, but they are also part of a great plurality of social struggles around the world with diverse agendas which cannot be brought together into one. In this case, a unified project identity is impossible.[69]

It is interesting to note that Castells in his trilogy focuses much on social movements and writes little about community. When he writes about community it is mainly about resistance and local communities which risk losing their struggle and thus disappearing. People can be mobilised and brought together in a community to resist individualisation and "social atomisation," which may lead to a feeling of belonging and ultimately to meaning based on, for example, the collective memory of the locality, but in the end, in the grand scheme of things, in society and the world, they are just local, and probably belong to the excluded and marginalised.[70] However, combining this with his statement, mentioned in the discussion about the definition of the "network society" that it still is in the "space of places," in the local, where people find meaning, the question can be asked if Castells' comprehensive vision of the world at large as a "network society" does not make him underestimate the importance of the local for the global.

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[67] Ibid., 2:108–144.
[68] Ibid., 2:160–167.
[69] Ibid., 2:155.
[70] Ibid., 2:66.

The example of Cataluña, a nation in the north of Spain without a state, built on an ancient Kingdom, but through the ages having lived with different levels of autonomy or oppression, could be a case in point. The Catalan nationalists define everybody living in Cataluña, speaking the Catalan language (or trying to), and wanting to belong to Cataluña, as Catalan. Castells writes: "I would make the hypothesis that language, and particularly a fully developed language, is a fundamental attribute of self-recognition, and of the establishment of an invisible national boundary less arbitrary than territoriality, and less exclusive than ethnicity."[71] Could Cataluña be an example of a nation in the 'Information Age', which has a cultural/linguistic identity, flexible government institutions and borderless trade? Is it a local identity within the "network society"?

Manuel Castells himself, born in Spain, professor emeritus in California, USA, who taught in many places around the world, and is director of the Internet Interdisciplinary Institute at the Open University of Cataluña (UOC), in Barcelona, could be seen as an example of this.

2.2.3. Four Dimensions

The description of the processes of individualisation and globalisation, as seen through the eyes of Bauman and Castells show their influence on the concepts of locality, identity, belonging and commitment of community. For Bauman, these themes highlight the loss which we are currently experiencing and underscore the worrisome situation of our 'community-less' society and the common cause. For Castells, these themes receive a new meaning in the "network society," in the local context, giving them a global sense and power. In the following paragraphs these four dimensions will be looked at specifically, in conversation with other voices in the field of sociology.

2.2.3.1. Locality

The pre-modern community was mostly situated in a locality, in the place where people lived, worked, interacted, and related. It was in this community that

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[71] Ibid., 2:55.

identity was received, both through the belonging to the local community and through the place, class, or role one had within that community. Dubar, a sociologist from France, describes this as a « forme identitaire, ancienne »

> *Ces formes supposent la croyance dans l'existence de groupements appelés « communautés » considérés comme des systèmes de places et de noms pré assignés aux individus reproduisant à l'identique à travers les générations. Dans cette perspective chaque individu a une appartenance considérée comme principale en tant que membre de sa « communauté » et une position singulière en tant qu'occupant une place au sein de celle-ci.[72]*

> *These forms suppose a belief in the existence of groups that are called "communities" and which are considered to be systems of place and of pre-assigned names resulting in an identity across generations. In this perspective belongs each individual to his or her "community" in what is considered to be a principal belonging, and has a specific position in it. (Translation BvdTL)*

Commitment was no choice; one's only option was to live out one's particular place and duty within the community and family into which one is born. This was taken for granted, shaping the people who were part of it.[73]

First, modernity and its quest for a better society and for freedom of personal choice brought change, leading to the individualism as described by Zygmunt Bauman. Secondly, with the growing mobility and possibilities of travel to faraway places, the local community is introduced to diversity of cultures and people with double, or even multiple, belongings –, or as Pico Iyer calls it, "the global soul."

> *For more and more people, then, the world is coming to resemble a diaspora, filled with new kinds of beings – Gastarbeiters and boat people and marielitos – as well as new kinds of realities: Rwandans in Auckland and Moroccans in Iceland. […] Everywhere is so made*

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[72] Claude Dubar, *La Crise Des Identités: L'interprétation d'une Mutation*, Third Edition. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2007), 4.
[73] Blackshaw, *Key Concepts in Community Studies*, 23.

up of everywhere else – a polycentric anagram – that I hardly notice I'm sitting in a Parisian café just outside Chinatown (in San Francisco), talking to a Mexican-American friend about biculturalism while a Haitian woman stops off to congratulate him on a piece he's just delivered on TV on St. Patrick's Day. "I know all about those Irish nuns," she says, in a thick patois, as we sip our Earl Grey tea near signs that say CITY OF HONG KONG, EMPRESS OF CHINA."[74]

The "global soul" may find her home in multiple places, while these places themselves also become diversified, with influences from multiple places.

With the development of the internet and information technology, the diversity of choice grew at an even faster pace. For Castells, these changes lead to a tension between the space of places (locality) and the space of flows (information and social media), in which the space of places is the weaker space. Power is in the space of flows, where participation in the information network places one in the relationships of production and wealth. These relationships give economic, political, and cultural power. The new community becomes the social movement to which people can choose to belong and commit. They have global impact, yet they also have the power to influence the local experience. In his chapter on the feminist movement he clearly shows how this global movement, has changed the daily life experience of many individuals in the local reality of different cultures and contexts.[75]

Wellman et al. describe the influence of the internet on community. They define community as local, in the neighbourhood, in public and in private, but always as physical proximity. They describe the characteristics of the internet as fast, always available and connected, independent of place, personalised and individual, connecting individuals with other individuals and with groups of their choice. Does the internet *decrease* community, isolating individuals? Does it *transform* community, through increased communication with those far away – family, friends – but at the cost of neighbourhood communities? Does it

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[74] Pico Iyer, *The Global Soul: Jet Lag, Shopping Malls, and the Search for Home*, First Edition. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), 10–11.
[75] Castells, *The Power of Identity*, vol. 2, chap. 4.

supplement community, maintaining existing social contacts through the internet, instead of the traditional communication options of telephone and face-to-face contact? The internet has clearly changed community, from a local community into a community of "networked individualism," in which an individual can belong both to local and global communities at the same time. "...in a person's 'glocalised' world, extensive local involvements fit together with far-flung communities of friendship, kinship and shared interest."[76] Should we see such a "glocalised" community as a new space of place?

Yet, these changes towards growing diversity for the local, as influenced by the global, also result in a revival of local identities.[77] In an insecure world, where one has the task to form one's own identity, as explained by Bauman, and where the choices become many through globalisation and the information technology, it is easy to get lost and to long for the security of the known and the being known, of the local. When the geo-social boundaries of a community become blurred or undermined, the importance of a "symbolic expression" of community and community boundaries becomes more important. According to Cohen, this can happen through "boundary marking rituals" such as fairs, fiestas, or some other local event, marking locality, or ethnicity, or occupation, or some other significant aspect of local identity.[78]

Wellman et al. state that:

> *[...] even as the world goes wireless, the persistence of tangible interests, such as neighbourly get-togethers or local intruders, will keep the local important. [...]E-citizenship will be both local and global.* [79]

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[76] Barry Wellman et al., "The Social Affordances of the Internet for Networked Individualism," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 8, no. 3 (June 23, 2006)..http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/enhanced/doi/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2003.tb00216.x/. Accessed 29/07/2014.
[77] Giddens, "Globalisation."
[78]Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community*, 50–53.
[79] Wellman et al., "The Social Affordances of the Internet for Networked Individualism."

And as Castells also pointed out, human experience and 'meaning making' are still locally oriented. It is the local community, therefore, that can bring authenticity and rootedness to the global and social movements.[80]

To summarise, we can say that individualism and globalisation, choice and social movements have brought the global into the local and changed the local experience of community. The individual now can choose to belong to local and global communities and several combinations of these at the same time. This does not necessarily mean the demise of the local community, since 'meaning making' and relational needs are often still experienced there. Local concerns still draw people together, but without the predesigned expectations of pre-modern communities, since individual choice now comes before identity, belonging, and commitment to a community.

2.2.3.2. Identification

Am I because I belong, or because I think, or because I choose? The changes in the experience of community also change the perception of personal identity. Belonging to a place or group no longer necessarily results in a clear identity. The multiple possibilities of different communities that offer themselves to the one individual make choice the start of belonging and identity into something negotiable and to be developed. And as Bauman says, choice is no longer a choice, and identity no longer a given but a task.

This choice, these choices, are not made in a vacuum and are not necessarily a purely solitary or ego-centric exercise. Choices are always made in a context and in relation to others. And this context and the relationships will be wider than locally available. Rob Krøvel suggests that the terms "roots" and "feet" can be used to describe the elements of choice within the identity formation process. The "roots" are the elements individuals use to identify themselves with place, heritage, and family. The "feet" point to that part of identity that is formed

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[80] Castells, *The Power of Identity*, 2:182.

through the meeting of others as one encounters difference. This may come through travel, and through international meeting places.[81]

According to Claude Dubar, these choices are made in relation to the personal life experience and history (biography), and to others (the relational). In his analysis, this results in four possible types of identity, where the emphasis is both on a scale of "self" to "other," and on a scale of the "relational" to the "biographical," and any combination of these. [82]

Forms of Identity according to Claude Dubar

Relational

Reflexive Self
Subjective choice, engagement by personal passion

Socialised Self
By taking on roles, which can be multiple. The I becomes plural

For Self   **For Other**

Narrated Self
Quest for authenticity, the ethical I giving meaning to total existence

Cultural Self
Belonging to a local group and it's inherited culture

Biographical

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[81] Roy Krøvel, "New Media and Identity among Fans of a Norwegian Football Club," *First Monday* 17, no. 5 (May 7, 2012). https://oda-hioa.archive.knowledgearc.net/handle/10642/1405. Accessed 19/08/2020.

[82] Diagram created by Berdine van den Toren-Lekkerkerker, based on: Dubar, *La Crise Des Identités: L'interprétation d'une Mutation*, 54–56.

For example, an identity chosen with an emphasis on self and biography becomes one in which the personal life experience plays an important role in the quest for authenticity and 'meaning making' and in the personal ethical living out of that identity. When the emphasis is on the other and on the relational it is concerned with social role, commitment, and expectations. It is important to note that each of these emphases of identity can exist concurrently in the same person, creating a hybrid identity. For example, I can introduce myself to someone else by my first name Berdine (self-relational), by my family name van den Toren-Lekkerkerker (other-biography), by my role name at work Mrs. Van den Toren-Lekkerkerker, consultant in mission education and part of the CMS community (other-relational), or as Berdine, daughter of Wim and Annie from Molenaarsgraaf (self-biography).

Another specific form of hybrid identity is developed in the situation of a transnational identity. Migrants, in most cases, will not abandon their homeland identity on arrival in the host country. Because of the links that migrants maintain with their home countries, and the links they have in their host country, their identity will be grounded both in their country of origin and in their host country, which will make this identity fluid and hybrid.[83] And this hybridity will have consequences for the way in which the person experiences life in the host country as well as for the life and ethical choices she will make.

As a result of the importance of choice in the task of identity formation, Bauman believes that our relationships become less intense. He speaks of "weak ties," since they are dependent on our choice and on the duration of that choice. There can be no expectancy of durability and therefore of security.[84] Andrew Root links these changes in the intensity and durability of our relationships to the possibility of a hybrid identity when he writes:

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[83] Shirlena Huang, Peggy Teo, and Brenda S.A. Yeoh, "Diasporic Subjects and Identity Negotiations: Women in and from Asia," *Women's Studies International Forum* 3, no. 4 (2000): 395.
[84] Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, 23–25.

As time and space have radically sped up, they have transformed the core building blocks of identity from work to consumption, from love to intimacy. And, if this is true, then it is absurd to assume that your identity is closed, that you ever settle on a single identity.[85]

And later he states that people are no longer looking for a "single self-definition" but for a liquefied identity.[86]

It is for this reason that Dubar, in agreement with Bauman, chooses to speak of "identification" instead of identity. This indicates an ongoing movement and is a verb rather than a noun. [87] It is a process in time and in conversation with the person's ever-changing context and relationships.

To explain the term "identification" Dubar writes:

Dès lors que celui-ci ne se définit plus comme membre d'une 'communauté,' représenté par ses chefs 'naturels', il faut qu'il puisse se définir (ou se redéfinir) autrement et trouver en lui-même un principe de 'représentation' de lui-même qu'il puisse partager avec d'autres et qui légitime l'élection de ses représentants. [88]

The moment that this person does not define her- or himself as a member of a 'community' any more, represented by its 'natural' leaders, this person has to define (or redefine) her- or himself differently and find a way of self-'representation' that can be shared with others and that legitimates the choice of representatives for the self. (Translation BvdTL)

Since a person can no longer naturally identify with a given community and the people representing it, the person needs to define, or redefine, herself. She herself needs to choose the principles for redefining self in such a way that she can continue to relate to others. A person can only find such a principle of representation – a model with which to identify – if she is convinced personally

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[85] Andrew Root, "Identity in a Digital Age," *Word & World* 30, no. 3 (2010): 244.
[86] Ibid., 245.
[87] Dubar, *La Crise Des Identités: L'interprétation d'une Mutation*, 3.
[88] Ibid., 160.

that this representation is in accordance with her values and convictions, and that she is able to defend this representation to others and live it out in her own life. The question to be asked then is on what basis, for which reasons, can a person choose a representation? And here again, Dubar emphasises that such a choice can only be made within a society. It depends on and is shaped by our biography and relationships, and further, it cannot avoid being linked with things like political choice, work, one's future, family, or one's ethical choices and commitments.[89]

Where Bauman worries about the consequences of individualism for community, about a loss of norms in a society of endless choice and therefore also about a loss of a common cause and solidarity, Dubar seems less pessimistic. For him, the changes do not indicate the loss of community but instead a change in it. From a given community without choice we now see communities of choice. And this choice in favour of community brings with it the commitment of the individual to a common cause. Dubar agrees with Bauman that these choices of identification and commitment often grow through an experience of crisis, but he sees this crisis more in terms of finding freedom and emancipation. [90] Bauman, on the other hand, describes the crisis as one in which some will indeed find freedom, but others will lose, becoming collateral damage in a dangerous society with growing inequality. It is for this reason that he pleads for a strengthening of "the bonds of interhuman solidarity," against the odds of all the individualising dynamics that make such a solidarity nearly impossible.

> The long-term commitment which strong solidarity promotes may
> seem a mixed blessing – but so does an absence of commitments
> that renders solidarity as unreliable as it makes uninhibiting.[91]

As individual identification becomes the norm and basis for an individual's choice to belong to a community, it has important consequences for the identity of that community. It will most likely result in a diverse way of understanding a community's identity. When people become part of the community because of

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[89] Ibid., 161.
[90] Ibid., 217.
[91] Bauman, *Collateral Damage: Social Inequalities in a Global Age*, 93.

an individual choice, and when they remain part of it based on individually chosen values and convictions, there will be diversity within that community. Not only will there be a difference in priority and emphases on certain values, each person will also experience the community in a different way, growing out of her personal framework and life experience. She will therefore represent the community in a (more or less) different way within the wider society. Castell's example of the feminist movement shows clearly how one movement can carry within it a great diversity. What brings women to the movement is their self-identification as social actors for freedom and equality for women. As such the movement is an important transforming factor in women's consciousness, even though they do not have an articulate feminist ideology. Feminism can have many different faces.[92]

The diversity of which we speak cannot be without boundaries, for if there are no boundaries there is no community, and therefore there will be no belonging. A community's self is always found in relation to others who are different.[93] This also becomes clear in the three different types of community identity described by Castells (see description above). A community seeks to defend itself in the encounter with the other, or it wants to resist the other, or it even desires to transform the other. Castells uses the example of the Cataluña language as such a boundary marking tool in an extremely diverse community. He sees the language as an important element for self-recognition and the establishment of a boundary for the Catalan people. People recognise themselves and each other, diverse as they are, within the wider Spanish society.[94] In the case of the feminist movement, the boundary marker might be the individual's commitment to social action on behalf of women.

Having described identity as a process of identification because of personal choice, it is important to also take the notion of "reflexive modernity" into account, as described by Beck and Beck-Gernsheim. They suggest that since we, in our current society and culture, realise that we cannot have an objective distance to our surroundings but that instead we form part of it, our choices are

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[92] Castells, *The Power of Identity*, 2:247.
[93] Blackshaw, *Key Concepts in Community Studies*, 100.
[94] Castells, *The Power of Identity*, 2:55.

also less a result of an objective process of reflection than a reaction of "reflex." In a world of flows, where the individual must choose fast and make quick decisions, there is neither the time nor the distance to make choices on the basis of objective and linear reflection. Beck changes the "I think therefore I am" into "I am I."[95] One of the questions raised by this is what influences affect the "reflexive" choices made by individuals. What makes the 'I' 'I'? Are they the same as those described by Dubar?[96]

To summarise, in our current (Western) society, individual identity is based on personal choice, in relation to one's personal biography and relationships. This individual identity is lived out in public and through the personal choice to belong to specific communities and/or movements, both locally and globally. The basis for this is a felt agreement with the members, values, and projects of that community. This lived experience then will impact and shape the individual, while the individual, with his personal values and emphases, will also impact the community. There is, therefore, an ongoing interaction and interdependence between the individual and the community, making identity – both personal and communal – a flexible and ongoing movement of identification.[97]

2.2.3.3. Belonging

In a globalising and individualising world, where belonging is based on choice and on the ongoing process of identification, where do we belong? Do we belong locally or globally, in the real world, or in the virtual world? Is it possible to virtually belong? In what ways does belonging still play a role in the community experience? Blackshaw states that in the experience of community,

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[95] Scott Lash, "Individualization in a Non-Linear Mode," in *Individualization*, by Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim (London: SAGE Publications, 2001), ix.
[96] Dubar's use of "identité reflexive" is different from Beck's use of the word "reflexive." For Dubar it points to the recognition of the individual to be part of a greater whole, without the possibility to distance oneself to one's context, and therefore finding one's identity also through other's perception and recognition of oneself (reflection). Beck also places the reflexive identity within the context of subjectivity as a consequence of being part of a context, but emphasizes the reflexive quality of decisions and choices made as related to 'reflex'.
[97] Lash, "Individualization in a Non-Linear Mode," ix.

the defining factor is not the form or instrument, but the relationships themselves, their quality and experience.[98] And these relationships can be given in a person's family but can also be made by choice.

The question is how this plays out in a world of networks, where, according to Castells, through the communication and information revolution, relationships and power become more and more depersonalised, existing in the flows of information and communication.[99] While community belonging will develop differently than through kinship and blood ties, the internet does not have to do away with community and the experience of belonging. Multiple ways of relating to each other are now possible. In a world where the local and the global meet and interact, where the individual choice becomes the defining factor, we see a "networked individualism" develop. The person becomes the "portal," finding "personal communities" which give support, sociability, friendship, information, and a sense of belonging to each person individually. And these "personal communities" can be found locally – with or without the help of internet – or globally, or both.[100] In her introduction to the book *Exploring Religious Community Online: We are One in the Network,* Heidi Campbell relates her experience of people who were disappointed, or felt disconnected, with their local religious community, yet found friendship, understanding, support and connection in religious communities through the internet. She writes: "This is the possibility of being together alone or being alone together."[101] The experience of belonging may not be a given in such internet mediated communities, yet, it never has been. Pre-modern communities or strong kinship communities also had members who felt that they were different, and therefore had an ambivalent experience of belonging.

If belonging can be described as the experience of quality relationships, of sharing values and practices in common, then it is this sense of commonality that also distinguishes us from others. Our community relationships also involve

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[98] Blackshaw, *Key Concepts in Community Studies*, 110.
[99] Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, 1:507.
[100] Wellman et al., "The Social Affordances of the Internet for Networked Individualism."
[101] Heidi Campbell, *Exploring Religious Community Online: We Are One in the Network* (New York: P. Lang, 2005), xvii.

boundaries.[102] We see this clearly in the three types of community identity identified by Castells. Each type stands in a particular relationship to the other communities, legitimising one's own choices and values, seeking to defend one's place and position in a hostile environment, or trying to transform the other.[103] As a result, there is a boundary between those who choose to belong to such a community, on the basis of the group's values and aims, and those who don't. And this boundary can be experienced as a strong marker of belonging for those in the community.

Next to an experience of commonality and of boundary, the performance of identity within a community brings an experience of belonging. The choice to act out the common values, shaping one's life according to the community culture, strengthens the experience of bonding and belonging. According to Dubar, this was especially strong in the Protestant Calvinistic culture of the Puritans, where the question of one's inner beliefs was not of ultimate importance, but how one authentically lived out these beliefs. This created a culture of entrepreneurial capitalism.

> *Chacun se définit ici par ce qu'il fait, ce qu'il réalise et non par son idéal intérieur. Elle s'organise autour d'un plan de vie, d'une vocation qui s'incarne dans des projets, professionnels et autres. Elle possède comme enjeu 'l'unité narrative d'une vie' et non la cohérence réflexive d'une intimité.[104]*

> *Each person defines her- or himself by what one does, what one has realised and not by one's personal ideal. This is organised around a plan of life, a vocation embedded in all projects, both professional and other. This is shaped in a 'unified narrative of a life' and not in a coherent self-reflecting intimacy. (Translation BvdTL)*

It is in relation to this identity performance that Cohen stresses the importance of the "symbolic expression" of community. Symbols and rituals always have a

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[102] Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community*, 12.
[103] Castells, *The Power of Identity*, 2:6–12.
[104] Dubar, *La Crise Des Identités: L'interprétation d'une Mutation*, 36.

communal character which is different from personal habits. They carry meaning, but they also allow people to invest meaning in them.[105] Because they are "imprecise," there is space for individuality and commonality. The commonality draws people together. They experience the known, the recognisable, but they will also invest their personal experience and interpretation of meaning into it.[106] Belonging and individuality are here not in opposition to each other but supplement each other. Unity and diversity can go together.

Symbols and rituals can also be an expression of boundaries. They express the distinctness of this community in relation to the other(s).[107] In some ways, they even protect the distinctiveness of the community by their capacity to obscure the communal realities for those on the outside, those who have no understanding of the meaning and practice of the symbols and rituals. At the same time, they strengthen the experience of belonging for those on the inside, those who participate in the symbolic expression of the community. The outsiders will be unable to participate and so also be unable to subvert or change this 'meaning making' exercise.[108]

To summarise, the diversity of the experience and meaning of belonging in an individualised and globalised world, the three dimensions of belonging as described by Soon and Kluver can be used. Their research delves into the relationship between people's experience of "collectiveness" in their self-expression through social activism as experienced in Singapore:

- the presence of a shared consciousness, an agreement on values, motives, and goals, a shared religious or ethnic background or nationality,
- the expression or performance of identity and belonging through social signifiers, such as cultural practices, symbols and rituals, social behaviour,

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[105] Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community*, 117.
[106] Ibid., 21.
[107] Ibid., 58.
[108] Ibid., 91.

- the presence of a common other or adversary.[109]

And as we have seen earlier, this experience of belonging does not have to be limited to one single community. Fluid identities will find more than one community to which they choose to belong, both concurrently and consecutively in time, and locally and globally. Another important qualifier is given by Cohen, when he writes:

> [...] whether or not its structural boundaries remain intact, the reality of community lies in its members' perception of the vitality of its culture. People construct community symbolically, making it a resource and repository of meaning, and a referent of their identity.[110]

Belonging is an experience of the community members. It can be discovered in the relationships, in shared values and shared practices, but the authenticity of belonging has its centre in the experience of the individual.

2.2.3.4. Commitment

As we have seen in the paragraphs on identity and belonging, community can only be developed based on a collective identity that is symbolically meaningful to the individual.[111] And with identity and belonging as flexible entities, the question can be asked if community means more than just a warm fuzzy feeling of belonging for some at some point in time. Anthony Cohen suggests that identity and symbols or rituals of meaning are the foundation of community, drawing people into commitment to a meaning generating project and so to a deep sense of belonging.[112] Gerard Delanty on the other hand counters that Cohen puts too much emphasis on community as an affirmed reality, recognised by symbols and rituals. Delanty believes that a person belongs to community

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[109] Carol Soon and Randy Kluver, "Uniting Political Bloggers in Diversity: Collective Identity and Web Activism," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 19, no. 3 (April 1, 2014): 503.
[110] Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community*, 118.
[111] Soon and Kluver, "Uniting Political Bloggers in Diversity," 502.
[112] Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community*, 19–21.

through the choice of participation only, and not through meaning and morality, since that would not allow for the diversity of meanings given to the community by different people. Meaning and moral choices are seen as forces that stifle dissent. Participation in an ongoing 'meaning making' conversation becomes a community imagining and shaping commitment, with a possible transformative effect both on the community itself and on the society in which it operates.[113]This is a commitment to a specific community or social movement and to the values and aims of that particular community.

An important question remains: in a world of "Liquid Modernity" can we build a society for all? Or will our world only consist of many different communities and movements, sometimes rubbing shoulders with each other, sometimes opposing each other, sometimes supporting each other, but always separate? And what about those people who have not been able to connect to a community, or who have been excluded from the community?

Bauman, in his evaluation, sees many problems. Our world of "Liquid Modernity" is a dangerous world. In the quest for freedom of choice, very little is durable, both in our personal life and in the life of the communities to which we have chosen to belong.[114] And these chosen communities may well cross boundaries of locality, connecting us to people in far-flung places. The more we are invested in our personal communities, and as a result, detached from our local neighbourhood and communities, the more we will need surveillance. This becomes clear when one drives through urban neighbourhoods, where walls, closed doors and sometimes even security guards protect the personal space.[115] This lack of durability in relationships and the lack of physical connectedness and belonging result in an experience of fragility and insecurity. Can there still be a common cause? For Bauman, solidarity is the only way out.[116]

Solidarity, however, may not be easy to find or develop. In a fast-moving world, where durability is rare, and where long-term commitment and dedication seem an anachronism. One needs to work hard to keep up, to stay with the flow, to

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[113] Delanty, *Community*, 155.
[114] Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, 161.
[115] Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Love* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003), 97.
[116] Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, 92, 93.

not fall off the bandwagon. As a result, personal desire and gratification become more important and prominent.[117] And the difference between desire and love is, that desire wants to use the desired, the other, for the sake of self. Love, on the other hand, values the other, wishes to reinforce the other especially in her 'otherness'. Desire is self-centred. Love seeks solidarity with the other.[118]

Is there place for love and solidarity in this world? For Dubar, the answer is yes, since he believes that even in an individualised world of choice, we still find our identity and meaning both in connection with ourselves and with other, both in one's personal history and in one's relationships. And with identity and meaning come belonging and commitment. The 'I' cannot live without the other, the 'we.'[119] We may live in a world in crisis now, moving from one system of community to another, but this crisis will lead to both freedom and individuality, as well as to a renewed openness to and responsibility for the other.[120] Is it fair to say that Castells gives many examples of this in his description of the different social movements and communities which work within society, that are based on shared values and a shared purpose for the good of the other, and which relate to each other through "flows" and "nodes" within the "network society"? He uses the word "interconnected."[121] There is an interconnectedness which involves both the individual with other individuals, the individual and her community, and the different communities with each other.

Still, it is fair to conclude that in the field of sociology there is not a unified understanding of community, but rather a questioning of the reality of community, and a shared struggle to come to a positive, creative alternative. In the context of a globalised world with a plurality of beliefs and values and understandings of our 'reality', the question is still out, whether community is possible and what it then would look like. Does it provide us with identity, roots, and a sense of belonging? Or is it a dangerous concept which oppresses diversity, the individual's reflection, and freedom of choice?

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[117] Bauman, *The Individualized Society*, 159.
[118] Ibid., 164, 165.
[119] Dubar, *La Crise Des Identités: L'interprétation d'une Mutation*, 222.
[120] Ibid., 221.
[121] Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, 1:501.

2.2.4. Summarising the Social Context

As both Bauman and Dubar indicated, we are in a time of crisis, a time in which we find a new understanding of self, of other, and of us. We have to leave behind the known of the pre-modern community, with its security of identity, role and relationship. It is unfruitful to look back and idealise the past, trying to shape the current by the known of the "old time utopia," as Bauman called it. And so, we live in a world with unlimited choice, in which we have no choice but to create our own identity and decide where we want to belong. For some this is a world of opportunity and adventure. For others, it is a world of danger, where it is hard to keep up, and where relationships seem fragile.

Crisis involves change which is ongoing, the outcome still open. What will the world look like? Who will I be? Where will I belong? How will I relate? Each of the four dimensions of community – locality, identification, belonging, and commitment – have become contested and fluid realities in the crucible of individual choice and depersonalising globalisation.

I believe there are important questions to ask in this research. Why do people choose to become part of the CMS community? What influences play a role in this decision? Are they influenced by our CMS biography and relationships? Are they made consciously after reflection, or more reflexively and intuitively? Pete Ward, whose book *Liquid Church* can be found on several bookshelves within CMS, speaks about a "network-based" church, a church that has to grow organically and respond to the needs of the people, a church firmly based within and responding to the consumer culture.[122] This "liquid church," in order to become a reality, must focus on the quality of relationships, mediated through communication and rooted in a "participation in Christ." He writes:

> *This is a mystical and spiritual reality that is based on the working of the Holy Spirit touching us and renewing us. Liquid church is not a program or a mission project; it is a community rooted in the fellowship of the Holy Trinity.[123]*

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[122] Pete Ward, *Liquid Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2013), 56.
[123] Ibid., 98.

If this is an inspiration for the CMS community, what practices will play a role? And to what do they lead? What are the outcomes? Is it possible for an organisation, such as CMS, to grow organically, and become "liquid" with a focus on relationships rather than projects? How would this influence the mission of the community?[124]

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[124] For both Ward and Bauman is the concept of 'liquidity' central to their argument. Castells speaks of change, flows, and transformation. Yet, their understanding of the concept as a lived reality in society (and church) is quite different. Bauman describes the liquid modernity as a: "life in fragility, temporariness, vulnerability and inclination to constant change." Liquid modernity seems to be an unavoidable 'fate,' in which "…change is *the only* permanence, and uncertainty *the only* certainty." Bauman evaluates this 'fate' as "the disintegration of the social network, the falling apart of effective agencies of collective action." Men and women are yearning for relationships, but also "despairing at being abandoned to their own wits and feeling easily disposable, yearning for the security of togetherness and for a helping hand to count on in a moment of trouble, and so desperate to 'relate'; yet wary of the state of 'being related" and particularly of being related 'for good', not to mention forever." Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, viii, 14; Bauman, *Liquid Love*, viii. Castells also describes society as being in a process of constant change. But for Castells, this ongoing change is less an unavoidable fate as a dynamic process in which people participate (in flows of information) and have power to influence towards a desired transformation. He describes several social movements as examples and case studies. Stalder describes Castells' theory as a complex system: "the continuous self-(re)creation and transformation of a network as a function of internal processes, influenced but not determined by input from the environment." Stalder, *Manuel Castells*, 175. Society is ultimately, according to Castells, not determined by environment driven and ongoing processes of change, even though they do have an important influence. People participating in social movements have a choice and a certain power. Yet, Castells also notes that participation in the flows of information and power depends on people's capacity to access and keep up with the flow of information and the related power. And it will be mainly the poor how will lack this capacity and will therefore also lack power. Castells, *End of Millennium*, 3:372. Ward on the other hand describes 'liquidity' (existing in constant change and experienced as an ambiguous reality with multiple meanings) as a necessary characteristic and choice of the church in a liquid society in order to remain an "effective agent for mission in the culture." He argues that God reveals God's self, and is actively engaged in, the liquid life in society and in the church. Church, therefore, responding to and acting in this liquid society should not understand itself as an institution with set structures and meetings, but as "a series of relationships and communications." He uses the term "network" and states that communicating Christ happens "through informal fellowship" which creates "connections, groupings, and relationships." "These can be seen as a kind of network where the Holy Spirit is at work creating Church." While Ward is deeply influenced by Bauman's sociological description of liquid modernity, he also admits that he has to read Bauman "against the grain." He also differs from Castells in his use of the term "network," in the understanding that the

Since CMS is a mission community, the changing context in which its mission finds its place also has important consequences for the current shape of the community. It must come to grips with its past, embedded in the colonial era, and find new ways of relating to its members around the world. CMS Britain has chosen to focus on a redefinition of these relationships and a renewed vision for its mission by establishing itself as a community. Yet, here too, questions need to be asked. Is this a realistic approach in an individualistic society and a globalising world? What is the lived experience as a result of these changes? And how does this lived experience relate to the theology of the community and its members?

2.3. Community and Mission

Connecting mission and community, Stephen Bevans states that where mission is at the heart of who God is, community is central to that mission. The Triune God exists in relationship,[125] drawing humanity, created in God's image, into that community. The focus of the Old Testament is on Israel, a community chosen by God to be a holy nation, a light and blessing to all nations. The language of 'covenant' is used (Genesis 12 and Isaiah 49:6). In the New Testament, at Pentecost God's people became a community (koinonia) of believers who through the Holy Spirit became part of God's mission (Acts 2:41-47). Both covenant and koinonia are described as a gift of God, originating in God's choice and grace (Genesis 12 and Philippians 1:3-7). From the start this community develops into a community with a worldwide focus, the body of Christ in this world.[126]

"network" is not only a human choice, movement, and endeavour but also a God given reality in which a person is invited to participate. And this is a theological choice, based on his understanding of God's acting presence and the work of the Holy Spirit in this world of liquid modernity. Ward, *Liquid Church*, 1–3; Pete Ward, *Liquid Ecclesiology: The Gospel and the Church* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 9, 11.

[125] Bevans, "The Mission Has a Church, Perspectives of a Roman Catholic Theologian."

[126] Sebastian and Kirsteen Kim, describe how Christianity as a world religion started through the testimony of daily life of Christian traders, slaves, migrants, families and communities in the society, rather than through the conscious effort of preachers and evangelists. Sebastian

Non-Western theology has reminded the church that the emphasis is not necessarily and foremost on the individual and his or her relationship with God, as has been a Western emphasis. N.E. Omeire writes:

> To be saved, then, is to be baptized by the Spirit into his body (1 Corinthians 12:13): the church is no appendix to the Gospel nor a merely human association, nor a purely instrumental means of encouraging spiritual growth. It is fundamental to the identity of believers – what they have become by divine act, and now are. Thus, while sin destroys relationships and tends towards the disintegration of society, the good news is of community restored in Christ.[127]

This emphasis on community and relationships as an integral part of God's presence and action in the world is expressed by Lesslie Newbigin in his book *The Household of God*, where he writes:

> What our Lord left behind Him was not a book, nor a creed, nor a system of thought, nor a rule of life, but a visible community [...] He committed the entire work of salvation to that community.[128]

It is also reflected in the language of covenant as it is used prominently in the Cape Town Commitment from the Third Lausanne Congress in 2010.[129] Rather than expressing the confession of faith in statements of beliefs (propositional), they are presented in the language of love (relational and communal), which is then related to commitment and praxis.

Therefore, following Omeire and Newbigin, it is impossible for the church to have its central focus on the church as institution and its buildings. Neither can the church see her calling as 'building' or 'extending' the Kingdom of God. The

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C. H. Kim and Kirsteen Kim, *Christianity as a World Religion: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 11.
[127] Nnamdi E. Omeire, "Community," ed. John Corry, *Dictionary of Mission Theology: Evangelical Foundations* (Nottingham: IVP, 2007), 66.
[128] Lesslie Newbigin, *The Household of God.* (London: Paternoster Press, 1998), 24.
[129] *The Cape Town Commitment: A Confession of Faith and a Call to Action / Third Lausanne Congress.* (The Lausanne Movement, 2010).

reality is that the church is invited to receive, and to enter into, the Kingdom of God. This is also the way Jesus talks about the Kingdom of God when He tells the Kingdom parables (for example Matthew 20:1-16; 22:1-14; 25). And, as in the Cape Town Commitment, the church worldwide, rather than being ruled by a truth oriented language and being defined by boundaries of belonging and exclusion, uses the language of love that binds the worldwide Christian community together and draws it into action. Mission then moves from recruitment of members to invitation into the community, a community that actively responds to God's reign, grace, and love.[130]

This community is worldwide yet worked out in specific local contexts and places. But this is not without tension because of the diversity within the worldwide mission community – diversity in culture, in spirituality, and in access to material resources.

Historically, there has been an understanding that the churches in the West had a leading role in planting and educating churches in the Global South. Within the worldwide Christian community, the churches in the West were seen as the 'mother church' (related to colonial rule). From the late 20th century, with the growth of the church in the Majority World and a growing understanding of the unequal power relations in a post-colonial world, churches are considered equal partners in the mission of God. An early example of this change is the Evangelical Community of Apostolic Action (CEVAA), which was created in 1971 in Paris as a result of the merger of churches around the world related to the former Paris Evangelical Missionary Society. Within the CEVAA, the churches, which came from both the global north and south, committed themselves to a relationship of equality and solidarity.[131] This project has met several challenges. First, it was perceived as becoming too 'impersonal' and so losing contact with its members and especially the younger generation. Secondly, the cultural and theological diversity created disagreement on strategy and focus. Thirdly, the contribution

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[130] Darrell L. Guder, *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1998), 97.
[131] See www.cevaa.org

of material resources to the project was unequal and therefore created tensions around questions of control and strategy.[132]

This example points out that the concept of worldwide community cannot be romanticised. Yet, does it mean that it is an impossible ideal? More attempts in the same direction are being made, such as the "interchange" policy in CMS[133], and the development of mission networks that aim at the sharing of vision and resources.[134] And the United Society Partners in the Gospel (USPG), another mission organisation within the Anglican Communion, which started in 1701 as the "Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts," introduces the description of its history on their website with a quote from their General Secretary Duncan Dormor: "USPG's vocation today involves wrestling with our history and journeying towards redemption where that is possible."[135] This they hope to achieve through their three strategic aims: "rethinking mission, energising church and community and championing justice."[136]

These attempts emphasise the necessity of ongoing reflection on the concept of the worldwide mission community, in order to grow in understanding of the self, of the other, and of what it means to be a missional community in a globalised world and in a local context. This global and local understanding is essential in four areas. First, if the understanding, knowing and worship of God are foundational for our Christian commitment, then the diversity of the worldwide understanding of God in the church worldwide is necessary. The book of Revelation paints us the picture of how this is only complete when all peoples and nations and languages come together praising the Lamb, each in their specific local identity, yet together in unity – a great crowd (Revelations 7 and 21). Andrew Walls writes:

> *The apostolic model of the church combines different and diverse systems of converted life. Each system is necessary, not only for its*

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[132] "Report of the CEVAA, CWM, and UEM Joint-Consultation. Wuppertal, Germany, 1-6 February 2000," *International Review of Mission* LXXXIX, no. 353 (2000): 217–228.

[133] See chapter 3.

[134] See for example Faith2Share network: http://www.faith2share.net

[135] https://www.uspg.org.uk/about/history/ Accessed 22/04/2020.

[136] https://www.uspg.org.uk/about/aboutuspg/ Accessed 22/04/2020.

own sake, but for the other's. [...] Only so would the full stature of Christ be reached; for that full stature must reflect a complete humanity, of which all the diverse segments even when converted, offer but partial views.[137]

Secondly, community in all its diversity is important for identity formation. Identity cannot be formed in isolation. Through the encounter of the other we recognise ourselves. And in this dialogue between self and other we grow in understanding of truth. Daniel Hardy, writing about the Anglican Church in her quest for self-understanding and mission, compares this growing in truth through encounter with the other with a marriage relationship, where partners "find themselves through going beyond themselves," drawing and redrawing boundaries. "What emerges in the intensity of meaning between them is something more true and good, anticipating a fullness of the possibility of human relationships." [138] This understanding finds depth and safety in the local and depth and a wider understanding in the global. John V. Taylor connects this understanding of the necessity of diversity in the encounter of each other in the church worldwide with the (trans)formation of the community towards "the likeness of Christ:"

> *Partnership between churches in mission means also an apostolic concern from one to the other to help one another to present the likeness of Christ more deeply; being in travail for one another until we all are formed in the shape of Christ.*[139]

Thirdly, a community's identity and formation are connected to the mission of that community. When local groups understand that they are not only small entities in themselves and for themselves but part of a wider community, they

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[137] Andrew F. Walls, "Evangelical and Ecumenical: The Rise and Fall of the Early Church Model," in *Evangelical, Ecumenical, and Anabaptist Missiologies in Conversation: Essays in Honor of Wilbert R. Shenk*, ed. Krabill, James R., Sawatsky, Walter, and Van Engen, Charles E. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006), 34.
[138] Daniel W. Hardy, *Finding the Church: The Dynamic Truth of Anglicanism* (London: SCM, 2001), 239.
[139] John V. Taylor, *The Uncancelled Mandate: Four Bible Studies on Christian Mission for the Approaching Millennium* (London: Church House Publishing, 1998), 10.

will be kept from inward looking tendencies and from narrow mindedness. Where the worldwide community becomes realised locally, those entities become inspired and energised by the worldwide community. Tormod Engelsviken, in his reflection on the church as a community in a globalised world, states that the church needs to recognise its glocal character, since it is active both at the local and the global level. He calls for a double vision, a vision for both the local and the global.[140]

And fourthly, both the local and the worldwide are particular and necessary elements of the Christian community in the world. As communities of grace, they provide welcome and openness, a home to belong to, and a place of (trans)formation that is specific and particular in each context. Harald Hegstad, also speaking about the church as a community sent into the world, links this with the church as being "gathered in the name of Jesus," in her preaching, and in the celebration of the sacraments, as a local community and as a worldwide fellowship. She is a sign of the Kingdom of God. [141]

While many members of the mission community will readily agree with this, the practice is much harder. In a worldwide mission community, with so much diversity in culture, values and resources, conversation can be difficult, and questions will rise about the boundaries of the conversation, the core of the community identity and the possibility and source of unity.

Other questions need to be asked around the globality and locality of the community. What difference does it make for a member to be part of a worldwide community when this member will never be able to physically meet with the other members of the community who are living in other parts of the world? This question also touches on the unequal opportunities of participation in the worldwide network, especially related to the availability of resources and access to power, information, and communication networks.

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[140] Tormod Engelsviken, "The Church as Both Local and Global: A Missiological Perspective," in *The Church Going Glocal: Mission and Globalisation*, ed. Tormod Engelsviken, Erling Lundeby, and Dagfinn Solheim, Regnum Edinburgh 2010 Series (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2011), 68.
[141] Harald Hegstad, *The Real Church: An Ecclesiology of the Visible* (Cambridge: James Clarke and Co, 2013), 85.

MEETING THE CHURCH MISSION SOCIETY (CMS)

The Church Mission Society, an organisation that understands itself as a community of people in mission around the world, is the empirical basis of this research. This chapter will give a first introduction to this organisation, starting with a description of a (possible) visit to the official website of CMS. For many people around the world, this will be the first encounter with the organisation. Therefore, the website is a place where the organisation will seek to clearly portray its identity, vision, and mission, as well as its current reality and opportunities.

In the following paragraphs the most obvious of its characteristics and identity markers, as they are presented on the first pages of the website, are identified. In order to give a broader understanding of CMS, this will be followed by a brief description of the start and early developments of CMS, a short introduction to some of its better known leaders, and the organisational changes of the last decades.

3.1. CMS Today

If someone would have opened the website of the Church Mission Society on 19 July 2018, this is what they would have seen:
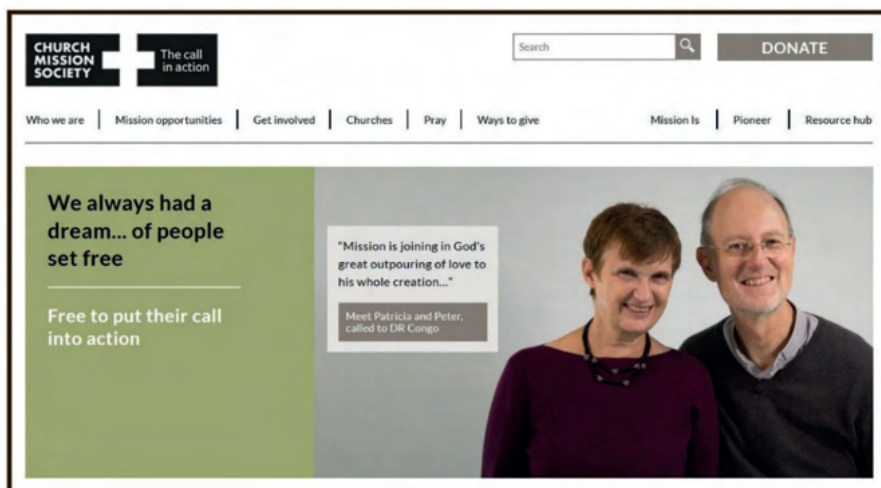
First of all, even though the word 'mission' appears four times on this introductory web page, their eyes would be drawn first to the caption: "We always had a dream… of people set free," and the photo of the couple looking straight from the page. The impression is created that CMS presents itself as a mission organisation for whom people are at the centre – people who have a dream or vision, and who want to put that dream into action. The people on the photo have names, Patricia and Peter, and the visitor to the webpage is invited to 'meet' Patricia and Peter.

3.1.1. "Who We Are"

Clicking on the menu "Who we are," confirms the people centred approach, and introduces the idea of community as "a community of people who have been set free to follow God's call in mission." And looking at the photos of the people featured, one cannot miss the diversity of those involved with CMS, in ethnic backgrounds, and the places and types of work. CMS, as a mission organisation,

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[1] https://churchmissionsociety.org/ Accessed 19/07/2018.

portrays itself as a community of people around the world, living and working in mission in a rather wide variety of ways. [2]

 And this section closes with:

> *We believe every Christian – and ultimately every person – is called to join in God's mission and has the potential to bring challenge, change, hope and freedom to the world. We all have a part to play.[3]*

Meeting the people of CMS is also an invitation to join, to join in the mission of God in the world. This mission is framed here in a rather careful way as *having the potential* of bringing challenge, change, hope, and freedom. Is this because the people who join this mission are, for whatever reason, not necessarily able to realise it? They may desire to bring challenge, change, hope, and freedom, but as a consequence of their limitations or fragility, they may not succeed, or not succeed as fully as they hoped they would. Yet, the invitation to join is phrased less carefully, as a statement that we *all* have a part to play. This does not seem to be optional, at least not for Christians.

When this call is explained in a following paragraph, it is repeated that *all of God's people* are called to join in God's mission. And CMS sees it as its mission to help people respond to this call. Practically, this is realised in the placement of people around the world, by member groups and partners.

> *Currently, there are Church Mission Society people in 40 countries across Africa, Asia, South America, the Middle East, Europe and the UK. Some have been sent from Britain and Europe, some have been sent by their local church in partnership with us, some through our sister societies CMS-Africa and Asia CMS. And we are committed to helping Christians in the UK receive the gifts of the global church.[4]*

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[2] https://churchmissionsociety.org/church-mission-society-big-picture Accessed 19/07/2018.

[3] https://churchmissionsociety.org/church-mission-society-big-picture Accessed 20/07/2018.

[4] https://churchmissionsociety.org/church-mission-society-big-picture Accessed 20/07/2018.

CMS as a UK-based organisation sends people to different parts in the world, as well as to places in the UK itself. Yet it does not only seek to be a sending organisation. The last sentence underscores that CMS also seeks to help churches in the UK to be a receiving partner. CMS sees its call here in a mediating role. The question is what the gifts of the global church are understood to be. Until now, the whole mission of CMS has been explained in relation to people and their relationships. And in this context the words "gifts of the global church" could be seen as rather impersonal or opaque.

Scrolling down again in the "Who we are" section, the website shows more photos of people who are part of CMS. They are put into three categories: the "people in mission" who live and work in different places in the world; the members of the community, described as "family;" and the "team," the people working in and for the organisation of CMS. The visitor to the website is again invited to meet these people through the photos and stories of people representing the different groups of people within the CMS community.[5]

And when one seeks to meet the "people in mission," one arrives on another page, again with many photos of people and a short introduction to who they are and what they are doing as people in mission.

Meeting "the family" happens through a couple of paragraphs written by members of a diverse group of CMS members speaking about their experience of community in CMS, while at the bottom of this page the visitor is invited to learn more about what it means to be a member of the CMS community personally. The experience of being part of CMS is described as belonging to a community.

> *Being part of CMS feels more like being part of a community or even a family….[6]*
>
> *The community is compared with being family, and is an experience that affects the content of people's faith, and the way they live out their faith, as it is both related to the local and the*

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[5] https://churchmissionsociety.org/who-we-are Accessed 20/07/2018.
[6] Anna and Chris Hembury, mission partners in Hull for more than a decade. https://churchmissionsociety.org/our-mission-community Accessed 20/07/2018.

worldwide. CMS is an inspiration to my Christian life. It encourages me to think about my real reason for being a Christian, which is mission. [7]

Being a member of CMS keeps me sane because in CMS I see the work of the gospel embodied and worked out, here and across the world, in a way that is appropriate to people today….[8]

But it is also an experience that carries an ambivalent element. Being part of community is not always easy.

We love the way it maintains intimacy but [is] always open, inviting, shifting its edges. We even love its exasperatingly dysfunctional bits, because it seems somehow more human. We love being part of something rooted, redemptive, eye opening, world changing, community building, boundary pushing, risk taking, faith informing. Yeah hard to put into words really.[9]

The strong word "dysfunctional" is used and related to "being somehow more human." The community experience is not perfect but described as "rooted, redemptive."

Thirdly, in "Meet the team" the people of different groups within the CMS team are introduced, with a link to a story about the Patron of CMS, Archbishop Justin Welby.

The fourth button on this page links to stories. All these people, introduced through the website, have stories to tell, stories about their life experience, the things they learn and the people they meet. They are introduced as stories of CMS in action.

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[7] Ann Bower, Birmingham. https://churchmissionsociety.org/our-mission-community Accessed 20/07/2018.
[8] Peter Hemming, chair of the Yorkshire CMS group, Leeds. https://churchmissionsociety.org/our-mission-community Accessed 20/07/2018.
[9] Anna and Chris Hembury, mission partners in Hull for more than a decade. https://churchmissionsociety.org/our-mission-community Accessed 20/07/2018.

3.1.2. **We Always Had a Dream**

When CMS introduces itself as a community of people in mission in the section "Who we are," they also link this to the people of CMS through its history, and especially its beginnings.

> *Our story began more than 200 years ago with a group of Christians whose hearts were stirred to put their call into action. This group included people like William Wilberforce, John Venn, and John Newton. Together they worked to abolish the slave trade, they fought for the rights of oppressed people at home and they launched out on dangerous seas to share Jesus with the world. The effects of their efforts – as well as the work of thousands of men and women who have followed in their footsteps – are still seen and felt across the globe today.[10]*

Especially the early leaders and initiators of the CMS are described as inspirational and the foundation of the current organisation. What they started has set the direction and has been followed by thousands of men and women who have had an effect worldwide. This brief introduction to the foundation of CMS is given a somewhat wider scope on the page "Our history." But here too, the main part of the "brief history" focusses on the beginnings of CMS, its illustrious first leaders, and its early work. It finishes with an overview of the many different places around the world where CMS people have worked.[11]

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[10] https://churchmissionsociety.org/church-mission-society-big-picture Accessed 20/07/2018.

[11] "The overseas mission work of CMS began in Sierra Leone in 1804 but spread rapidly to India, Canada, New Zealand and the area around the Mediterranean. Its main areas of work in Africa have been in Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Congo, Rwanda and Sudan; in Asia, CMS's involvement has principally been in India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, China and Japan; and in the Middle East, it has worked in Palestine, Jordan, Iran and Egypt. The chaplain on the First Fleet to Australia was sent at the urging of Wilberforce. The second was sent by CMS and is regarded as the Apostle to New Zealand where CMS Britain worked directly (1809–1914). Other work included Canada (1822–1930), with smaller missions in Abyssinia (1830–1842), Asia Minor (Smyrna) (1830–1877), Greece (1830–1875), Madagascar (1863–1874), Malta (1815–1843), Mauritius (1856–1929), Seychelles (1871–1894), South Africa (1840–1843), Turkey (1819–1821), Turkish Arabia (Baghdad, 1883–1919

The most prominent caption on the first page of the website, stating "We always had a dream … of people set free," refers back to this history, as it relates to the anti-slavery movement and people such as Wilberforce and Venn, but also to the ongoing vision and mission for the future.

3.1.3. Plan, Vision, and Values

The current vision and mission of CMS is framed in relation to the values of the CMS community. The vision is described as the desire to see "all God's people engaged in God's mission, bringing challenge, change, hope and freedom to the world." This is meant to lead to the renewal of people and places through the love of Christ, and to transformation through the creative lives of pioneering leaders. A special focus is placed on human flourishing for people on the margins and on the healing of creation. The values that people engaged in God's mission live by, mentioned in this vision, are pioneering, evangelistic, relational, and faithful. [12]

Throughout the website there is a repeated emphasis on people joining in on God's Trinitarian mission, focussed on Jesus and carried out in the power of the Spirit. And again, here the emphasis is on people, helping them to join God's mission and empowering them to bring "challenge, change, hope and freedom to the world."

Members of the CMS community commit to live according to the stated values and the realisation of the vision. And these values are worded positively: crossing boundaries, sharing Jesus, being relational, pioneering, and faithful. Here again, the vision is carefully worded, not primarily as human action, but as participating in the mission of God. In joining this mission, the hope is that one will witness people and places renewed, transformation realised, places and people on the margins flourish and creation healed.

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and Mosul, 1900–1919), and the West Indies (1819–1861)."
https://churchmissionsociety.org/our-history Accessed 20/07/2018.
[12] https://churchmissionsociety.org/our-plan-vision-and-values Accessed 20/07/2018.

This section is then followed by "What we do," which explains how the CMS organisation seeks to realise this vision and live these values in its organisational structure and objectives.

Yet, what the visitor to the website may not easily discover is what CMS understands mission, or God's mission, to be. What are people joining? What are the norms for the challenge, change, and transformation which is sought?

To get a broader introduction into the Church Mission Society and its context, a further look at the history of CMS and its more recent developments is needed. This history shows how from its inception, CMS has understood its mission to be holistic, as the proclamation of the Gospel both in word and in social involvement, even in political struggle for justice and freedom. Hence the statement on the website: "We always had a dream … of people set free."

3.2. Early History[13]

The Society for Mission to Africa and the East was founded in London in 1799. The chair of the Society was John Venn (1759-1813), the rector of Clapham and an Evangelical leader within the Anglican Church. Other well-known members of this founding group were William Wilberforce, John Newton, Charles Simeon, Hannah More. Its beginnings were strongly related to the so-called Clapham Sect.

The Clapham Sect was an informal group of friends and kindred spirits committed to the alleviation of poverty and suffering, the improvement of

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[13] The CMS history is described in two official histories – commissioned by CMS, the first being written by Eugene Stock at the centenary of CMS, and the second written by Gordon Hewitt. This last history only covers the first half of the second century of CMS' existence. Eugene Stock, *The History of the Church Missionary Society, Its Environment, Its Men and Its Work*, 4 vols. (London: CMS, 1899). Gordon Hewitt, *The Problems of Success: A History of the Church Missionary Society 1910-1942*, 2 vols. (SCM press, 1971). For this short description of the early CMS history I have consulted especially: Kevin Ward and Brian Stanley, eds., *The Church Mission Society and World Christianity, 1799-1999*, First Edition. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1999). This volume was published to mark the CMS Bicentenary, and is less of a full history and more of a collection of articles focusing on the meaning of mission, as understood and practiced by CMS through its history.

moral life and the reformation of religion. It came into existence in the second half of the 1780's against the backdrop of a Europe in turmoil including the French Revolution and the later Napoleonic war. English society too was rife with poverty and social injustice. This was a group of people living around Clapham Commons in London who were engaged in the political struggle for the abolition of slavery, social reform, debt relief, education through the Sunday School movement, and the protection of animals.[14] Influenced by the Great Awakening and the Wesley brothers, this group of "Evangelicals" wanted to promote evangelistic fervour within the Anglican Church, both in Britain and the wider world.[15]

The main focus of the mission society they established, the Society for Mission to Africa and the East,[16] was evangelisation and the establishment of churches around the world, while at the same time operating out of a deep concern for social well-being and just structures. Kevin Ward writes that CMS, being deeply influenced by the evangelical awakening, identified itself with the theological emphases of this movement, such as the sinfulness of human beings, justification by faith through the work of Christ on the cross, the need for conversion of each person, and a strong belief in the supreme authority of the Bible as the word of God. They also had an optimistic faith in the capacity of converted men and women who are inspired by the Holy Spirit to bring change to the world through social and political action. [17] The knowledge of God and the (resulting) transformation of human beings would lead to a transformation of

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[14] Stephen Tomkins, *The Clapham Sect: How Wilberforce's Circle Transformed Britain* (Oxford: Lion Books, 2010), 49–50.

[15] Kevin Ward, "'Taking Stock': The Church Missionary Society and Its Historians," in *The Church Mission Society and World Christianity, 1799-1999*, ed. Kevin Ward and Brian Stanley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2000), 21; Walls, *Missionary Movement in Christian History*, 246–250.

[16] CMS was renamed to Church Missionary Society for Africa and the East in 1812 (CMS Atlas, p. 201-219), and to Church Mission Society in 1995. Kevin Ward, "Introduction," in *The Church Mission Society and World Christianity, 1799-1999*, ed. Kevin Ward and Brian Stanley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2000), 2.

[17] Ward, "'Taking Stock': The Church Missionary Society and Its Historians," 21.

power structures and a more just society in which all people would be free. This was seen "as a prelude to the inauguration of God's Kingdom."[18]

Brian Stanley and Peter Williams emphasise that this social engagement, including the struggle for the abolition of slavery, was related to the strong belief that all human beings are equal before God, since they are all created in God's image.

> For evangelical Christians, in contrast to much secular opinion, the barrier separating 'civilised' from 'savage', though formidable at first sight, was in principle and practice surmountable. Missionary literature thus united extreme statements of cultural difference with strong assertions of humanitarian identity.[19]

And this was a proven reality, albeit a rather ambivalent one, in the practice of mission engagement through the years. Evangelisation and civilisation became intertwined. First, it was felt that the civilisation of the people in Africa was necessary to eradicate the slave trade. Mission would lead to people being educated, able to create structures for commerce, and thus being protected from becoming the victim or cooperative of the slave trade. [20] Secondly, European culture was viewed as superior to African culture, and therefore, next to evangelisation, European education, training in practical skills, health care and administration were seen as necessary to lift the African people out of their ignorance and deplorable state.[21]

The countercultural and pioneering character of the Church Mission Society also became evident in the fact that recruitment of the first missionaries turned out

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[18] Ibid., 22.

[19] Brian Stanley, "Christian Missions, Antislavery and the Claims of Humanity, c. 1813-1873," in *The Cambridge History of Christianity. Vol. 8, World Christianities c. 1815-c. 1914*, ed. Sheridan Gilley and Brian Stanley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 449. See also Peter Williams, "'Not Transplanting': Henry Venn's Strategic Vision," in *The Church Mission Society and World Christianity, 1799-1999*, ed. Kevin Ward and Brian Stanley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2000), 149.

[20] Stanley, "Christian Missions, Antislavery and the Claims of Humanity, c. 1813-1873," 453.

[21] Andrew F. Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission and Reception of Faith*, First Edition. (Maryknoll, NY: T & T Clark International, 2002), 159; Kim and Kim, *Christianity as a World Religion: An Introduction*, 68–70.

to be difficult. On the one hand, the society chose to be a "voluntary" society, not only recruiting people from the establishment of the church, but also lay people. As an Evangelical movement, they wanted to recruit people who personally felt the call of God to commit themselves fully to the mission task. On the other hand, the society chose to work within the Anglican Church and its structures, recognising its authority and principles. Ade Ajayi writes that "the injunction to spread the Gospel was to all Christians as individuals, not to the church as an organization." However, evangelisation, and "foreign mission" were both seen as a means "reawaken" the spiritual life of the church. [22]

The commitment to evangelisation meant that the missionary was to be ordained within the Church of England, and therefore had to have a certain education and social background. A lack of educated people who felt called to mission service abroad and fear of a wrongly motivated missionary call, which might allow people to climb the social ladder, [23] led to a cooperation with German mission schools and seminaries. The first missionaries sent out by the CMS had German nationality. Although born out of necessity, this intercultural collaboration between CMS and the Basel Mission is an early example of CMS seeking international relationships that are mutually beneficial in order to respond to the call of mission, as it was understood in that specific context.

3.3. Respected Leaders

Three leading people who are still regularly quoted within CMS, and who deeply influenced the mission understanding and practice of the Church Missionary Society are Henry Venn, honorary Secretary from 1841 to 1873, Max Warren, General Secretary from 1942 to 1963, and John V. Taylor, General Secretary from 1963 to 1973.[24]

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[22] J. F. Ade Ajayi, "From Mission to Church: The Heritage of the Church Mission Society," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 23, no. 2 (April 1999): 51.

[23] Walls, *Missionary Movement in Christian History*, 168; Ajayi, "From Mission to Church," 51.

[24] In *The Church Mission Society and World Christianity, 1799-1999,* edited by Kevin Ward and Brian Stanley, Venn, Warren and Taylor each have most of the references throughout the book as shown in the Index. In his article "'Taking Stock', The Church Missionary Society

3.3.1. Henry Venn

Henry Venn became the CMS Secretary when the slave trade had been officially abolished in the British territory but when slavery itself was still alive and well. He stressed the importance of the development of a strong African people, able to resist slavery and its dangers and establish an "indigenous" church. The church needed to grow towards a "self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating" structure.[25] Williams quotes Venn's instructions to missionaries, as saying:

> *It must be remembered that in Missionary work we are not transplanting … native Christians have been raised from seed – "the seed is the word of God." Now, seed sown in a new country and climate will not yield a produce precisely the same with the mother plant in the old country. It will be essentially, yet not identically, the same. There will be variations more or less pronounced, and we must conclude that it will be so in the propagation of Christianity.[26]*

The missionary task was to bring people to Christ and to establish new churches.[27] And the end-goal was the "euthanasia of mission," described as a "Native Church established under a Native Bishop." [28] Education should therefore happen in the local language and the Bible and liturgy also needed to be translated into the local language, preparing churches and their leadership for their new reality as a "native" church according to the "three-self"

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and Its Historians" Kevin Ward chooses to describe these leaders, partly because of already being acquainted with them. Ward, "'Taking Stock': The Church Missionary Society and Its Historians," 41. Yet, the amount of their writings and publications, in articles and books, as well as personal letters, influenced the missiological reflection and understanding of the wider church, and therefore also validates this choice. Venn, Warren and Taylor are also the leaders of CMS history who are frequently mentioned in the interviews of this research.
[25] Wilbert R. Shenk, "Henry Venn's Instructions to Missionaries," *Missiology* 5, no. 4 (October 1977): 481.
[26] Williams, "'Not Transplanting': Henry Venn's Strategic Vision," 170.
[27] Ibid., 157.
[28] Ibid., 169.

principles.[29] And when such a church was established, the missionary had to move on to new fields and regions,[30] even when they found this difficult, fearing possible mistakes would be made by the young church. The missionary needed to learn to let go and keep away from ongoing paternalism.[31] This approach was not appreciated by all, and Venn had to counter criticism from missionaries who were unwilling to work under African leadership. At a mission conference in Liverpool, in 1860, he spoke rather sharply about Europeans who "would not bear to be under a black Bishop." He indicated that for his part he "should rejoice to be under a black bishop," and believed that the refusal to do so came from "the taint of our former slave-trading and slave-holding amongst us."[32]

The life story of the first African Anglican Bishop, Samuel Ajayi Crowther, is an example of how these ideas were realised, and how they also turned out to be rather difficult to maintain. Crowther, a liberated slave, who was the first student in Fourah Bay college in Sierra Leone, worked on the translation of the Bible into the Yoruba language. He became an important leader in the church in Sierra Leone and more widely in West Africa. A significant detail is that as the first African Bishop his Bishopric covered the newly established "native" churches of African members but no churches with European members. Henry Venn realised the difficulty of changing the attitudes of the English missionaries in that region. So, according to Williams, in consultation with Bishop Crowther the following decision was made:

> *The presence of European missionaries under an indigenous bishop might place such a bishop 'in a false position' and 'might have a bad effect on the native Church.' […] The solution flowed from this: keep the indigenous church separate 'with a complete organization*

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[29] Shenk, "Henry Venn's Instructions to Missionaries," 476; Jehu J. Hanciles, "Missionaries and Revolutionaries: Elements of Transformation in the Emergence of Modern African Christianity," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 28, no. 4 (October 2004): 148.
[30] Williams, "'Not Transplanting': Henry Venn's Strategic Vision," 157.Williams, (2000), p. 157.
[31] Ibid., 156; Ajayi, "From Mission to Church," 52.
[32] Williams, "'Not Transplanting': Henry Venn's Strategic Vision," 154.

of Bishop, priest and Deacon' and it 'would exhibit a more firm and rapid development'.[33]

Venn and Crowther hoped that this rather pragmatic approach to an unjust and difficult situation might still result in the development of a mature and firmly indigenous church. However, conflict arose around leadership style between Crowther and the English missionaries. Bishop Crowther was accused of laxness in disciplinary measures towards his own priests, regarding the rules of morality.[34] This conflict ended in the resignation of Crowther as Bishop or – as others believe – his being forced to resign. [35] A contributing factor in this conflict may have been the influence of growing imperialism, with more and more nations becoming British colonies, and with sentiments of racism and superiority growing, also within the church. In this context, Hanciles and Ajayi describe two factors that played a role. According to Hanciles, Venn was too optimistic in his idea of a "euthanasia of mission," overlooking how difficult it is for human beings to step aside and work towards self-redundancy. He states that because of this, his policy "failed to surmount the barriers of self-preservation and self-justification."[36]

While Ajayi points out that though the church in Sierra Leone became self-supporting and self-propagating, it was not truly self-governing. Firstly, CMS continued to hold on to and invest financially in its properties, such as buildings, schools, and lands, and it continued to influence the governing of the church. And secondly, through the European bishops still serving in the church, CMS continued to have an influence in the different appointments, since "the bishops were closer to the European missionaries than to the African pastors or their congregations."[37]

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[33] Ibid., 163.
[34] Lamin Sanneh, "The CMS and the African Transformation: Samuel Ajayi Crowther and the Opening of Nigeria," in *The Church Mission Society and World Christianity, 1799-1999*, ed. Kevin Ward and Brian Stanley (Grand Rapids, MI, 2000), 188.
[35] Walls, *Missionary Movement in Christian History*, 105–110.
[36] Jehu J. Hanciles, "The Anatomy of an Experiment: The Sierra Leone Native Pastorate," *Missiology: An International Review* 29, no. 1 (2001): 70.
[37] Ajayi, "From Mission to Church," 53.

Hanciles writes that after the death of Henry Venn, the project of the "Native Church" with a "three-self" agenda was quickly abandoned. This was a result of the growth of the British empire and the structures of authority that went with it, which were embedded in cultural paternalism (as we would frame it now in our time).[38] The reality of autonomous churches proved to be much more difficult than the vision for the "three-self-churches." Williams concludes that, while Venn's principles and vision are admired nowadays, they were ignored at the CMS Centenary in 1899.[39]

3.3.2. Max Warren

Max Warren became the General Secretary of CMS about a hundred years after Henry Venn, in the second year of World War II. At that point CMS had more than 1000 missionaries living and working in Africa and Asia. This was at an exceedingly difficult time during which the people working in the London headquarters faced the danger of bombings, missionary men were conscripted by the army, and the finances dwindled quickly. And following this came the first signs of de-colonialization and the end of the British Empire.[40]

In order to help the CMS members in Britain understand all these developments within the wider reality of a changing world, Warren started writing the "CMS News Letter." This letter did not just tell the stories of mission, its successes and difficulties; its aim was to share the underlying understanding of the situation in the world and related theological reflections, underpinning the mission approach of the Society. Frederick W. Dilistone, writing about the legacy of Max Warren, names the changes in the world which were addressed by Warren in his letters as "the emergent problems of race, the burgeoning of nationalistic aspirations, the decline of European influence, the resurgence of non-Christian faiths."[41]

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[38] Hanciles, "The Anatomy of an Experiment: The Sierra Leone Native Pastorate," 74.
[39] Williams, "'Not Transplanting': Henry Venn's Strategic Vision," 172.
[40] Federick W. Dillistone, "The Legacy of Max Warren," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 5, no. 3 (July 1981): 114.
[41] Ibid., 115.

As a trained historian, to find understanding and insight for the development of new strategies and appropriate responses to the changes the society and the church in the world were facing, Warren often turned to history. Kevin Ward quotes Warren:

> *I am deeply convinced that only a right attitude to the past provides me with any possibility whatever of a right attitude to the future. […] As it were, I try and enter into conversation with the past, make it my contemporary, argue with it and treat it as a living companion. I do not believe we can understand the present and plan for the future unless we see clearly how continuous the present is with the past and how all-pervading is the influence of past patterns upon present behaviour.[42]*

We see Warren engaged in such a conversation with the past, in order to understand and shape the present with a view toward the future. In his introduction to the book *To Apply the Gospel: Selections of the Writings from Henry Venn*, he explores the ideas described by Venn and makes critical notes. He wonders, for example, how much the controversy around Crowther,[43] during his final years, was due to the limited support and resources provided him by Venn.[44] At the same time he understands that judgment is easy in hindsight and that Venn's situation was really complex, as he had to work with so many people who did not share his vision. [45]

Partnership and cooperation became some of Warren's leading principles. In his booklet *Partnership: The Study of an Idea* Max Warren opens his argument with: "Partnership is an idea whose time has not yet fully come." He uses the meaning of partnership from an old legal Anglo-French word, 'parcener', which means co-heirship.[46] Further on in his argument, he states:

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[42] Ward, "'Taking Stock': The Church Missionary Society and Its Historians," 42.
[43] See 3.3.1.
[44] Max Warren, "Introduction," in *To Apply the Gospel: Selections from the Writings of Henry Venn* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1971), 30.
[45] Ibid., 26.
[46] Max Warren, *Partnership : The Study of an Idea ; Being the Merrick Lectures at Ohio Wesleyan University, Delaware, Ohio, March 1955* (London: SCM Press, 1956), 11.

The essence of partnership is that it is a relationship entered upon in freedom by free persons who remain free. Their relationship is a dynamic one."[47]

For the mission practice, and following Venn, he strongly believed in "indigenous" churches, and he became instrumental in the development of autonomous churches within the Anglican Communion, both in Africa and in Asia. The churches in Africa, Asia and Britain, and other places in the world became sister churches, called to work together and to support each other within the Communion.[48] And secondly, partnership should also be sought ecumenically, with other mission organisations, in order to come to an "intelligent interchange within the common task of world evangelization."[49]

Another idea he shared with Venn was the "voluntary principle" of CMS within the Anglican Church. Others countered that mission is the task of the church, and of the whole church. Warren did not deny this, but he also believed that for the church to be able to commit herself fully to this task of mission in the world, she needed the commitment, space, and flexibility of a voluntary movement within her structures. And this belief was so strong that he, as the only dissenting voice, voted against the integration of the International Missionary Council with the World Council of Churches in 1958.[50]

After his retirement as General Secretary from CMS, and especially through the correspondence with his son in law, Roger Hooker, who worked in North India, Warren developed a "theology of attention." He called for an attitude of openness and humility in the encounter with people from other cultures and religions, expecting to find God already present and speaking in their context

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[47] Ibid., 13.
[48] Ward, "'Taking Stock': The Church Missionary Society and Its Historians," 38; John Clark, "CMS and Mission in Britain: The Evolution of a Policy," in *The Church Mission Society and World Christianity, 1799-1999*, ed. Kevin Ward and Brian Stanley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2000), 326.
[49] Dillistone, "The Legacy of Max Warren," 115.
[50] Ibid., 116.

and religion, while not losing the specific Christian understanding of God.[51] He pleads in *Theology of Attention* for a double listening, a listening both to the other and to Jesus to understand how He would be present with the other.

> *When you and I venture to listen to another person "in the name of Jesus Christ" there is an unseen listener present, Jesus himself. We have to listen to him listening. We have to know Jesus and be ready to learn all his meanings too. And in the context of this listening it may be that he will have something new to say, something we have never heard before. And if we listen very carefully, with concentrated attention, it is likely that we will hear him speaking through the lips of a Hindu, a Muslim, a Buddhist, a Jew, a man or woman of some tribal religion – or perhaps a Marxist or humanist. Jesus, now as always is very full of surprises."[52]*

Such an open and listening attitude will result in surprising and mutual learning in unexpected places and from unexpected people.

Henry Venn lived and worked at the front side of the colonial period, at the beginning of the Christian church in West Africa. He tirelessly worked towards the establishment of indigenous churches, out of a strong belief that all humans are equal before God and will only be able to form a true and strong Christian community if that community is rooted in the local context and fully governed by an indigenous leadership. Max Warren, at the end of the imperial project, built on this heritage and developed it further, into his policies of partnership and mutual cooperation. This included an attitude of openness and humility and became a theology of attention.[53] And it is this attitude and theology that deeply influenced his successor, John V. Taylor.

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[51] Graham Kings, "Mission and the Meeting of Faiths: The Theologies of Max Warren and John V. Taylor," in *The Church Mission Society and World Christianity, 1799-1999*, ed. Kevin Ward and Brian Stanley, First Edition. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2000), 295.

[52] Ibid., 299; Max Warren, *A Theology of Attention* (Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1971), 6.

[53] In chapter 10, on the ambivalent lived reality of the CMS community, a more critical view will be given on Warren's idea of partnership and theology of attention.

3.3.3. John V. Taylor

John. V. Taylor followed Max Warren as General Secretary. Warren was already involved in the mission call of Taylor when he was sent by CMS to Uganda. He went as the warden of Bishop Tucker College, the main training centre for Anglican clergy in the Church of Uganda.[54] Here he served for 10 years. In 1963 he became the General Secretary of CMS, following Max Warren. After Warren's retirement from CMS, he wrote of Taylor as being ahead of the people of his time, forward looking, and independent.

> *He is head and shoulders spiritually and mentally above any of his contemporaries and is one of the few Anglicans with a capacity for seeing 6 feet in front of his nose and then a little more. What is more he doesn't possess the peculiar Anglican Ecclesiastical squint which gets virtually every important issue out of focus.[55]*

Taylor, like Warren, regularly wrote about the changes going on in society and around the world. And, like Warren, he believed that these changes would not change the call to mission, since it is founded in the call of Christ. The practice of mission may change due to the changes in society and resources, but not the goal of mission, which is to represent Christ in this world.

> *It seems certain that the next few decades will bring more rapid and more far-reaching change to the whole world than anyone can remember or visualize. Yet Christ's mandate to his followers still stands, whatever the circumstances. It is, in fact, a mandate which changing conditions, resources and techniques can do little to alter, since the mission to which it commits us is primarily to be the human presence of Jesus Christ who is the same yesterday, today and forever.[56]*

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[54] Timothy E. Yates, "Reading John V. Taylor," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 30, no. 3 (July 2006): 153.
[55] Kings, "Mission and the Meeting of Faiths: The Theologies of Max Warren and John V. Taylor," 304, 305.
[56] Taylor, *The Uncancelled Mandate: Four Bible Studies on Christian Mission for the Approaching Millennium*, 41.

In this changing world Taylor sought to be a reflective leader, deeply related to both human beings and to God, and to reconcile tensions, through his leadership and in his writings.

This was the time that, within the Anglican Communion, the relationship between the mission, including CMS, and the churches around the world needed to be redefined. It included questions around the authority structures and those of cooperation and partnership, as well as questions around property and land. [57]

Taylor's love and respect for the human being, and his belief in their missional potential was expressed in his advocacy for small groups and missionary cells, which he saw as places conducive to personal growth, transformative relationships, and activism in society. The goal of mission was not first and foremost numerical growth, but rather "quality of life and victory over evil."[58]

An example of Taylor's reconciling attitude can be seen at the World Council of Churches meeting in Uppsala (1968), where there was tension between those believing the mission task to be mainly in social action, and the conservative evangelical participants who stressed the importance of personal conversion and evangelization of the non-Christian peoples. Taylor, together with D.T. Niles, was a reconciling figure between those camps and was recognized as such.[59] Yates later wrote: "Part of being alive for Taylor was grappling with tensions."[60] And the tensions he then identified are those between a stress on personal conversion and integration into the community of the church, between spiritual devotion and political engagement, between the European focus on reason and the African recognition of the instinctive, between the voluntary commitment and the need for organisation, and between social action and conversion and evangelisation. And Taylor's most fundamental attitude would be the choice for "both-and."

The underlying reflections can be found in his writings. He has written several books exploring Christianity in Africa, seeking to find a deep and empathetic

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[57] Ward, "'Taking Stock': The Church Missionary Society and Its Historians," 38, 39.
[58] Yates, "Reading John V. Taylor," 154.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid., 156.

understanding of African culture and values, and of how God reveals himself in the African context. The best known of these writings is his book *The Primal Vision: Christian Presence amid African Religion.*[61]

Taylor continued writing the CMS News Letter, begun by Warren. He regularly wrote about dialogue with people of other religions and about living together in a world of inequality and injustice. He condemned, for example, the Vietnam War, and the life of excess of the wealthy at the cost of the poor. Conversion and spiritual devotion should be combined with an active and prophetic life, while not afraid of the political.[62]

Taylor's later books, *The Go-Between-God,* and *The Christlike God*[63] give an important insight into his understanding of mission. He reflects in *The Go-Between-God* on the Holy Spirit who works secretly and freely in places and in ways beyond our imagination. God reveals Himself to all, yet each of us responds differently, depending on context, experience, and culture. Therefore, we need to approach each other with humility, with an open and humble attitude to find God, and to share God.[64]

Towards the end of Taylor's tenure as General Secretary, the Society recruited its first missionaries from "overseas churches" *to* CMS. This was seen as a logical consequence of the long relationships developed between the churches and the mission societies.[65] Taylor's theological reflections and his understanding of God at work in the world, revealed to all in the most unexpected places, must also have contributed to this development.

Simon Barrington-Ward, Taylor's successor as General Secretary of CMS, describes how the legacy of Taylor has influenced him and CMS' mission policies,

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[61] John V. Taylor, *The Primal Vision: Christian Presence amid African Religion*, New Edition. (London: SCM Press, 1963).
[62] Yates, "Reading John V. Taylor," 154.
[63] John V. Taylor, *The Go-Between God: The Holy Spirit and the Christian Mission* (London: SCM Press, 1972); John V. Taylor, *The Christlike God* (London: SCM Press, 1992).
[64] Kings, "Mission and the Meeting of Faiths: The Theologies of Max Warren and John V. Taylor," 307; Yates, "Reading John V. Taylor," 155.
[65] Clark, "CMS and Mission in Britain: The Evolution of a Policy," 319.

while at the same time admitting that the vision often was larger than the reality.

> *At the CMS we worked at attempts to receive, here in Britain, through what we called the 'interchange' of people, gifts, and insights, still always having to acknowledge our endemic condition of economic and cultural one-sidedness. […] We knew we must be smaller and more selective. But our goal was to help send, bring, and place the most creative and redemptive 'people in mission' we could find in situations where they could open the way to a deeply pervasive, spiritual renewal. Only people who are constantly being changed can bring change to others. Through them the message of the wounded Servant God in Christ might become 'a story whose hour has come.'[66]*

The idea of partnership in mission, as developed by Max Warren, received a new dimension. It worked out practically in the placement of people in mission who had the capacity to be creative and redemptive and to work towards the creation of communities that "by their very being" would "witness to the grace of Christ."[67]

3.4. Processes of Change

Since 1975, according to Ward, CMS has been searching for a new and appropriate role in mission. "Like the empire, this has not been easy."[68] He then uses terms such as "continued activism," "Christian presence," and "presence and partners" in order to describe how different people within CMS shape their mission involvement, while indicating that there is less of an overall defined strategy.

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[66] Simon Barrington-Ward, "My Pilgrimage in Mission," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 23, no. 2 (1999): 64.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ward, "'Taking Stock': The Church Missionary Society and Its Historians," 39.

Yet, it is possible to point to some important processes of change in the organisation of the society. First, in 1995, during the first year that Diana Witts was General Secretary of CMS, the name of the society was changed from Church Missionary Society to Church Mission Society since mission rather than the missionary should be central. Mission was understood to be the task of the church and *every* Christian, both local and worldwide, not just of the special few missionaries that were sent out. And, this mission was no longer understood to be one-directional, from the West to the rest, but was to be practiced from everywhere to everywhere. This idea is described by Michael Nazir-Ali, CMS General Secretary from 1989 to 1994, in his book *From Everywhere to Everywhere: A world View of Christian Mission.* In this mission effort, church as community plays a crucial role. He refers to Lesslie Newbigin, who describes Christian communities as the "hermeneutic of the Gospel:" they are eucharistic, communities of thanksgiving and praise, of truth, of hope, and of sharing at every level. [69] He describes the mission calling of these communities as evangelisation with an incarnational approach, in their presence, identification, dialogue, action and unity. This would take place through proclamation (both by daily life, and verbally) and by invitation. Interestingly, he suggests that this emphasis on evangelisation was made possible because of the influence of churches from Africa, Asia, and the Pacific region. The 1988 Lambeth Conference was the first time that there were more delegates from Africa than from any other continent.[70]

Second, in 2005 it was announced in the official publications of CMS that the society would work towards regionalisation. Tim Dakin, the then CMS General Secretary, wrote in the bi-monthly members magazine *Yes,* that Warren's idea of partnership was no longer appropriate for this time, since "the Northern Church came to think of itself as the centre of Mission. In this new phase the peoples of the world are being thrown together to live side by side in unprecedented ways."[71] And one of these ways, as announced in this article, was the establishment of regional offices in Africa and Asia. Later this was

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[69] Michael Nazir-Ali, *From Everywhere to Everywhere: A World View of Christian Mission* (London: Collins, 1991), 203.
[70] Ibid., 67.
[71] Tim Dakin, "Changing CMS," *Yes* (August 2005): 7.

spoken of as "Network Mission," meaning that the regions Britain, Africa, and Asia would become "local mission movements," each with their own governance, policies and priorities, working together in a network relationship of "interchange." Consequently, in 2008 CMS Africa started in Nairobi, and in 2012 Asia-CMS was established with its office in Kuala Lumpur. It was a process that was widely supported within the society as a step forward in a post-colonial world, rectifying relationships that could too easily be unequal and paternalistic. Yet, at the same time, it was a process that was experienced as painful, a process of renegotiating relationships and access to resources, and for the British partner a process of loss. Together with NZCMS (New Zealand), CMS Australia and CMS Ireland, they now form the CMS Mission Network, in which cooperation and mutual support are central.

Third, another move during this time was the merger in 2009 of CMS and the South American Mission Society (SAMS). Until then CMS had not worked in Latin America. Both societies felt that, in the context of declining support for mission in the churches in the UK, they had a similar vision and would be strengthened by this merger. Yet, this too was experienced, especially by SAMS members, as a painful process of letting go of the SAMS family and entering a new and bigger community. For CMS members it meant that they too had to reapply for CMS membership, for legal reasons regarding the new entity of CMS and SAMS as one community, named the Church Mission Society. Dakin, in an accompanying document to the CMS Constitution of 2009, describes this process as "a challenging experience." He writes:

> I've been stretched by the process of bridging our different Evangelical perspectives […] and by the cultural, organisational and legal changes in becoming a new company limited by guarantee […]. Yet the benefits have been enlivening for all of us as the greater richness, broader mission engagement and efficiency savings have emerged.[72]

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[72] Tim Dakin, "Background Notes on Outcomes and Impact of the Ten Year Strategy," 2010.

Fourth, since 2008, CMS has been recognised as an acknowledged community[73] within the Church of England. Announcing this change in *Yes* Magazine, Tim Dakin describes it as following a process of reflection, of a review of the mission spirituality of CMS, led by former General Secretary Simon Barrington-Ward, and of cooperation with the leadership of the Church of England. Recognition was granted in 2008. [74]

For CMS, recognition as a mission community meant that people were invited to make a conscious choice to become a member and to commit to a life according to the ethos, vision and promises of the community. This process began with the conviction that mission is God's mission and that each Christian is called into this mission in his or her context. Secondly, it grew out of the conviction that the life of and life in a community can be a powerful way to live up to this high call. John Martin, the editor of the CMS magazine "Yes," links this change with CMS' vision in the past, quoting John V. Taylor's idea to encourage Christian people to explore life in community.

> *'I believe that the small, purposeful commune, dedicated to a particular kind of witness, has immense potential today as a new form of missionary presence in many situations that are impervious to more traditional forms of mission.' […] CMS has committed itself to rediscovering life as a spread-out community, living out the kinds of principles that Taylor foreshadowed more than a generation ago. These things have always been at the heart of Christian discipleship.*[75]

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[73] As an acknowledged community within the Church of England, the community is recognised by the House of Bishops, under the condition that the community functions according to a written constitution that describes membership and leadership structures, and a structure for accountability to the Church through the appointment of an episcopal visitor. https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-11/GS%202191%20Religious%20Communities%20Regulations%20.pdf. Accessed 09/02/2021.

[74] Tim Dakin, "Called to Community: A Special Message for Yes Readers," *Yes* (Advent 2009): 2.

[75] John Martin, "Mission Spirituality: Yesterday, Today and Everyday," *Yes*, no. Lent (2009): 3.

Members of the community promised to invest in its life and to live a life of mission service based on an active and sustained mission spirituality connected to that community. The merger of SAMS and CMS, which required a new enrolment of voting members, was used to renew the membership, asking all members to recommit to the members' promises of the community.

3.5. What is CMS?

CMS has a long and complex history. Several histories have been written,[76] from different perspectives, highlighting various elements or questions. Yet, the worldwide, dispersed character of the CMS community, together with its long history, make any introduction to CMS partial.

In this chapter, CMS is described from the perspective of its self-presentation on the official website. The themes highlighted in this first encounter were the centrality of people, the experience of community, or even family, the understanding that the call to mission is everybody's call, both local and global, and that this call can have many different expressions. The importance of the CMS heritage, seen in people from its history, was also exposed. The description of the CMS history then also clarified how these themes shaped the development of the society.

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[76] See 1.2.

RESEARCHING MY FAMILY

Researching a community to which one belongs requires a methodology that honours both an insider perspective, and the limitations and biases that this position brings. This chapter, therefore, starts with an exploration of the value and dangers of the "insider's perspective." And, secondly, in describing the research methodology as a pastoral cycle, and the different research tools chosen as part of that methodology, the question will be raised how this can be considered a theological approach leading to a theological understanding responding to a theological question. The chapter closes with a short description of how it was carried out, with a special focus on the case study and the interactions with the members of the CMS community.

4.1. The Insider's Perspective

As this research has its origin in my personal life experience, and since I studied the community of which I am a member myself – my 'family'- it is important to clarify my position and choices in the research. Does this membership not lead to bias in the observation of the lived experience? Will it limit the possibility of an objective representation of the observed? Will the outcomes of the research be shaped too much by my loyalties and relationships in the community? However, the questions can also be reversed. Is it possible to observe objectively? Is distance an advantage for such objectivity? And does such an objective observation necessarily lead to the truth?

Tim Ingold, in his article on the use of ethnographic methods in anthropology and other disciplines, pleads for the use of participant observation as a methodological tool that takes into account the relationship of the researcher and the researched as being "alongside" and "together."

> *To participate means to do so from within the current of activity in which you carry on a life alongside and together with the persons and things that capture your attention.*[1]

Such participation is not in contrast to observation. Ingold says that in empirical research we need to go beyond the dichotomy between observation and participation, and between the objective and the subjective. He states that "knowledge grows from the crucible of lives lived with others."[2] This is a knowledge that grows through being attentive to the persons, situations, and things, and through a participative living and acting with, and out of the insights and wisdom of the observed. He calls this "an intimate coupling, in perception and action, of observer and observed."[3] It is in the engagement with the other and the surroundings that true knowledge develops.

Bennet et al. also write that it is impossible for a researcher to find detached and objective knowledge. They suggest that it is impossible to "observe the world from [a place] that will grant [us] a divine eye view of persons and events – we are all, already, part of the landscape that we seek to represent."[4] They therefore plead for the researcher to take a reflexive attitude. Where reflective observation looks attentively at something with a critical eye, reflexive observation includes an attentive observing of oneself – "at what I am like, at how I see what is outside of myself, how I affect it, or how my seeing of it affects how I present it."[5] The questions that the researcher asks and the observations

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[1] Tim Ingold, "That's Enough about Ethnography!," *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 4, no. 1 (June 2014): 387.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid., 388.
[4] Bennett et al., *Invitation to Research in Practical Theology*, 40; Pete Ward, "Attention and Conversation," in *Perspectives on Ecclesiology and Ethnography*, ed. Pete Ward (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2012), 36, 38.
[5] Bennett et al., *Invitation to Research in Practical Theology*, 35.

the researcher makes, are shaped by the researcher's own personal social and cultural reality.[6] It is only when the researcher has a clear understanding of self, that she can come to an understanding of the other.

Rather than seeking to bracket beliefs, values and experience there is an acknowledged understanding in social sciences that participation and relationship are important ways of knowing.[7] At the same time, there is a realisation that this interaction of the researcher with the community of research will also affect the way people understand things and the way they behave.[8] This underscores the importance of reflexivity for the researcher, recognising the continuous exchange between the researcher and the researched community, between both the observation and the representation of the observed, and the processes of change that may result out of the exchange that happened in the research.[9] Such a reflexivity will not only focus on the possible personal bias of the researcher, but also on the consequences of the research itself for the researched community. For this reason, reflexivity should not just focus on the "self," but also on the "inter-personal," and the "collective." Henk de Roest, in his book on collaborative research and following Ruth Nichols, indicates that such a broader practice of reflexivity is of great importance for the recognition of the power dynamics within the research process.[10] He emphasises that both the inter-personal and the collective reflexivity themselves need to be a collaborative exercise, asking questions about the experience and effect of the research for all participating in it.

If knowledge is found in the combination of observation and participation, then reflexivity also becomes part of this process of learning. Reflexivity will not just be a tool to avoid bias. Writing about ethnographic research in Religious Education, Deborah Court explains that a researcher who knows the context she

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[6] Ward, "Attention and Conversation," 36, 38.
[7] Elizabeth Jordan, "Researching from the Inside: The Researcher as a Member of the Family" (Presented at the Ecclesiology & Ethnography Symposium, Durham, 2014).
[8] Gerardo Marti, *A Mosaic of Believers: Diversity and Innovation in a Multi-Ethnic Church* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005), 197.
[9] Mark Fox, Peter Martin, and Gill Green, *Doing Practitioner Research* (London: SAGE Publications, 2007), 82; Bennett et al., *Invitation to Research in Practical Theology*, 40.
[10] de Roest, *Collaborative Practical Theology*, 176, 177.

studies from the inside, may receive a higher level of acceptance and trust. She will not only know how to ask good questions, but at the same time also understand the answers given at a deeper level.[11] The researcher's self and the "insider's perspective" become a tool for deeper understanding.

Yet, there is less agreement on how much this insider perspective should be seen as a tool and opportunity, rather than a fact to be aware of, and a possible danger to the usefulness of the research within the academic world. Gerardo Marti, a sociologist, researched his own community, a thriving multi-ethnic church in Los-Angeles, where he served as a member of the pastoral staff. During the time of his research, he felt he needed to take a more professional distance from his research subjects, in order not to influence people and situations, and thereby the outcomes.[12] Even though he experienced his place as an insider to the community as an asset, giving him access, trust and openness for his research questions and activities,[13] he also felt that the values of being a pastor could not co-exist with the values of academically rigorous sociological research. He writes:

> *I distanced myself through a "hands-off" attitude. I wanted very much to conduct this study with academic integrity, in the hope of making a scholarly contribution to the understanding of interethnic congregational diversification.[14]*

As an insider, he "embraced" the role of an outsider, in order to look at the community afresh, allowing him also to bring in new and valuable insights.[15]

Henk de Roest argues for collaborative research in practical theology, in which both the researcher and the practitioners and "everyday believers" have an active researching and knowledge generating role. He writes:

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[11] Deborah Court, "Qualitative Research as Cultural and Religious Mirror: What Do Researchers Really Learn?," *Religious Education* 103, no. 4 (July 2008): 414, 420.
[12] Marti, *A Mosaic of Believers: Diversity and Innovation in a Multi-Ethnic Church*, 203.
[13] Ibid., 200.
[14] Ibid., 203.
[15] Ibid., 210.

> *I envisage a 'communal' or 'relational' turn in the process of collaborative research on Christian practices.[16]*

This "relational turn" from a researcher directed practice to a more communal practice is necessary in that it honours the relational character of the 'Missio Dei', and that it allows the communities to profit from the research. They will gain a deeper self-understanding and the research will contribute to the development of the community, to innovation and professionalisation, in such a way that it honours all involved and contributes to their practice.[17] Yet within the framework of this collaborative research, De Roest also argues for a continuing place for the "ivory tower," not as an escape or creating a reality separate from the lived experience, but as an opportunity to take a wider view and see new vistas. It is this distance that prevents the limitations of bias and secures academically rigorous and reliable research. He writes:

> *Nevertheless, the history of scientific life in both the pre-war and post-war period shows that some form of disengagement with regard to the partners one collaborates with is a necessity in order to ensure free, independent and, what's more, trustworthy, reliable research.[18]*

With a view on the study of religious experience, thoughts, and feelings, Rosalind Pearmain describes the relationship between the researcher and the researched person or community as especially important. She highlights the importance of the affective and the physical experience related to religious belief and the life inspired by that belief. And this experience has both conscious and unconscious elements.

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[16] de Roest, *Collaborative Practical Theology*, 2.
[17] Ibid., 156–184.
[18] Ibid., 260.

> *Spirituality is about deeply stirring and moving experiences. […] It is more than we usually know of ourselves.*[19]

Therefore, a relational approach, allowing for an "affective and pre-conceptual mode of cognition and relation," is needed in research, in order to be able to access the "ineffable and moving manifestations of spiritual experience."[20] Deborah Court, who emphasises the value of the place of the insider, adds however that this can be costly, since such an insider has "to be willing to be changed." A revisiting of the familiar with an open attitude, with a willingness to receive the unexpected and different and to allow these to challenge and change personal perceptions and values, is crucial.[21]

This means that the researcher needs to be very self-aware and reflexive; she needs to be aware of her presence and influence in the communication process of the religious experience[22] and open to be personally impacted by difference and willing to be changed. It is in the meeting of each other, in the conversation, action and change that happens in this process, that deeper understanding can be gained.

For this research I have adopted the "critical subjectivity," described by Peter Reason as:

> *a quality of awareness in which we do not suppress our primary subjective experience; nor do we allow ourselves to be overwhelmed and swept away by it; rather we raise it to consciousness and use it as a part of the inquiry process.*[23]

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[19] Rosalind Pearmain, "Evocative Cues and Presence: Relational Consciousness within Qualitative Research," *International Journal of Children's Spirituality* 12, no. 1 (April 2007): 79.

[20] Ibid., 81, 79.

[21] Court, "Qualitative Research as Cultural and Religious Mirror," 422.

[22] Pearmain, "Evocative Cues and Presence," 80.

[23] Peter Reason, "Introduction," in *Human Inquiry in Action: Developments in New Paradigm Research*, ed. Peter Reason (London: SAGE Publications, 1988), 12.

Through the conscious acceptance of, and reflection on my own subjectivity, as well as the effect of the research and myself on the community of research, I understood myself to be what Swinton calls a "research tool."

> She looks carefully at the situation and participates sensitively in it, so these previously hidden meanings begin to merge – previously hidden from the researcher, but also frequently hidden from the community. Thus, in bringing these meanings to the attention of the community, she facilitates noticing, creates new theories, and offers the community insights that it may or may not have previously been aware of.[24]

In this way, knowing and understanding become a communal and relational activity and reality, but a relational reality that does not take away the possibility of critical reflection and engagement with views from outside the research relationship. As much as observation and participation can go together towards a rich understanding of the complex reality, so can the insider and outsider roles meet each other in the researcher and create a fruitful place of conversation, bringing growing insight and even action towards change within self and the community. It is of utmost importance, though, that this process be a conscious and reflexive process, one that is externalised in the design and description of the research.[25]

 In my on-going research, this has meant that, even though I am approaching the CMS community as 'my own family,' I have also been aware of the fact that I am an 'outsider' in certain ways as well. As a member of the community, I am more part of the family than were I just an employee. I have consciously and publicly committed myself to the community and its vision and purpose, promising to live my life in accordance with these. I have friends and personal connections within the community. But at the same time, I am a Dutch woman rather than British: I live on the other side of the North Sea in the Netherlands,

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[24] John Swinton, "Where Is Your Church?: Moving Toward a Hospitable and Sanctified Ethnography," in *Perspectives on Ecclesiology and Ethnography*, ed. Pete Ward (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2012), 81.
[25] Court, "Qualitative Research as Cultural and Religious Mirror," 410.

and my life experience has largely happened outside of this particular community.

Where I have been aware of the advantage of being an 'insider,' in the organisation of the interviews and focus groups, in the access to strategic documents, and in the non-organised conversations and observations that brought new insights, I have also been aware of the limitations that this position can hold. For example, I have had to take a conscious step away from my first impressions, especially in the analysis and interpretation of language that is so familiar to me. Do the interviewee and I give the same meaning and importance to the words we are using? Where I have been able to understand underlying issues and historic reasons because of being an 'insider,' I have also had to pay attention to the experiences, values and ideas, that I find harder to catch, hear and notice, since they are so different from my own experience and understanding as member of the community.

I also realised that people trusted me, the 'insider,' in sharing their thoughts, questions, convictions, and experience. They wanted me to succeed in the research, were motivated to contribute so that it would become useful for the community and the wider mission community and church. Yet, will the outcome of this book, respond to their expectations? I have been clear from the start that this is my research, and that it would be possible that some outcomes could be painful or be experienced as problematic. Two levels of responsibility are at play here. First, I have a responsibility to the community as an organisation which has given me the time and space to pursue the research. Since the organisation of CMS has never put any pressure on me, I have felt completely free to ask any questions to any person willing to engage with me. And the same is true for the final presentation of the research. My sense of responsibility towards the organisation, therefore, is more in the sense that I hope that the outcomes and reflections will be useful to them as a resource in self-understanding and aiding vision and strategy development. And secondly, I feel responsibility towards the people who participated in the research, through interviews, focus groups, and personal encounters in different contexts within the community. In the preliminary presentation of this research, therefore, writing about the community and my fellow-members, I have felt the need to ask certain people

to read through parts of the book, in order to make sure that they felt represented correctly and appropriately.

In all of this, I have realised that my place in the research has been both a place of power and of dependence. Where I have the power of representation, I also depend on people in the community for their contribution and cooperation. Where I have the power to choose what enters into the research and what is put aside, where I have the power to create descriptions and develop theories, I am dependant on the people in the community for their insights, wisdom, experience, questions, and critiques. Still, the outcome and presentation of the research remains fully mine. And it is in this context that I have found Jaco Dreyer's turn from "epistemology" to "ontology" helpful.

> *It is thus not only the "what" of the researcher (what is your race, gender, scholarly position, etc.), his or her positionality in terms of social location, academic position, and scholarly privilege that is important, but the self or personhood of the researcher.*[26]

In researching 'my family' I do need to be very much aware of who I am, how my values, interests, commitments and worldview shape what I ask, perceive and discover.[27] But that would not help me as a person who has a certain power, unless I also become a person who recognises her own dependency and her own "limitations and fallibility:" "a person that recognizes the fragility and vulnerability of its claims."[28] Dreyer states: "The certainty of our reflexive efforts depends on the extent to which we do our research with integrity, with ethical imagination and with a genuine concern for the wellbeing of the researched."[29] Reflexivity does not only take into account what we are but also our attitude and commitment, our "self and personhood."

And it has consequences for the claims we make in our research. The realisation of our position, the particularities of our personality, biography, locality, and our

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[26] Jaco S. Dreyer, "Knowledge, Subjectivity, (De)Coloniality, and the Conundrum of Reflexivity," in *Conundrums in Practical Theology*, ed. Joyce Ann Mercer and Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, vol. 2, Theology in Practice (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 102, 103.
[27] Ibid., 104.
[28] Ibid., 106.
[29] Ibid., 107.

values and commitments, helps us to contribute what we have to offer and to share our discoveries, critiques, and understanding from the specific perspective of who we are. This contributes to the wider conversation, to a deepened and a broadened understanding as it joins with the other voices in that conversation.

The following paragraphs will explore the practical and more detailed ways in which this methodological stance is worked out in the CMS case study, answering the wider research question of 'seeking understanding' through the methodology of the Pastoral Cycle.

4.2. Pastoral Cycle as Methodology

To do justice to all the elements and complexity of this topic, I have chosen to use the Pastoral Cycle as the research methodology. The early origins of this model, according to Ballard and Pritchard, date from the time between the two world wars, when Fr. Joseph Cardijn developed the model of 'see-judge-act' for the Catholic Action in Europe.[30] After the 1960s more emphasis was given – especially in Latin America – to the importance of the theological reflection of lay people in their context, in order to address their needs and the structures of injustice in their society in the light of God's revelation, presence and action. Paolo Freire, the Brazilian educator and activist (1921-97) developed a pedagogy for experiential learning, to help people become conscious of the reality of their situation and context and to reflect on this situation drawing also on other sources, in order to find a way towards action and change. Juan-Luis Segundo calls it "orthopraxis."

Even though this method originates in the specific context of social oppression and economic injustice, and therefore lays a strong emphasis on discovering and exposing power dynamics for change and liberation, it can be used in a wider context. In practical theology, Graham, Walton, and Ward refer to J.L. Segundo when they use the term 'hermeneutical circle,' and place it at the heart of

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[30] Paul H. Ballard and John Pritchard, *Practical Theology in Action: Christian Thinking in the Service of Church and Society* (London: SPCK, 1996), 74.

theology of praxis. Such a theology of praxis touches on all areas of theological reflection, as it is grounded in the lived reality and context in which the Christian tradition and faith enters, in which it is understood and also speaks. Segundo developed this movement into a method for theological reflection in four phases, which he describes as: immersion/experience, social analysis, theological reflection/hermeneutics, pastoral planning. [31] It starts with the conscious immersion in and experience of the lived reality of the situation or community to be researched, which Frans Wijsen calls "step zero." In this phase participant observation is used as a methodological tool, including reflection on the researcher's own place and complicity in this experience. [32] This lived experience is then analysed in the second phase, gaining a deeper insight into its dynamics and meanings. Wijsen warns that this analysis should remain critical and actual, rather than an analysis of what was in the past or what is romanticised. Segundo calls for a "hermeneutics of suspicion." The outcome of this analysis is then evaluated through a "return to the Christian tradition." This is the third phase of "theological reflection, hermeneutics" which results in values and a vision and leads to a "faithful praxis" that is tested in the lived reality. The fourth phase then goes back to the practice in the lived reality and plans towards action and a faithful practice while taking into account what has been discovered in the preceding three phases.[33]

As related to the research described in this book, the pastoral cycle as method for theological reflection is helpful in four ways. First, because of the emphasis on the experience and immersion in the lived reality, the pastoral cycle places the research squarely in the lived reality, leading to contextually relevant

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[31] Elaine L. Graham, Heather Walton, and Frances Ward, *Theological Reflection: Methods* (London: SCM Press, 2005), 188.

[32] Frans Wijsen, "The Practical-Theological Spiral: Bridging Theology in the West and the Rest of the World," in *Pastoral Circle Revisited: A Critical Quest for Truth and Transformation*, ed. Frans Wijsen, Peter Henriot, and Rodrigo Mejía (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005), 115, 116.

[33] Graham, Walton, and Ward, *Theological Reflection*, 190, 191. Richard R. Osmer speaks in this context about four interrelated tasks: "the descriptive-empirical, interpretive, normative, and pragmatic. Richard R. Osmer, "Formation in the Missional Church: Building Deep Connections between Ministries of Upbuilding and Sending," in *Cultivating Sent Communities: Missional Spiritual Formation*, ed. Dwight J. Zscheile (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2012), 29.

understanding, wisdom, and action. Secondly, it is appropriate for the iterative relational character[34] of the research, in which the researcher, throughout the different phases of the process, can be both an "insider" and an "outsider," while also working together with the researched community to gain a deeper and more complex understanding. Thirdly, linking the Pastoral Cycle with the cyclical concept of the hermeneutical circle also allows for a process in research that is an ongoing movement of discovery, analysis and learning, and action. This leads to new discovery and learning and is not just a linear process with a single outcome. And fourthly, Wijsen rightly emphasises that these four phases cannot be isolated parts. They are all linked, and they overlap. And it is especially important to realise that the theology is not restricted to the third phase. All phases carry theological meaning and significance.[35]

In practice this meant that I started this research with a case study of CMS as an acknowledged community of mission in the Anglican Communion. I looked at its lived experience and self-understanding against the background of an understanding of the social context, as discovered in sociological reflection. Insights of leading sociological thinkers, such as Zygmunt Bauman, Manuel Castells, along with my personal experience informed my questions and influenced my observations, including the post-colonial dynamics relevant to the CMS context. The focus was on both the worldwide and local experience of community and their relationship. This can be understood as the 'Experience' phase of the Pastoral Cycle.

Secondly, the 'Analysis' phase of the Pastoral Cycle, consisted of the analysis of the case study findings, through a process of coding and thematising of the data in the light of the social context and the (theological) self-understanding of the community. This led to a more realistic understanding of the lived reality of the worldwide community and a fuller insight into the implications and the questions that should be raised, both on the local and on the global level.

The 'Experience' and the 'Analysis' phase together led to the 'Reflection' phase, consisting of a wider theological reflection. Here, formal theology, originating

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[34] de Roest, *Collaborative Practical Theology*, 260.
[35] Wijsen, "The Practical-Theological Spiral: Bridging Theology in the West and the Rest of the World," 118.

from within the CMS community and the wider missiological field, was brought into conversation with the lived reality and experience and both the explicit and implicit theology as lived in that experience.

And finally, the 'Response' phase consisted of reflection on the outcomes of the research and the possible consequences of these outcomes for how we experience, live and shape the worldwide Christian mission community, including why and how that matters for mission.

4.3. Case Study

Starting with the "experience phase," a closer look at the case study and the methods used is necessary. This case study can be understood as a study of lived religious practice; therefore, further reflection on the theology of the case study as research method is also needed. To this we will turn in the following sections.

In my experience, since CMS became an acknowledged community within the Anglican Communion, members have differed in their evaluation of this idea and its reality. "What does this mean for real life? How can this be made practical and real?" are regularly asked questions. The meaning given and the lived reality of CMS as a worldwide mission community seems to differ between the different members of that community. This experience needed to be tested.

The research question, particular to this case study, therefore was: How do CMS members experience and enact the worldwide mission community, and what meaning, and importance do they give to this for their mission practice?

To answer this question, I looked at the CMS community from the perspective of the local members and churches in the UK, the members who are working in the CMS-Britain office in Oxford, and the members of the CMS mission network, in order to gain insight into the lived theology of the community. The following paragraphs explore how the lived experience, as expressed by the different groups within the community, can be understood to be theological, as part of a lived theology.

4.3.1. Lived Theology

In his article *The Cultivation of Theological Vision,* McGrath describes what he believes to be the danger of the separation of experience and observation from theological reflection in the Pastoral Cycle, as described by Laurie Green.[36] An added danger that he mentions is the risk of evaluating the academic theological reflection as somehow 'neutral' and 'objective.' He states that the theological is already active in the observation. We cannot but 'see' through the lens of the Christian 'map of reality'. What we observe is influenced by our Christian understanding of the world and our beliefs. [37]

How important this risk of separation is, I believe, depends on how one understands the nature of the conversation between the different partners participating in the cycle of reflection. Is it a temporal meeting and conversing of people coming from wholly different directions, or an ongoing conversation of partners, with both overlapping and separate experiences and reflections, in a process of mutual sharing, learning, discovering, and shaping? McGrath's emphasis on the importance of the relational character of the lived experience and theology is an important one. This makes theology a lived experience which carries and shapes theological meaning by a process of ongoing reflection and experience, in the reflective conversation with the partners.

Three theological themes are regularly used to support this understanding of the interrelatedness of the lived reality in the world and theology; they are, first, a Trinitarian view of being and mission of the church, second, Christ as the One in whom all things come together (Colossians 1), and third, the church as a Christian response to God's work in the world. In her research on local congregations, Elizabeth Jordan emphasises the relationality of God, as shown in the Trinity, and "the invitation to human beings to join the movement of divine love [which] comes from God and is made possible by God." [38] This

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[36] Laurie Green, *Let's Do Theology: Resources for Contextual Theology* (London: Mowbray, 2009).

[37] Alister McGrath, "The Cultivation of Theological Vision: Theological Attentiveness and the Practice of Ministry," in *Perspectives on Ecclesiology and Ethnography*, ed. Pete Ward (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2012), 115, 116.

[38] Jordan, "Researching from the Inside: The Researcher as a Member of the Family."

relationality also has important epistemological consequences for her; relationship itself becomes a way of knowing. "There is no knowledge of the being of God, of ourselves or of each other as isolated individuals, to be acquired from objective observation." On the one hand, this means that participation in this relationality is essential for knowing. On the other hand, this means that we cannot but understand the church (the Christian community) "as a sign and a reflection of God's way of being in creation."[39] For Jordan, this implies that through knowing the church's life in the world we can discover the local manifestation of God's work in this world; and this manifestation of God is both a social and a theological entity.

The Christological argument is made by Pete Ward when he states that the church should be seen as simultaneously theological and social/cultural, but he uses the theme of Christ as the One in whom all things come together (Colossians 1). [40] Theology cannot function as a separate, disembodied discipline, since it is embedded in the reality of Christ in this world. Neither can theology be totally defined by the social and cultural reality in which it exists, since it also arises from "a traditioned ecclesial expression. This expression includes a doctrinal and liturgical canon that forms us as we set about trying to understand the church."[41]

Nicholas Healy uses the word "interplay," to describe the conversation between theology and the lived reality. He not only highlights the diversity of congregations and Christian communities, but also the diversity within these communities. There is not only a diversity in "life and language," but also in their understanding of God. [42] There are differences in the context in which the community exists which influence the being and believing of the community.[43] Yet, we should not neglect the fact that there may be inconsistencies in the

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[39] Ibid.
[40] Pete Ward, "Introduction," in *Perspectives on Ecclesiology and Ethnography*, ed. Pete Ward (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2012), 2.
[41] Ibid., 3.
[42] Nicholas M. Healy, "Ecclesiology, Ethnography, and God: An Interplay of Reality Descriptions," in *Perspectives on Ecclesiology and Ethnography*, ed. Pete Ward (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2012), 185.
[43] Ibid., 186.

beliefs, habits, or actions of each member of the community.[44] This complicates our understanding of the church and the community but is a normal consequence of the fact that, according to Healy, the church is an embodied expression of the Christian response to the gospel of Jesus Christ and God's saving work in the world. As a result, "what we are as Christians and as the church is hidden by our own finitude, diversity, inconsistency, and the confusion of our places within the world."[45] Yet, we are the church, irrespective of the quality of our response, and the centre of this church is both in God and in the world. There is no church apart from the world and God working in it.

Inspired by the theological theme of the Trinity and reflecting on the research methodologies into this lived theological reality, Paul Fiddes wants to go beyond the idea that theology and speaking about God and the church should be seen as "deductive," and the approach of social sciences as inductive as it draws conclusions from the dispassionately and objectively observed practice.[46] We know through participation in the all-embracing reality of the Triune God, who is at work in this world, incarnated into this world, and inviting us into relationship with God in this world.

> *I want to affirm that ecclesiology is grounded in God, and its story is nothing less than an engagement in the metanarrative of the Trinity. This is a narrative given through the self-disclosure of God at key moments in human history, and through human reflection on this encounter, prompted by its impact on the human mind.[47]*

As a result, it will not suffice to "translate" theological propositions into a specific context. The incarnation of Christ was already culture and context specific and can only be understood in other contexts through the encounter

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[44] Ibid., 188.
[45] Ibid., 199.
[46] Paul S. Fiddes, "Ecclesiology and Ethnography: Two Disciplines, Two Worlds?," in *Perspectives on Ecclesiology and Ethnography*, ed. Pete Ward (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2012), 13.
[47] Ibid., 17.

with God in an embodied way. This comes in the concrete realities of particular contexts and not just through our ideas or beliefs.[48] Fiddes writes:

> *Theology means talk about God, and so we are asking what the triune God is doing in and through these bodily shapes of life, finding what we can say about the activity of God in creation and redemption.*[49]

God acts in history, in place, in the particular of each life and context. It is from this perspective that Robert Schreiter develops his contextual theology and speaks about the creation of local theologies in a Catholic Church.[50] He states that for this task, which is a theological task, the tools of social sciences should be used. As it is not appropriate to separate the church and the world, it is neither appropriate to separate in this endeavour the theological and the secular. For Fiddes this means that the tools of social science are essential for the understanding of God and God's work, but they stand in the service of the theological quest.[51]

Approaching this question from the ethnographic side, John Swinton describes this process as a hermeneutical process in which the researcher's beliefs, context and life experience also play an important role. And agreeing with Fiddes he writes:

> *[…] in terms of both method and methodology, theologians who desire to use ethnography as part of their theologizing should approach the issue as theologians. Ethnography should be perceived as occurring within a theological context, rather than theology speaking into a context that is already defined by ethnography.*[52]

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[48] Ibid., 18, 19.
[49] Ibid., 19.
[50] Robert J. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985).
[51] Fiddes, "Ecclesiology and Ethnography: Two Disciplines, Two Worlds?," 20.
[52] Swinton, "Where Is Your Church?: Moving Toward a Hospitable and Sanctified Ethnography," 87.

Yet, this relationship between theology and ethnography should be a relationship of hospitality, where there is mutual respect, giving and receiving, rather than theology taking precedence, and so bringing inequality into the relationship.[53] The anthropologist Joel Robbins even pleads for a conversation between anthropology and theology that goes beyond the use of each other's sources and tools for research but truly engages each other's foundational values, theoretical and ideational frameworks, with an openness that leads to being changed through this engagement. This conversation could be a transformational conversation, shaping both disciplines in new ways.[54]

Since the research question of this case study of the CMS community is a question of understanding – the understanding of the lived experience of the Christian mission community worldwide – the methodology of this research is based on the assumption that this community, in all its diversity and human brokenness, is both a human response to, and a part of, God's self-revelation and incarnation into this world. The question, therefore, is a deeply theological question, in need of a thoroughly grounded research into the lived reality and its social and cultural context. In order to be able to take into full account the theological dimension, the worldly dimension, and the lived and experienced reality of the Christian mission community worldwide, I have chosen to use the concept of the four voices of theology, as developed by Clare Watkins, Helen Cameron, et al.[55]

4.3.2. Four Voices of Theology

The concept of the "four voices of theology"- operant, espoused, normative and formal – is developed by Watkins, Cameron, et al., in the context of Theological Action Research (TAR). Action Research was originally developed by Kurt Lewin, just after the end of the Second World War, as a strategy for social research,

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[53] Ibid., 89.
[54] Joel Robbins, "Interview during the Graduate School at the PThU Groningen on His Forthcoming Book: Theology and the Anthropology of Christian Life," October 30, 2019.
[55] Helen Cameron et al., *Talking about God in Practice: Theological Action Research and Practical Theology* (London: SCM Press, 2010).

with a democratic and participative character.[56] Martyn Descombe describes Action Research as "essentially practical and applied. It is driven by the need to solve practical, real-world problems. […] The research needs to be undertaken as *part of practice* rather than a bolt-on addition to it."[57] Watkins, Cameron, et al., speaking about Theological Action Research, state that TAR works with a holistic epistemology in a specific context and a lived experience, starting with a *theological* question for research and using *theological* methods to interpret the data.[58]

The understanding that what we do, that our actions are bearers of theology[59] means that our practices can be called the "operant voice" of theology. The other voices they distinguish are: the "espoused voice" signifying the beliefs and values people attach to their life, faith and practices, the "normative voice" of the Scriptures, Creeds, and liturgies, and the "formal voice" of the theological reflection of the academy, the theology of the 'professional' theologians.[60]

In acknowledging these four voices of theology as part of the whole theological reflection enterprise, Cameron and Watkins et al. manage to resolve the danger of separating the theological and the lived reality, while accounting for the differences in perspective which each voice brings. This leads to a fuller and more dynamic picture of theology, both in the understanding of the lived reality as it is researched and in the understanding of the research process itself.

Bringing these four voices into an active conversation will guard the researcher against a theology that does not take the lived reality into full account and therefore risks painting a vision removed from real life, one that is too idealistic and prescriptive. It also guards against a theology that is fully shaped by the lived

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[56] Peter Reason, "Choice and Quality in Action Research Practice," *Journal of Management Inquiry* 15, no. 2 (June 1, 2006): 189.

[57] Denscombe, *The Good Research Guide*, 127.

[58] Clare Watkins et al., "Epiphanic Sacramentality: An Example of Practical Theology Revisioning Theological Understanding," in *Explorations in Ecclesiology and Ethnography*, ed. Christian B. Sharen (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2012), 73.

[59] Clare Watkins et al., "Practical Ecclesiology: What Counts as Theology in Studying the Church?," in *Perspectives on Ecclesiology and Ethnography*, ed. Pete Ward (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2012), 177.

[60] Cameron et al., *Talking about God in Practice*, 53–55.

reality and so becomes a subjective description only of what is. As Watkins writes:

> *[…] theology as such does not reside in one or other voice, though each may have its particular kind of authority and perspective; neither are the voices discrete, as each can be seen as formed by, and forming of, the others in various ways. Where theology is located in this conversation is, rather, in the moments of disclosure – what we have elsewhere called 'epiphanies' – which take place as the conversation proceeds.[61]*

Understanding and insight grow within the conversation between all the participants of that conversation, be they people, context, written sources, or action plans, a conversation that is theological in all its parts and phases.

Using the four voices of theology as a research tool also resolves the tension between a theological question that is answered through the use of ethnographic research tools, in which ethnography is placed at the service of theology, as we see in the argument of Paul Fiddes. He emphasises the embodied and contextual nature of theology, since God entered into this world, acts in this world, and therefore can only be known in this world. But in order to come to theology as speaking about God, we need the tools of science to help us discover who God is and where and how God acts in this world. And these tools of science are, according to Fiddes, secular tools in themselves.[62] Yet, if the whole research process, including all the voices, is understood to be carrying theological meaning in itself, then the use of ethnographic tools will also become theological in itself. Asking a theological question, observing, and researching through a theological lens, creates theological conversations that include all areas of life.

It is important to note that, while this notion of the four voices of theology is particularly important in the case study, it is not limited to the lived experience

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[61] Clare Watkins, "The Conversational Disclosure of Whole-Theology: Methodological, Theological and Epistemological Implications of the 'Four Voices of Theology' Framework for Practical Ecclesiology, or Practising Ecclesiology: From Product to Process." (Presented at the Bergen Symposium, Bergen, 2014).
[62] Fiddes, "Ecclesiology and Ethnography: Two Disciplines, Two Worlds?," 20.

of the community of CMS. In this research, using the Pastoral Cycle as an ongoing cyclical process of experience, analysis, reflection, and response, aiming at a renewed experience and reflection, each of these phases will have to take the different voices of theology into account.

Since the lived experience is shaped by the meaning given to that experience, as well as by the history and heritage of the community and by the wider theological reflection both in the community itself and in the church worldwide, the understanding and description of that lived experience has to take each of these theological realities into account. For example, when the interviewees describe the community as family, this not only resonates with the familial language used in the Bible describing believers as brothers and sisters, but also with the Trinitarian and relational understanding of God encountered in the theological reflections of the community and the wider church. This in turn relates to both the character of the community by valuing faithful relationships[63] and the missional calling of the community in the world. At the same time, the theological reflections of both the community and of me as the researcher have to continuously be connected with the lived experience, and the operant and espoused theology as they are discovered in that experience, in order to remain grounded and relevant. This is another instance where the insider's perspective is helpful, participating naturally in that lived experience, while at the same time a certain distance offers a wider perspective and the possibility of a critical analysis.

In sum, even though this research is using relevant tools and reflections from the social sciences, it is fully theological. It asks a theological question[64] of understanding and response, and not a sociological question as it would in sociology of religion,[65] or sociological theology.[66] Yet, this theological question

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[63] Faithful relationships is one of the core values of CMS. See chapter 2.1.3. See also chapter 6.

[64] Watkins et al., "Epiphanic Sacramentality: An Example of Practical Theology Revisioning Theological Understanding," 73.

[65] Peter L. Berger, *The Many Altars of Modernity: Toward a Paradigm for Religion in a Pluralist Age* (Boston, MA: Walter de Gruyter Inc, 2014).

[66] For example: Robin Gill, *Theology in a Social Context: Sociological Theology*, vol. 1 (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2012).

cannot be reflected on from outside the social context. Therefore, starting with the personal experience which raised the question, it describes the specific self-understanding and experience of community in CMS as a Christian mission community. I have discovered this through participatory qualitative research, while also listening to the voices of sociological research and analysis about the society in which we are living (including the religious groups, communities and movements). These elements come together in an understanding of the social reality, realising that this understanding itself already is theological in that it carries, both consciously and unconsciously, theological meaning. It is into this reality that the formal theological voices of both CMS and the world mission movements are invited to speak, entering the social reality, and finding new insight and broadened understanding in that specific context. And while, because of the particularity of the case, it is not possible to come to conclusions that are generally valid and applicable, they do contribute to the wider conversation about community, mission, and God, by revealing fresh perspectives, and possibly even including a new appeal.

4.4. How It Happened

The case study, which is part of this wider theological research as described above, is seeking to understand the lived reality of CMS as a worldwide community, especially from the perspective of the members of CMS Britain, but also related to an international perspective. This section gives an outline of how the research happened, with a special focus on the case study and its analysis, along with my interactions with the members of the CMS community.

CMS is a community that consists of a network of diverse communities, to which different people belong at different levels of involvement and commitment. Some people belong to more than one community within the wider group. Some people feel strong links to the worldwide community, others are much more locally centred and focussed. To get a relatively fair (and practically workable) sample for the case study research, a sample that would reflect the diversity and breadth of the community, I focused on the following groups:

1. A Link Church, which is a local congregation in the UK with a particular link to CMS, often through the support of a CMS mission partner, and also some individual CMS members. These are the CMS community members in the local churches and context in the UK.
2. CMS-Britain's office in Oxford. Much of the thinking and evaluation of the CMS community in the UK happens here. The leadership of the CMS community in the UK is based here and relates as such to the mission partners sent by CMS-Britain, who are working in projects and places all around the world. Relationships with international partners are also maintained here.
3. CMS-Britain mission partners. These are the people who are working, sent by their local churches through CMS, all around the world, connecting with churches and communities in other cultures and contexts from Birmingham and Hull to India and Argentina.
4. The CMS Mission Network, an "interchange" partnership between CMS Africa, AsiaCMS, CMS Britain, CMS-Ireland, NZCMS (in New Zealand) and CMS Australia. Within this group I focussed especially on CMS Africa, and African local communities related to CMS.

Through listening to people from each of these groups, I have sought to discover how people describe their experience of community in CMS, what happens and how it happens, how people express the meaning and value of what happens, and what they think should really happen.[67] In this way I wanted to capture the practices, the meaning given to them, the vision shaping them, and the lived reality of these practices. And therefore, both participant observation and semi-structured interviews have played an important role. Observation not only gave insight into what happens, but also into the performative impact of the meaning and vision as it is expressed within the CMS community. The interviews allowed me to listen to the stories of members who described their experience of community, or the lack of it, in their context. These interviews covered a set of subjects, probing deeper into the stories and comments that surprised me, or seemed especially important to me.

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[67] See also: Osmer, "Formation in the Missional Church: Building Deep Connections between Ministries of Upbuilding and Sending," 29.

The risk of this approach was that it would be difficult for me to discover the experience that was outside of my view, or contrary to my expectations. For this reason, at the start of the data gathering, I conducted a short survey in the office in Oxford, asking open questions about the concept and experience of community in general; not limited to the CMS community. People participated anonymously in this survey, allowing them to say what they would normally not divulge in conversations in the office. Secondly, the two focus groups allowed me to observe discussions between people connected to the CMS community, while asking questions to probe deeper than what I had captured in the normal conversations and the initial responses and reflections. Being a member of the community myself and working in the CMS office in Oxford, I had overheard conversations about CMS as community – conversations that were rather critical of both the idea and the lived reality – and I wanted to capture this formally, in the office, and also with people of the 'diaspora.' Using set questions,[68] starting with the reading out of their written response by each individual participant in the group, and followed by a free discussion on the question and the answers given in the group, I wanted, first, to check my personal bias in the interviews and observations. And, secondly, I hoped to hear more than the thoughts of individuals through interviewing; I was interested in the development of thoughts through conversation.[69]

During the transcription and the initial open coding of the interviews and focus groups, I started to realise that where all the four dimensions of community, as I had distilled them from my reflections on the context of this research,[70] have a place in the stories told about the lived experience, yet, there is diversity in the weight and emphasis given to each of these dimensions. And secondly, I realised that the community experience is not only described as a positive reality, but also as painful, incomplete, not realised, not living up to its values and expectations. But, surprising to me, even when people spoke about the ambivalent reality of community, they also continued to speak in very positive terms about the vision and value of community. Even though people could be

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[68] See appendix.
[69] Henk de Roest, "The Focus Group Method in Practical Ecclesiology: Performative Effects and Ecclesiological Rationale," *Ecclesial Practices* 2, no. 2 (2015): 235–254.
[70] Locality, Identification, Belonging, Commitment – see chapter 2.2.3.

disappointed, they continued to invest in the community. And it was this discovery which I used as a lens for the second round of coding. It led me to describe the CMS community as a 'Circle of Shared Existence' as a 'Relational Event,' that incorporates both the positive and the painful reality.[71] Through the third round of coding, conducted with the express purpose of checking this description of the CMS community, and through the writing up of my description of the CMS community experience as I had found it, I realised the importance of 'ambivalence' in the experience of the CMS community. That ambivalence is not just a negative and destructive experience, but rather a constructive reality, leading to a relational and contextual shape of the community. It therefore can be seen as a necessary experience for the community that seeks to live according to the values and vision of participating in the Mission of God and seeking to be a sign of the Kingdom of God.

Finally, I have sent parts of the book to a small number of CMS members, representing the different groups in the research, in order to receive their reaction, comments and questions. This was important to me as researcher for the checking of the outcomes of the research. Did I hear, perceive, and represent rightly? I also wanted to ensure that I have done justice to the input of the interviewees and of some more prominent actors in the shaping of the CMS community.

4.5. Conclusion

In this chapter I have given an overview of the most important methodological questions and choices in the case study of CMS as part of the research project into the theological experience and understanding of the worldwide Christian mission community. Where I have used the Pastoral Cycle as the overall methodology of the research project, I have chosen to combine this with the concept of the four voices of theology in the CMS case study. The result of the case study is a description of the CMS community practices as a lived theology of community, as it is experienced and expressed by its members.

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[71] See chapter 5.

The steps that I have taken in the research process, based on my methodological framework using the Pastoral Cycle and the Four Voices of Theology, together with an indication of where the different chapters of this book fit into the overall methodology, can be visualised as follows:
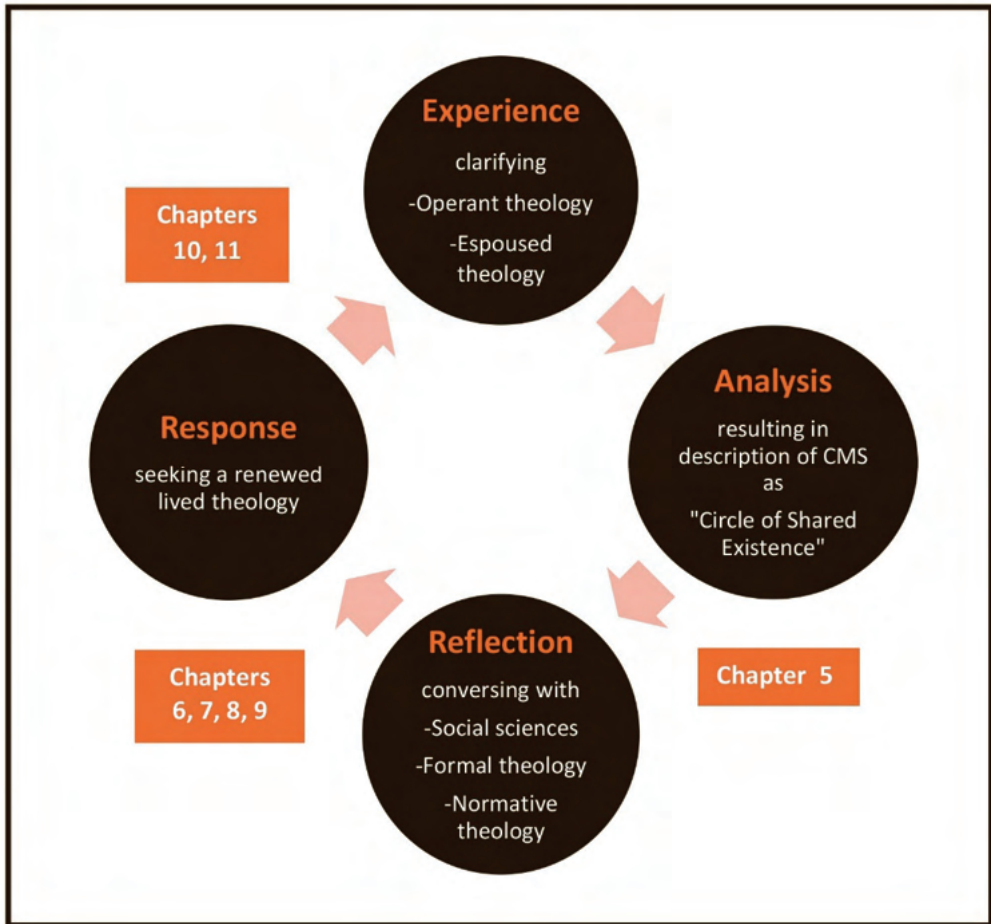
The importance of this research methodology is related to the understanding that we cannot see the full breadth and depth of the worldwide Christian mission community, without understanding both the lived reality and contextual experience of that community, together with the formal and

normative theology around this subject. A sincerely mutual conversation is needed, in which all those voices are heard, listened to, and allowed to contribute to and shape each other. As a researcher, I have been part of this conversation as a 'relative' insider and have used this as an opportunity for better understanding; I allowed myself to be a 'tool of research.' While keeping away from grand generalisations and 'universally' normative theories, I permitted myself to reflect on indicators for a wider understanding of community, practice, mission, and God.

The following chapters, in Part II, will describe the CMS community practices, and the theological conversation in the context of the lived reality and the formal theology developed within and outside the CMS community. This description will start with a general framework in which the community is understood as a 'relational event' that can be described as a 'circle of shared existence.' This is followed by five chapters, each giving a more detailed description of one of the dimensions of the community, with a discussion in the light of voices from the social sciences and theology, both from within and outside of CMS.

PART II

CMS AS CIRCLE OF SHARED EXISTENCE

Within CMS, community is an often-used word which can have different dimensions and shapes. A person can speak in one sentence about the CMS community and about the church and/or the local community, without necessarily making a clear distinction between them. People belong to many different communities. In a small survey, asking the employees of CMS in the office in Oxford to what communities they belong, family, friends, peer groups, church, action groups, hobby groups and the local village and neighbourhood were named, as was CMS in general, CMS as a work place, and the CMS Pioneer course.[1] Most of the named communities have a local or regional character, but some have a clearly international character, such as, for example, the Ethiopian Christian Fellowship Church and The Mission House.

In this chapter I give a general introduction to the community discourse, as it is used within CMS,[2] and as it relates to the lived reality of the community. And I show how this community, according to the interviewees, ought to be lived and

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[1] On 19-10-2017 I held an initial survey, at the Monday's@10 meeting for staff in the CMS office in Oxford, introducing my research project and asking open questions about what communities people belong to and why that is important to them.

[2] By the interviewees, in the focus groups, and also on the website and in the communication literature of CMS.

realised. In this section, the CMS community is described as a 'relational event' with a vision and purpose that is realised in places and events, through attitudes and actions, resulting in specific characteristics and outcomes. People also describe this 'relational event' in familial language thereby emphasising belonging. Community in event and action is expressed in language of purpose and commitment.

5.1. Relational Event

On the first page of the CMS website, the focus on people is visible. "We always had a dream … of people set free," it states. By primarily using photos of people's faces, taken in such a way that they seem to look the viewer in the eye, and pictured against a light and simple background, the visual design also underscores this focus.[3] This presentation communicates that in CMS people are central, and much of the language used when speaking about community is relational. People speak about being together, sharing life, having things in common, such as vision, interests, and values. They speak about the importance of mutual support and friendship.

For some, sharing of life and being together means that community will only be experienced in its local expression, in the local neighbourhood, village, or local church.

> But I think, for me, community is about living together, about sharing life together. It is about.. holding, holding values, holding maybe similar values, welcoming outsiders, hospitality, I guess, that..... ... and... a sense of.... a sense of rootedness in a rhythm of life that is rich and meaningful. I don't get that from CMS, because that is not my experience. (Interview 11-24:20)

And a bit later, reflecting on his local community, he says:

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[3] http://www.churchmissionsociety.org/ Accessed 02/02/2017. See also chapter 3.

> *Whereas my local community, I think about that, there are times to bring [people], because it is hospitality, you might share a meal. (Interview 11-27:40)*

Others indicate that even over the distance of continents one can share and belong together, through mutual visits, communication, and social media, and through prayer for each other.

> *On se connaisse très bien, on se dit, Edo,[4] je l'ai vue là-bas, laisse-moi prier pour lui. Comme, si je peux vous dire, prier pour ma femme, je connais la femme d'Edo. J'étais chez lui. Vous voyez maintenant, ça c'est ce qui est vraiment très important pour nous en tant que gens qui travaillent pour le Seigneur. Oui, oui. (Interview 16-46:05)*

> *We know each other very well. We say, Edo, I have seen him there, let me pray for him. And if I may say: pray for my wife. I know the wife of Edo. I was with him. Do you see now, it is really very important for us as people who work for the Lord. Yes. Yes. (Translation BvdTL)*

When people meet, they get to know each other, they develop a friendship and they care for each other.

This relationship is strengthened by the experience of having things in common. In the initial survey this was mentioned as one of the main reasons why community was important to the respondents. The commonalities most mentioned were the shared goal and purpose. This is followed closely by the shared values and beliefs, and the shared interests. People identify with each other and experience a sense of belonging together.

As a result, community is regularly described as a family, or as a home – family as a place of mutual belonging and relationship, home as a place of personal growth and support.

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[4] Not his real name.

> *And... what is interesting, people would say, we don't understand all this Sunday stuff, but we have found a home here. (Interview 04-13:22, speaking about small communities within a local church)*

Yet, interviewees would also indicate that a family or a home, within this discourse, does not just exist for itself, it exists for the other. While the secure place of the home is meant to be a welcoming place to the outsider, a place of hospitality, both the home and the family also are a starting place and support base for outward action, both locally and more widely. [5]

In this outward focus, the crossing of boundaries is seen as essential; it is about meeting the other. The difference encountered is to be celebrated as part of God's reality in which people recognise their common humanity across boundaries of difference.

> *… because there is a strong New Testament theological underpinning for celebrating just that kind of community and discovering that deep unity that we have in Christ that transcends all human barriers... it...it...it's what Paul is talking about in Galatians and Ephesians. (Interview 1-05:52)*

But community is also seen as a source of knowledge and understanding in which inequalities are not experienced as an obstacle for true mutual learning, at least in theory. One interviewee asks:

> *And so, how do we as a community work with that. How do we understand ourselves as a community that, that respects that the Spirit can, can work with the powerless and the needy as much as he can work with the powerful. (Interview 05-41:02)*

Such an outward focus is said to be based on a mission spirituality that is shared within the community through a shared commitment to a rhythm of life in prayer, and a reflection on God's revelation and presence in the context in which one finds oneself; this leads to a daily life of mission. One of the CMS leaders,

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[5] See chapter 9.2.

reflecting on the community in the wider society, connects its calling to a spiritual rhythm developed in that community.

> *A real sense of grace and love and understanding. And concern and care. And then recognising that to be prophetic, and by that I don't mean a big word of prophesy at half past six a Sunday evening, but it is how you live every day prophetically. And.. that, that I think is also about... how we help disciples really understand what it means to follow Jesus. [...]uhm... but out of it had come the thought that actually we could try and write some kind of spiritual rhythm of life, which helps people go a pilgrimage, to understand how Jesus, I think, in many ways was a pilgrim. (Interview 4-20:59)*

This prophetic life is realised in an active building of relationships across boundaries, that may be social, ethnic, geographic, or religious. This will necessarily lead to action according to the needs of the other. Sometimes, this action is mentioned in the language of "partnership" and sometimes there is more a connotation of "helping" the other in need through projects, or through people being sent to do a job. The community has to be a place where people meet and relate to each other. And this relational place has to be a community of purpose, a place of outward action. It is a 'relational event,' based on a vision which is realised in real places and events, by people acting together according to the vision, even when it is costly.

The following paragraphs will introduce these elements of the relational event – elements that will be explored further and, in more detail, in the later chapters.

5.1.1. Vision[6]

The most important expressed vision for community within CMS is to be missional. This can be expressed locally, or in a wider context, worldwide.

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[6] See also chapter 7.

Missional community. If we are Christians, then we are all that, aren't we? (PiM FG 18:15)

For this person, being a Christian implies that one is part of a community and that the purpose of that community, and therefore for each member, is to be missional. This mission is expressed in the interviews, the focus groups, as well as in the official CMS communication materials, in the terms of the Five Marks of Mission. These were adopted at the Lambeth Conference of the Anglican Bishops in 1988, with the launch of the Decade of Evangelism.[7] The Five Marks describe the mission of the community as proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom: teaching, baptising and nurturing new believers; responding to human need through loving service; seeking to transform unjust structures of society; and striving to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustaining and renewing the life of the earth.

This action focussed vision is combined with a vision for relationships of mutual learning within the community. The vision has a receiving element, in that relationships across boundaries open up a wider world and other perspectives on the world and on a person's life and context. In some cases that will help people to discover more about God, the world, their context, and their own place in it.

So, other people connect into my life, and who I am, and what I am interested in, and uhm.. and what makes me tick. It kind of is a whole learning, well it is a humanising thing for me. Community. And in quite a deep way. Uhm... allows me to see the world... you know in some sense, I, I sometimes think, with our own community, my actual community, that I can view the world through a dozen different sets of eyes, instead of just looking at it through my own.

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[7] https://churchmissionsociety.org/mission-opportunities/how-we-do-mission/ Accessed 08/05/2020. And theologically explored in articles written by theologians who are connected to CMS, coming from different parts of the world in: Andrew Walls and Cathy Ross, eds., *Mission in the 21st Century: Exploring the Five Marks of Mission* (London: Darton Longman & Todd, 2008).

Uhm.. and understand the world then 12 times better than I do on my own. (Interview 8-10:04)

5.1.2. Places and Events[8]

The realisation of this vision takes place in the local community through gatherings and events, by, for example, sharing a meal, going out for a drink with colleagues, meeting in the park or in each other's homes. It can happen in the workplace, where employees become friends, where people participate in social activities and events in and outside of the working hours. A former CMS employee tells how she still feels connected to people in the CMS office and the wider CMS community, even after moving away:

> *Actually, I popped into the offices back in October. Uhm… and everyone was just lovely, do you know what I mean? And I thought ohh.. this is nice. And it was like I had not left. And then, it, there are various people I am still in touch with. But yes, I do still feel part of it. (Interview 22-22:00)*

Secondly, there are places and events that bring people from different localities together, such as regional and international conferences, [9] visits that are organised across geographical boundaries, and of course the social media as a boundary crossing place for encounter and the upkeep of relationships while physically being in different places. To facilitate this type of dispersed community, people in CMS place great importance on the telling of stories, and many of their events create an important space for this telling of the stories of people within the community. Telling of the stories is experienced as an encouragement to participate in the community life and in the outward mission of the community.

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[8] See also chapter 9.
[9] For example, the Africa Forum is a group of volunteers within CMS with a special interest for Africa. They organise conferences in the UK, collect prayer news for their members, promote projects in Africa and seek to keep relationships with partners in Africa alive.

But... I mean fundamentally, I guess, a meeting of people with a heart for mission in Africa, an opportunity to share, to meet each other, to see what other people are doing, to be encouraged by what other people are doing. Uhm.. Perhaps to be inspired to do things that you would have never thought of, that other people ... a path they have started on. (Interview 14-13:11, speaking about the importance of the Africa Forum)

5.1.3. Attitudes and Actions

The centrality of people and relationships within the community experience calls for, according to its members, an attitude of openness to the other – for hospitality. This is true even when this hospitality brings with it a certain sense of discomfort, because of the encounter and appeal of difference. An elderly couple reflected on this:

Perhaps being uncomfortable is a good thing. So.. uh.. you are constantly challenged. If you are comfortable, there is no challenge in anything to make a change, to contribute in some way. So, perhaps, there has always to e something uncomfortable for us as a Christian, all the time, because you are not challenged if you are sitting back and being content at the way things are. (Interview 17-42:03)

Hospitality and openness to the other may bring challenge, but this is seen as an opportunity for something good to happen.

The aim of the community is not to build a sub-culture but to create a place where all are welcome. At the same time, it is a community with a clear identity and purpose, described primarily as Christian and missional. This identity is meant to be so evident that only those who subscribe to those values will want to belong. [10]

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[10]This is further explored in chapter 8.

There are people who are working in the office who are not part. You know, and I think the security guards are part of that, partly because they don't share some things that we are sharing in terms of the quality of the relationships that we have with them. But also, their ability to contribute to the organisation, and that spiritual position and their, their commitment to our common purpose, which is beyond, you know, beyond being an employee. So, I think there are people who are.... I would not say there are boundaries. (CMS Office Focus Group-18:02)

Following this remark about existing boundaries for belonging which was brought up during the focus group of CMS employees, a discussion ensued about specific people, such as the cleaners of the office, and the people working in the café, providing drinks and food for the employees. As soon as a name was mentioned people started to backtrack on the boundary, giving reasons why that person should be seen as part of the community, even though they may not be able to subscribe to all the CMS beliefs, values, or its purpose. The idea of boundary seems to disappear as soon as a relationship with a specific person is in play. Exclusion is experienced as a bad word.

The importance given by people to the attitude of hospitality may be one of the reasons for this fear of exclusion. Hospitality is about people and it is realised in an attitude of curiosity, of non-judgmental acceptance, of openness and a willingness to be challenged by and learn from the other. People speak of the importance of mutuality, with a willingness to share and to receive that leads to interdependence.

This focus on relationality and hospitality needs to influence the way in which the community lives its active missional life. In the CMS Office Focus Group this was expressed in terms of mutuality.

I think that is a massive responsibility on us, to make sure that the networks and the relationships we are part of, are, have got this mutuality, have got this ability to be challenged, have got this ability for the agenda to be set by other people. Especially, I mean, it is bad enough for the office, but I mean, you know, especially in

the context of the worldwide church! (CMS Office Focus Group-54:57)

Action needs to take place in partnership with others, with the people of the local community, be it one's own home community, or the community where one has come to live and work as a CMS mission partner. Action is never taken on behalf of, but always with the other. It is together that needs and opportunities are weighed and decisions to act are made. It is together that action is undertaken and worked out. And it is in this working together that each partner has gifts to share and needs to face, help to receive, and things to learn.

5.1.4. Outcomes

Community, as relational, hospitable, and realised in partnership, is not always seen as an easy option. Community life asks commitment that may be costly and unsettling. Yet it is understood to be a calling, a calling from God and a calling into the world.

Since God is relational as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, those who represent Him in the world should be relational. Community living is living in the image of God.[11]

> *Because it is at the heart of the Godhead. Because the Father, Son and Spirit are a community and I think we are called to, to, to establish ourselves, the church is called to establish itself in the image of God. And so.. I don't think … we cannot be in Kingdom business without being in community. (Interview 9-01:08:36)*

And therefore, community living is not only costly, it also brings the joy of friendship across boundaries, the advantage of role models and a wider perspective, which can lead to personal growth.

Community life is also experienced as an encouragement to a mission active life. Commitment to each other breeds commitment to the other. The focus is on

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[11] This is further explored in chapter 7.2.

the other in the community, and on the other outside the community. The safety of the home and the encouragement of the family are the foundation and the source of the outward focus of the community members. And this too is not just seen as an outcome, but also as a calling.

> *I would summarise it as: God is calling us to walk with Him. He wants us to walk with Him, as we submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. And this will manifest itself in the different sectors, the different levels of society, the different communities, and the different issues. (Interview 7-01:14:07)*

Community living is described as living according to the image of God, as participating in the Mission of God. Though the community members may be committed and active in mission service in their local context and beyond, they always realise that their action is only part of the action of God, that their mission depends on and is realised in the mission of God.

5.2. Discourse and Ambivalence

Listening to interviewees speak about community, I became aware of the centrality of the value discourse. Much of the 'community speak' within the CMS community is value heavy, creating strong expectations on how community 'ought' to be, and how community members 'ought' to think and behave.

This value discourse is expressed in the form of theological beliefs, such as the 'Missio Dei', God as communal Being, the life of Jesus as our example, and Kingdom values. Each of these beliefs relates to values, such as "kenosis," "incarnational" living, and "prophetic" living in hope. Another important source of the value discourse is the foundational story of CMS. The Clapham Sect, with their prophetic life based on community living and a deep involvement in the issues and problems of their time, is often mentioned as the 'raison d'être' of the CMS community as it is currently organised. And as a prolongation of this foundational story, the ongoing stories of CMS people, who are dedicating their lives and investing their energy and skills in different aspects of mission, in

different places in the world, are seen as stories that should cheer people on in their personal life of mission.

> *We have so many mission partners, in different regions, and we all know that they are there, working in these... some of the places where people are placed, you know.. and how they are working and... and its...just nice to know, you are not on your own. So, if someone in South America knows that we have got a mission partner in Asia, in Africa in Europe, in Britain, everyone is doing... that one thing, for the same... So that community is definitely important, being out there and worldwide. It has to be. (Interview 2-18:27)*

Because the community is such a value heavy entity, there is also much ambivalence expressed. When expectations are high, disappointment is bound to exist, since not all within the community will respond in the same way to the same values and have the same expectations. This is also because not all are able to live up to such a high call. One interviewee, for example, explained how he disagreed with a certain belief in his community and felt that he did not have the space to discuss it openly, for the reaction would be too strong and too judgmental.

> *I honestly think my views are right. I do think I am very right. I am just not going to hit them over the head with it. So, I am forced to live irregular. I live a double life. (Interview 7-01:06:48)*

This raises questions about what can be expressed, and what not, and who decides on this in each community and in the community worldwide.

I have identified four factors that contribute to this experience of value ambivalence. First, even though community members may agree on the different values and their importance in general, they will have a different way of prioritising these values, depending on their life experience or on their character. For some people, for example, the clarity of the Christian identity and the boundaries that might come with that identity are more important than for others within the same community. These other members may agree on the

importance of Christian identity but at the same time place the value of relationality above identity clarity with the result that community boundaries become more blurred and fuzzy.[12]

Secondly, people may agree on the values of community, but have a different understanding of what they mean and give a different outworking of these values in their daily life. This may be related to difference of culture and context.

> *Whereas my local community, I think about that, or there are times to bring (friends or others), because it is hospitality, you might share a meal. You don't, you don't have to! As long as you are hungry, and you are willing to talk... you can come... But some of the CMS stuff, you obviously have to have some connection language, experience, culture, to connect to it. So, although its, although it might feel and experience like community, it is not community for me. It is a vehicle to... to share ideas, and... be aware of other ideas... and... for people to, I guess, become better at what they are doing, or.. I, yeah... support. (Interview 11-27:40)*

For this person community means a geographical entity, where life can be shared around the table. Within CMS this is not possible for him, and therefore it is not community for him, even though he experiences personal encouragement and support. For others, it is possible to experience community relationships across geographical boundaries, albeit at a distance. Where the first person may be disappointed with the community experience within CMS, others from the CMS community may be disappointed with him because of his perceived lack of commitment to the wider community.

Thirdly, within a community different people will have a different level of commitment to the communal life, both inwardly towards fellow community members and outwardly in its missional action. As mentioned earlier, CMS is not the only community to which the interviewees belong. How much do people expect from each other? How clearly are these expectations communicated? How clearly are these expectations formulated? Is there room for diversity?

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[12] This is further explored in chapter 8.1.

Some interviewees seem to indicate that the pressure can be high. When asked about her membership to CMS, one interviewee said:

> *Well, I am sure I don't do everything I should do as a CMS community member. I read my bits and pieces that I get, but I never manage to go to any of the various meetings that are advertised or other. (Interview 22-20:23)*

And, as indicated above, not everyone feels free to express their true thoughts. They seem to experience a certain enforcement of views and expectations.

And finally, some of the values that are central to the CMS community also hold the strongest ambivalence, precisely *because* of their importance for the community within a world that does not necessarily favour these values. An example is the highly prized value of equal worth and mutuality of the CMS Mission Network members. These values are confronted with a global reality in which money and material resources have greater worth and power than human resources and the wealth of wisdom. All agree that each member has gifts to share as well as needs to be met. Yet, some members have more money, which is experienced as giving them more power. The financially less resourced members have to ask for money and therefore have to report back on how they have used it, obliged as they are by Charity laws and an understanding of financial accountability. And somehow, because of the money, the agenda is set by those who have the financial resources. This is an issue that has been mentioned by several people in a variety of places within the CMS community. It is an issue that is experienced as painful, including by the financially better resourced members, since this lived reality counters the high expectations connected to the values of equality and mutuality that are so central the community's vision and self-understanding.

The CMS community speaks of itself as a community of purpose with a high calling and high values which are based on its theology, history, and ongoing relationships. Much of their discourse is around sharing and commonality, 'a shared existence' across boundaries. In the following section, I will describe this experience as a 'circle of shared existence', consisting of the different elements

of community – its its history, its values, its purpose, and its membership – all being interrelated and interdependent.

5.3. Circle of Shared Existence[13]

Following the community discourse, as described above, and realising that the purpose of the community has a central place, I have come to describe the community experience as a 'Circle of Shared Existence.' [14]

The circle represents the experience of commonality, in values, vision and action, and in the commitment of the community members to allow their lives to be shaped by the experience and the values it stands for. Central to the experience of shared existence is the purposive being, to which people are committed regardless of their sometimes-ambivalent community experience. Around this centre, the active verbs 'believing,' 'embodying,' and 'belonging' express both the actively chosen attitude towards, and the active participation of, the community members within the community.

In the interviews and focus groups, people placed great emphasis on the theological sources and the foundational story/stories of CMS as a community. This '(hi)story' speaks about and has even come to exist around the purpose of

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[13] This circle does not exclude the experience of ambivalence and disappointment, as it is related to the high values and expectations within the community. See chapter 10. Neither does the term "existence" exclude the possible temporal nature of belonging by choice, and the multiple belongings to different communities at one time. See chapter 8.

[14] Following Coding 1 I worked on the premise that the community experience was often spoken about in relational terms of belonging. It turned out that 'commonality' is more central, as an experience of 'shared existence.' People speak of shared purpose, working community, sharing time in and out the office, sharing a vision, sharing a table, sharing a daily rhythm etc. The language of 'shared existence' is more helpful, since it is a more general indicator, whereas 'belonging' is only one of the dimensions of the whole 'shared existence,' constituting that 'shared existence', together with the community (hi)story, believing, and embodying.

the community as a missional community. As such it shapes the 'value organised life;' the 'believing' leads to 'embodying,' which in turn shapes the 'believing' again. This is a reciprocal movement that affects, invites, and deepens the member's commitment to the purpose of the community which is expressed in 'purposive being.'

If we would take the central position of purpose out of the community's shared existence, the (hi)story as it is told would no longer make sense and the embodiment would lose much of its content. Belonging would in that case lose its intentional outward focus (crossing boundaries, focus on the other and on relationship), and in the eyes of many of the interviewees lose its 'raison d'être.'

None of these elements can be missed or taken separately. They are connected, need each other, shape each other and together they shape the purpose and action of the community. The relationships between each of these elements is reciprocal.
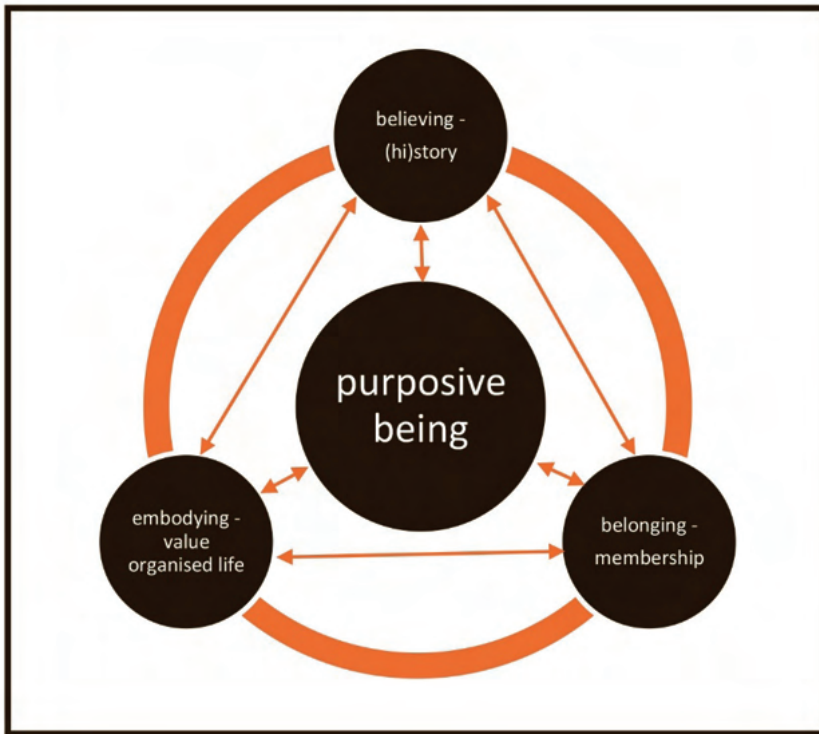
In the following sections I will describe each of the elements of the circle, their content, how they are experienced both positively as within the experience of ambivalence, and how they relate to each other and so constitute the whole of the experience of shared existence. Starting with 'Purposive Being,' as the centre of the experience, I will describe how it is theologically and historically motivated and realised within the 'relational event.'

PURPOSIVE BEING

Bringing together CMS and its mission during a focus group discussion, an employee of CMS placed purpose at the heart of the community. He stated:

> *(CMS is) united around a common purpose, to do with sharing good news with neighbours... good news about Jesus Christ. I think it is about the Gospel, which is about liberation, freedom, setting captives free. I like uhm..., I really like D.T. Niles definition, of evangelism is one beggar telling another beggar where they got bread. So, it is a load of beggars. Uhm... united in this common purpose. They share that in word and deed. [...] I think it is very missional. Which I suppose means, it is outward focussed. Something to share. I have quite a wide definition of mission. I really like the Anglican... 5 marks of mission. The 5 t's, the 5 t's of mission, to teach.... to tell, to teach, to tend, to transform and to treasure as a summary of them. [...] I remember uhm... I think it was G.K. Chesterton, it was something like uhm... the church, or the body of Christ, is the only institution that exists for the benefit of its non-members. So, it is something, for me essentially it is about benefiting those outside that community. (PiM FG-03:47-6)*

For this person, being community and having a clear purpose are related. It is the purpose, its outwardly focussed mission, that unites the community. And for this person, the purpose has a strong theological basis. First, by quoting D. T. Niles, the community consists of beggars only, all depending on grace, and

therefore in need of each other in order to find bread.[1] In quoting Niles, this person indicates that the members of the community belong together to help each other – to point each other in the right direction. And as this kind of a community, they exist for the benefit of the other. Second, the community has a missional purpose, which is expressed in the Five Marks of Mission, as well as in the language of liberation and the setting free of captives. This is Christologically motivated.

This chapter first explores the place of purpose within the CMS discourse, and what people who are part of the CMS community[2] believe this purpose to be. Secondly, I ask the question how this purpose and vision relates to the wider society, and especially the individualised and globalised world. And thirdly, the community purpose is described as a theological dimension in the CMS discourse as it encounters the world.

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[1] D. T. Niles, *That They May Have Life: A Statement of Missionary Theology.* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1951), 96.
[2] Different people from the CMS community have taken part in this research, such as for example members of the leadership (former and current), a CMS Trustee, employees who work in the office in Oxford, mission partners who work in different places around the world, community members who live in the UK but have committed to CMS, members of churches who are connected to the CMS community.
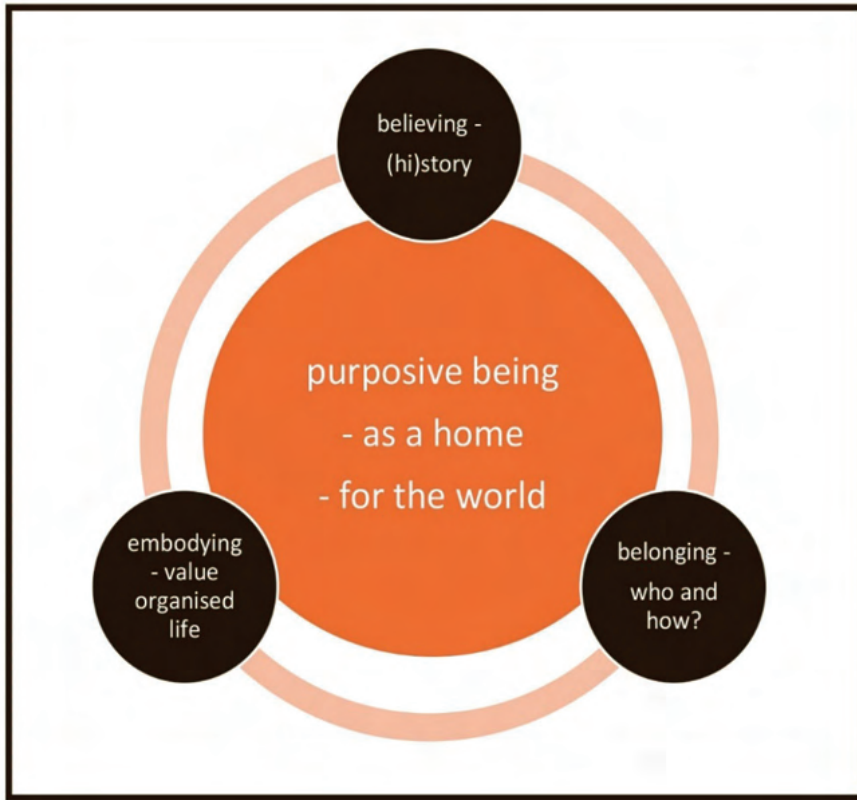
When one of the leading members of the community said: "our fundamental identity is that we are a missional community" (Interview 1-105), he explains that it is the identity of the community and its purpose that are placed in strong relationship. Later in the interview he stated that the identity of the community is its purpose, which finds its foundation in the Trinity – God in relationship. And since this Triune God is a God of mission, so the community cannot but be missional, participating in the mission of God, and living according to the values of His Kingdom. A bit further in the interview this person quoted a poem by Oscar Romero:

> *"We are workers, not master builders, ministers not messiahs. We are prophets of a future not our own." And I love that sense of*

being prophets of a future not our own. You know, I think, I think what we do... uhm... the actions that we undertake, uhmmm...should be prophetic, they should speak of... uhm... the upside down, the right side up. You know, values of the incoming Kingdom. (Interview 1-57:23-4)

The purpose of the community, as it is related to Kingdom values, is described as prophetic, a purpose that is countercultural. It is a world 'upside down,' a world for others in which the community works and invests itself.

Furthermore, the theological motivations as they relate to the Trinity, the Kingdom of God, the 'Missio Dei', in a Christological perspective, are combined with a historic motivation. With its origins in the Clapham Sect, a community that had prophetic action at the centre of its existence, CMS has through the ages been inspired by its example.

Rooted in the CMS history and DNA, you know, CMS UK, and Wilberforce, Clapham Sect and stuff like that. [...] There has always been this sort of strong social justice element of it, probably all the way from Wilberforce, you know. Social justice, as seeking to help, not just proclaim the gospel but see, help in practical ways. (Interview 10-36:24)

In addition to the story of the Clapham Sect, many other stories are also told, both in official CMS literature, such as the magazine *Yes*, and *PrayerLines*, as well as in conversations and meetings organised by CMS. These are stories of people investing themselves, in education, health care, community development, evangelisation and church planting. People speak of campaigns that were started or joined around racial justice in the UK. This happened when the race riots occurred in 1958, as well as in the "Make Poverty History" campaign, in the campaign for debt relief and also by bringing the suffering of the people in Northern Uganda because of LRA violence to the attention of the world, when the media seemed to have forgotten this conflict. Other examples are advocacy work against human trafficking, Female Genital Mutilation, abuse of women and children, and other forms of injustice that continue to be high on the agenda. Any attitude different from this could be seen as a negation of the CMS identity, based on their calling from God and on their communal history.

Reflecting on the relationships within the mission community worldwide, a CMS founding father regularly mentioned by the interviewees is Henry Venn (General Secretary of CMS from 1841 to 1873), and his vision for the building of "three-self-churches" and the "euthanasia of mission." Interviewees evaluate this vision as well-ahead of its time, as prophetic and pioneering and as a call to continue that heritage. Venn's example and vision continue to develop and shape the CMS purpose and were an important influence in the development of CMS Africa, AsiaCMS, and the CMS Mission Network. Another example of a rethinking of relationships worldwide, yet now in post-colonial times, is the stress that is placed on mission that is not mono-directional, from the West to the rest, but "from everywhere to everywhere."

> *Moving away from 'the West to the rest', the moving away from mono-directional to a multi-directional understanding of mission, as in the title of Michael Nazir Ali's book about mission: 'From Everywhere to Everywhere.' Uhm… which invites you therefore into relationships of mutuality, where before they were mono directional. Uhm… and I think that is exactly the kind of thing that we are working on, are committed to. (Interview 1-38:47)*

Other, less positive, historic stories are told as well, about how Western feelings of superiority existed, how power was abused in leadership structures, including under CMS mission people, and how mission cooperated with the state and even facilitated colonialism.

> *So, there were people in the Anglican community, if not in CMS, who somehow were involved in slave trade and... uh... like that formation of tea gardens and not handing over the administration to the right people. Uh... that also leaves to a lot of traffic.. to human trafficking and things like that. So.. that link can be explored historically. How was the Anglican community in, in some ways, responsible for the mess in the colonies, and how CMS has worked towards clearing of that mess. (PiM FG-59:32)*

These stories also shape the purpose of the community, in the sense that now people see it as their calling to admit to these mistakes, to learn from them, and to change the ways they relate to the community of brothers and sisters around

the world who are serving God and His world together. A former employee of CMS tells of his involvement in a CMS programme that facilitated the sending of people from Africa and Asia to the UK in order to help the church in the UK. Yet, he also admits to the struggles of this programme.

> *But one of the big struggles we had was to get the church to own the fact that they had been sent there. […] And the need to change the whole perception of the church of Africa as well as here, about who is a missionary. (Interview 9–30:17)*

Ingrained views on who can be a missionary, and why people from other continents would want to come to the UK hampered the programme.

The strong relationship between the community identity and its purpose, raises for me the question of how its relational values and community purpose relate. Is the centrality of purpose creating an activist community, its high calling worked out in projects and activities? Should the community then be seen as supporting each other in the tasks and work? One interviewee seems to point in that direction when he says:

> *I see CMS as a platform for my mission and my ministry, but not my support group. Even the CMS office, although we are few of us, we are, we are not quite a family. A family is the local church. So we work together because we are a mission agency and a.. we have a common vision. But I would say that when a crisis comes in, the local church community is where I am supposed to go to. (Interview 13-25:02)*

For this person, CMS is a working community, sharing resources and working towards a shared goal, but not a community for personal relationships and mutual support.

Other interviewees, on the other hand, stress the importance of relationships, of people rather than targets, which is also supported in theological terms, such as for example "the body of Christ" and the Trinity, as well in stories told about the history of the community and its current life. This relationship between the community's purposeful action and its relational values is explored in the following section.

6.1. Purposeful Action as Being Community

Mission creates community, according to a CMS employee.

> *If CMS is doing what CMS says it wants to do, then a community will emerge. (Interview 8-19:08)*

He further explained that community must be the outcome of mission because mission is relational, resulting in relationships built and restored. The reverse can be stated as well. It is the community that enables the missional purpose by facilitating mutual support and the sharing of resources. Being missional cannot be separated from being communal; the two cannot be played out against each other.

Yet the interviewed employee wants to go even further; for him it is the *being community* itself that is missional. The purpose is not first about doing but about the shared experience – the vocation to live and learn, and so to participate in mission.

> *And if we are talking about a mission community, a Christian mission community, what makes it. What... what, not what does it need to do... but if you like, what is the soil from which it emerges.[…] a community are people who have got shared experiences. {…} whether that is a shared struggle, or living together, or some narrative or story, or vocation, […]it has got a purpose, it is a mission community. (Interview 8-12:13)*

The purpose of community is to *be* community, and mission participation is part of, and grows organically out of, this experience of being.

6.1.1. Being Community

First, why do interviewees want to belong to the CMS community? Encouragement, a sense of belonging, acceptance and bonding, support and security, are words that are used to describe the reasons why people want to

be part of the CMS community. A member of a small local community that is related to CMS says:

> *I am not alone, I have these people, who love me, and who care for me. Uhm.. almost unconditionally, in the sense that they are there, there for me whatever. And in the good times and in the bad times. In difficult decision and joyful things. People will, I know when I want to celebrate, there are people who will celebrate with me. And I know, when I need to cry, there are people who will cry with me. (Interview 8-10:04-7)*

The community is experienced by this person as a secure place where one is known and accepted, where one is part of the family. It is a place where one finds support, where, for example, the community prays, when prayer seems impossible.

> *At one point she said, I just can't pray at the moment. And I said, no, but other people are praying for you. (Interview 22-34:34-6)*

And this also is the place where people can be welcomed in. An interviewee of African descent, who came to CMS Britain said: "When I came here, I met people of my tribe, people who speak my language" (Interview 5-47). The experience of recognition of the other overcame the cultural boundaries to such an extent that in his experience they were talking the same language, belonging to the same tribe. As an outsider first, he became part of the community because the home opened its door to him and because he chose to enter. The mutual recognition of the other and the choice for each other extended the community and the family grew.

Since people are speaking about family and familial relationships when they are talking about CMS, I believe that the experience can also be compared with a home. As much as a home and a family are the places to welcome the stranger, they are also the safe places for people to belong, and to learn and develop. A community can be a place for growth and transformation too, inviting its members to learn and grow in understanding. "A broadened perspective" on the world, the church and one's own place in this world, is mentioned as an important outcome for a person belonging to a community. In community we

discover our "shared humanity": "In a divided world... uhm... discovering our true and common humanity is special and touching" (Interview 1-05:52).

Secondly, this meeting overcomes prejudice of the other. The other becomes less strange, and one's understanding of the other grows, to the point that judgment is suspended, and a mutual relationship of giving and receiving, sharing and learning may grow. Interviewees within the CMS community place a particular stress on the "broadening" of one's spiritual understanding and life, in community. For example, in meeting the other, prayer develops a wider perspective and focus on the world.

> *I think, I think there is an added value. I was not sure at the beginning. But I think I have grown to see that there probably is, because we offer a different focus, a different dimension, and a different, perhaps a different discipline of prayer, or different things to pray for, which uh... which they are part of. (CMS FG 35:28-9)*

Faith is strengthened, but also deepened in meeting the perspective and life of the other. This other person can reveal another understanding of our daily reality or broaden our understanding of God. One interviewee, present at the Africa Forum, a conference organised by people connected to CMS Britain, said:

> *It is actually almost an old CMS thing. You don't perhaps fully understand God until you see some of the ways other people understand Him from a different culture. Uhm... And as, as everybody here knows, the African church is very vibrant. We had a short glimpse even this morning, didn't we? (Interview 14-21:40)[3]*

This encounter of difference, as experienced within CMS, also helps people to relativize their own situation when needed. Several interviewees have indicated that they complain less, since they are part of the CMS community. The realisation of one's own relative wellbeing, compared to the difficulties in other people's lives, brings a change of perspective. This change of perspective also

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[3] Walls speaks of "Christ growing" through the encounter with the other. Walls, *Missionary Movement in Christian History*, cvii.

brings challenge. Opening one's life to the other, allowing oneself to be touched by the other, is challenging and brings responsibility. It asks for a response, sometimes a response of a change of personal attitudes, sometimes a response of action. A mother tells about her 5-year-old daughter, who heard stories of children living in slums in Nairobi having difficulties to find enough food to eat in order to have the strength to learn at school. The daughter was so touched by this story that she refused to eat some sweets, because the cost of these sweets was more than the cost of a meal for the children in Nairobi. This in turn touched the mother, who as a consequence was moved to reflect on the family meal budget.

> *So I think that has had an impact on her, in that she has thought about it, and uhm... and the fact that she did and wanted to discuss it further, you know, and bring it home, and not just buy the soap hearts. But she applied that. So, I would say that impacted within my household, was important. (Interview 20-27:07-3)*

Experiencing CMS as a place of belonging and as a home, includes both a welcoming of the other, and the opportunity for growth and transformation. The relational reality of community includes an outward focus. According to interviewees, being part of such a community means living responsively in a context of needs and pro-active in its calling in the world.

6.1.2. Active Community

The missional character of the community is worked out in purposeful action. Within CMS Britain this is expressed in the "Pray, Learn, Participate" discourse. The person who initiated this discourse describes prayer as a "shorthand for spirituality." It includes intercessory prayer but is not limited to it. It is a "seeking of God's will" and what that means for one's life and the life of the community.

> *That, that we are a mission community, therefore we have got purpose. So, we are not simply a holy huddle, or a group of people meeting for a pint, or whatever. You know, there is a reason for us being there. So therefore, we are wanting to develop our thinking and our learning and our experience and our practice as a*

community. […] we need to.. to ground this and move forward in this through, you know, in our spirituality and see our spirituality as part of it. (Interview 8-16:47-5)

In the community, prayer and purpose are linked and lead to a spirituality of learning and action. The learning is described as a learning about mission – the what, where, when and how – and a learning from mission.

As a Christian community, or as a mission community, the thing is that we… you know, community is a group of people who are learning together. Learning to live, learning to reflect on what is going on, learning about the things, it has got a purpose, it is a mission community. So, we are learning together about that. (Interview 8-12:13)

The learning is also expressed as learning from mission action and encounters.

[…] But that learning thing is actually all our experiences. So, it is not that their sense of a, an academic kind of college where one person is the expert and… Well actually we all share experiences and therefore we learn, because we have all, we, we begin to build up a jigsaw of understanding. (Interview 8-13:32)

In its active missional involvement, a community will discover and learn and be transformed through the experience of meeting the other.

As a praying and learning community, people are invited to participate in its outward mission. And this participation can take the form of a personal and active commitment to a local project, the financial support of another community on another continent, the building of relationships across cultural boundaries, and many other forms. It can also take the form of commitment to the job that needs to be done in the CMS office. As such, the community can also be a working community.

We are a working community. […] So that is part of what we are as community, it is not just an airy-fairy spiritual concept. We are working together towards a common purpose. You know. To

ensure that we are supporting God's mission in the world. (CMS FG-11:33)

Several people in the CMS Britain office speak of an experience of community, indicating that even though they are employees, and even though the experience may be ambivalent at times, they are committed to the purpose of the community and to each other – to being a missional community and living a missional existence.

The worldwide character of the CMS community also has consequences for active participation both in and beyond the local community. Interviewees express that in participating in mission worldwide, in the context of globalisation, migration and transnationalism, they encounter global problems, such as global warming. And they realise that this brings a shared responsibility. How can one pretend not to see the effects of climate change in Bangladesh and so avoid responsibility?

> *The whole perspective of global warming is actually affecting, uhm it is affecting the Bangladeshi Christians for instance, yeah? So for the Bangladeshi Christian, uhm.. we as Christians in Europe, we can say we need to be doing something about this, because... I mean, of course it is affecting everybody, but we are talking about mission community, we are talking about Christians, yeah? (Interview 3a-05:13-6)*

Global realities call for change and action in local lives; people belong together across geographical distance or boundaries and carry responsibility for each other. As a result, the worldwide Christian mission community is more needed than ever, according to an employee of CMS Africa:

> *Acting locally, thinking globally, hearing global perspectives, but bringing them to bear in local contexts, very relevantly, bringing the communities together with them. And how the church can play a role institutionally. But that -Christian individuals, Christian believers, what they are doing and what difference they can see, small or big. (Interview 7-20:56-1)*

To summarise, for the CMS community, the central identity is *being* a missional community. This can be described as an active missional existence that impacts people's lives through mutual relationships. It happens in such a way that they grow in understanding of themselves, of the other, of the wider world, of God, and of their responsibilities in the community and in the wider world.

6.2. Discourse and Ambivalence

In the interviews mission as the community purpose is rarely questioned. People speak highly of those members of the community who live a mission life. A lot of the energy of the community goes into the support of these people, whether they live locally or far away on other continents. And when people voice their discontent with the community experience, it is their commitment to missional living that keeps them connected and committed to the community. A volunteer within CMS, for example, tells about his involvement with CMS – which he calls "a family" – becoming formalised when he was employed at the CMS Britain office as an Africa representative. But then he also tells how that involvement was cut short when he was made redundant.[4] That was a very painful situation for him.

> *I mean, that was a very hard thing to take, because I felt sort of called into it and then suddenly the rug was pulled out from under my feet really. And uh… one could have ended up quite bitter. (Interview 14-08:04)*

This clearly challenged his commitment to CMS. But a couple of years later he was asked to be involved again in CMS, this time as a volunteer. The reason why he was willing to accept the pain and feelings of rejection and still take this step of renewed commitment, this time as a volunteer, was his desire for continued involvement in mission in Africa, which he describes as follows:

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[4] This story is explored further in chapter 10.

I mean fundamentally, I guess, a meeting of people with a heart for mission in Africa, an opportunity to share, to meet each other, to see what other people are doing to be encouraged by what other people are doing. Uhm… Perhaps to be inspired to do things that you would have never thought of, that other people…. A path they have started on. (Interview 14-13:11)

The ambivalence, as it is also expressed by other members of CMS, is more about the lived reality of the community's mission in practice. How much do the community members really care, learn, or participate? Is that not mainly for the enthusiastic few? Are people really willing to cross boundaries? A strong example of this questioning was given by a CMS Britain office employee. She explained that when the CMS office moved to Oxford, the leadership made the argument that this was not just a move to one of the elite university cities of the country because the office was going to be located next to a Social Priority Area, Blackbird Leys. The move to this place would offer the community in the office the opportunity to live a missional lifestyle right at the doorstep of the office. Yet, this did not become a reality. The employee explains:

So how can you build up a community within your staff, and... within people here. We were supposed to be having a strong connection with Blackbird Leys, when I first arrived here. We have, we have nothing to do with Blackbird Leys. That is, that... that... that is... you know its.. it is very sad. (Interview 2-9:41-3)

To her disappointment, the vision turned out to be hard to realise, and it just did not happen.

One of the reasons for this might be that for many employees in the office, their purpose is to be a "working community." Within this working community the members are committed to the community, to each other and to the job that needs to be done. This job is supporting, facilitating, and resourcing mission. The website says that CMS exists to set people and communities free to follow God's call in mission.[5] This then is an example of the missional purpose in itself not

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[5] http://www.churchmissionsociety.org/our-plan-vision-and-values
Accessed 14/02/2017.

being questioned, but being contested in how that purpose should be lived out by the office community.

6.3. Purposive Being at the Centre

To summarise, the community's purpose, understood as one of welcome, formation and action, is central to the self-understanding of CMS, whether it is successfully lived out or not. Rather than understanding the purpose of the community as realising activities and projects, the purpose is described in terms of sharing life and relationships. Purposeful action is believed to grow out of this relational existence, a consequence and outcome rather than being the primary goal of the community. Being community is understood to be a missional reality in which relationships result in action and this action leads to a new and wider relational being. This is why I use the term 'purposive being,' expressing this mutual influence of the relationships as missional being and the action as the outward movement of the community.

It would be possible to create a linear tree diagram, using the different elements of experience of shared existence, where the shared (hi)story represents the roots of the tree as foundational story, and where the belonging, the believing, and the embodying (purpose and action) represent the branches of the tree.

The problem with this representation of the shared missional existence is that the (hi)story is not just foundational, but it is as much an ongoing and active part of the whole as the other dimensions. It is a shaping element, while it is also being shaped by the other elements in how it is presented and interpreted and in how it is a continuing and growing body of community stories.[6]

As mentioned in chapter five, each of the four dimensions of the community experience is needed and is related to the others in a reciprocal interaction, yet with the community's purposive being at the centre. The purposive being as central dimension of the community experience draws the other dimensions together, interacts with them, and gives them their 'raison d'être'.

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[6] The place and function of story in the community will be further explored in chapter 9.6.

It is striking that, within CMS ambivalence towards the communal experience is mainly expressed in its inability to live up to the high value expectations. Yet, several people who voiced their ambivalent experience and frustration, at the same time continue to commit whole-heartedly to the community, indicating that this continued commitment is related to its values and purpose, rather than to its lived reality.

This idea is confirmed by the fact that several members of the CMS community, when asked about their local and worldwide mission, respond by speaking positively with stories about specific people living out their calling wherever they are. And in the official publications of the CMS community, which are used to facilitate the community's dispersed experience, the telling of stories about the lived experience of mission has an important place. In *The Call,* the magazine for CMS members,[7] the largest part is reserved for stories about how people actively live a life of mission. The stories are told of how people live their life, committed to mission, and to the people with whom they are together in mission. It is through these stories of purposive being that people find inspiration and renewed commitment, even though they may be disappointed with the lived reality in their own local community.

> *Well, you can't have a community of people unless they have a purpose. Uhm. you know, at church, like a village church community, like the one I am part of here, we don't share… we don't have a shared lifestyle together, but we are committed to the same church, we are committed to each other as Christians, we support each other, but we have ministry in the wider village community here. (Interview 23-8:7)*

The purpose of actively participating in both the internal and outward life of the community is central in the CMS discourse. The community in its purposive being *is* missional, *encourages* a missional attitude, and *supports* the missional living both as a community and for each member of the community individually.

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[7] https://churchmissionsociety.org/resources-cms-uk-publications/call-newspaper Accessed 3/10/2018.

6.4. Purposive Being in the Individualised Society

The question can be asked if the centrality of purpose in the community is unique to the CMS community or if it fits a wider pattern. Reflecting on individualisation and globalisation, and the consequences of these processes for the understanding and lived reality of community, I will describe how in the sociological discussion the centrality of identity construction and the process of identification is seen as foundational for the individual's place and attitude in society and their commitment to participating in that society. This description is based on elements of the theories which are developed by Bauman, Castells and Dubar.[8] If there is a commitment to a "common cause," it is the outcome of a personal choice, and the individual's choice-identity. This is why the process of "identification" is placed at the centre, rather than purpose.

Zygmunt Bauman describes the individualised and globalised world as a place of insecurity. People are searching for freedom and autonomy for the individual. They want to create their personal ties, their webs of relationships and commitments, on the basis of personal choice.[9] And through the centrality of personal choice a world of "universal comparison" is created.[10] The "pre-allocated reference groups" fall away, and the individual has to choose between the sheer unlimited options this world offers, to construct their personal identity. As a consequence, the individual also carries the sole responsibility for this chosen and constructed identity and the consequences of living it out. Since the personal identity is lived out in the wider world with all its risks and insecurities, this is a rather precarious situation. The possibility that it may result in failure is always there. In order to live with, and mitigate this insecurity, people may seek connection with others, though Bauman would not call this community. The connections are based on personal choice only, and therefore not necessarily durable. Change of circumstances and opportunities may well end the commitment to the connection. Connection is a project, and especially

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[8] See chapter 3.
[9] Blackshaw, *Key Concepts in Community Studies*, 15.
[10] Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, 7.

a personal project, for as long as it is deemed useful.[11] In a society of individual identities, "common troubles do not sum up into a common cause."[12]

The word "network"[13] might be more appropriate, as a description of the human relationships and commitments in a society of individuals. Castells certainly believes so when he speaks of networks and social movements. Like Bauman, Castells sees the construction of identity as central to the life experience of the individual. Yet, Castells makes a distinction between the primary and the collective identity. The primary identity is constructed in the encounter with the other, and so far as it is internalised by the individual, gives meaning and is "self-sustaining across time and space." [14] The collective identities – legitimising, resistance, or project identity – are constructed by social groups processing its building blocks, such as geography, history, biology, etc. and rearranging these in a 'meaning-giving' process. And these identities are central to the creation and ongoing existence of social movements.[15] In his description of examples of such social movements, such as the feminist movement and the Catalan freedom movement, Castells shows that he, contrary to Bauman, does observe people investing in a common cause. In these movements people are able to build a collective identity, based on a shared resistance to dominating structures as well as on their personal gender, or language and cultural identity. This results in "purposive collective actions whose outcome in victory as in defeat, transforms the values and institutions of society."[16]

It is important to note that for Castells, as for Bauman, personal choice is at the centre of the identity construction. By choice, a person has to internalise the values and the meaning connected to the identity, committing to living out of these values and this identity. It is through this choice that a person can commit

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[11] Ibid., 51.
[12] Zygmunt Bauman, "Foreword," in *Individualization*, by Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim, trans. Patrick Camiller (London: SAGE Publications, 2001), xviii.
[13] The difference between community and network will be explored further in chapter 8, in the discussion around identity and believing.
[14] Castells, *The Power of Identity*, 2:7.
[15] Ibid., 2:425..
[16] Ibid., 2:3. Definition of social movements.

to a common cause. Castells, as Bauman, realises that this commitment may only be for a certain period of time, and that a person may well commit to more than one cause at a time. Therefore, he speaks of a "network society," in which commitments and allegiances flow and movements need to be flexible, creating ever new social and relational connections. Yet, Castells, more than Bauman, finds reason for trust in this "interrelationship," the rational self-regulation of the different elements of the network, and the resulting commitment to common causes.[17]

Dubar shares Castells more trusting attitude towards the flexibility of the network interrelationships and the continuing commitment to societal causes.

> *La construction des identifications personnelles, subjectives, plurielles ne signifie pas l'absence ou l'abolition 'de tout' collectif mais la construction d'un autre type de collectif, différent du précédent, plus 'sociétaire,' c'est-à-dire à la fois librement choisi et volontairement régulé.[18]*

> The construction of personal identifications, that are subjective, and plural, does not mean the absence or abolition of all collectives but the construction of another type of collective, different from the first, more like a 'society,' meaning both freely chosen and voluntarily regulated. (Translation BvdTL)

It is true that after individualisation, the personal comes before the communal. But, according to Dubar, that change also liberates the person to a freely chosen and therefore more conscious commitment to the other. He argues that, in order to come to such choices and commitment, the person has to construct a personal identity. This is a process that can never happen in isolation, and therefore result in a purely self-centred or static identity. It is an ongoing process of "identification" between biography and relationality, and between the influences of 'for self' and 'for the other'.[19] Castells' idea of "interrelationship" therefore is not something that is just a given reality, with which a person has

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[17] Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, 1:4.
[18] Dubar, *La Crise Des Identités: L'interprétation d'une Mutation*, 217.
[19] Ibid., 54–56. See also chapter 2.

to deal, and to which the person has to choose their attitude. "Interrelationship" is inherent within the person, as member of the society, discovering self and the personal biography in relationship with the other, and finding meaning in the choices of the 'for self' and 'for other.' [20]

This "interrelationship," understood from within the person and based on the free and personal choice of the individual, is what people within CMS would describe as foundational to the community. The free person discovers her identity as a gift of God, an individual created by God in relation to the other, and to God. This discovery brings the individual to live that identity not just in relationship with the other, but also in serving the other as a fellow creature of God. An example of this is the story told by a CMS member about how she serves in a café for homeless people. She serves the coffee. She wipes the tables. She washes the dishes.

> *And we have a very simple conversation with each other, but again, it is about being… We are not equal in the eyes of… of the world, but in that instance we are. […] We are on equal terms. (Interview 3-9:42)*

She recognises, regardless of all the differences between them, their shared humanity. This motivates her to acts of service. And it is not just the individual that has to engage in the process of "identification," in order to be able to live freely in society. The CMS community as a whole can also be seen as continuously finding its place on the axis between its (historic) biography and the current context and relationships. The community also exists and moves on the axes between 'for self', and 'for other'; being both a 'home' and an active serving and outward looking community.[21]

Dubar's axes of "identification" are helpful for placing the self and the other in relationship within the individual self by which "interrelationship" becomes an inherent characteristic of the individual. Yet, the focus of the "interrelationship"

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[20] This deals with the orientation to self and other. But not yet with the temporality of the identification process and the resulting choices and commitments. This is further explored in chapter 8.
[21] See 2.2.3.

still is the self. The self is in need of interdependence in order to function well in society. Commitment to the common cause exists in order to find and preserve one's place in society – a society with all its insecurities and possibilities for harm to the personal wellbeing. From the perspective of the self, the other and the relationship with the other, including the investment in the wellbeing of the other, ultimately serve the wellbeing of the self.[22]

Yet, people in CMS indicate that the reason for their existence as community also lies outside of themselves, especially in the welcome and service of the outsider who is excluded and marginalised. The purpose of the CMS community is not the community itself, but its mission in the world. A CMS member, comparing the CMS community with church, expresses this as follows:

> So, as a matter of looking outside yourself, rather than just… if you are in a church, and you are just looking for your own interest and uhm… your own structure maintenance and you are just looking after your own, that is not really mission. You should be looking out for those outside the church. I do actually remember that quote from a … Archbishop Temple about the church as the only organisation that is functioning to look after its non-members. (Interview 15-2:6)

The outward purpose of the community, in this case, goes beyond the common cause towards betterment of one's personal life or the well-being of the community. And this is based on the theological self-understanding of the community, whose source of identity also lies outside the community, in God and in the mission of God.

6.5. Purposive Being as Theological Dimension

The question about the centrality of purpose in the community as it is particular to the CMS community can also be approached from a theological perspective. In the historic development of CMS as a mission society in a post-colonial era,

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[22] Dubar, *La Crise Des Identités: L'interprétation d'une Mutation*, 222.

for both John V. Taylor, and S. Barrington-Ward,[23] the idea of community with the purpose of mission became a way of reimagining relationships. They envisage community as a place of reciprocally beneficial relationships that bring a new understanding of God and provide a place of training and formation.

John V. Taylor had been deeply influenced by his experience of mission in Uganda, where he encountered a new way of understanding the world and understanding God. "Man (sic.) is a family." And God is Presence, meaning "friendship, "reverence," and "compassion." He describes this in his book *The Primal Vision.*[24] God is present in Christ, and mission then is also described in terms of presence.

> *…the way of presence is not merely a new missionary method, but God's own way of drawing Adam into his embrace and lifting the despoiled and threatened Creation up into his peace. There have been a few moments in the history of the church since the writing of the epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians when men [sic.] have built their faith upon this understanding of God.*[25]

God's presence becomes the paradigm for the way the church is called to live in the world. And in practicing such presence new understanding of God, the human being, and the world will grow.

> *…the Christian understanding of Man [sic.] has far more in common with the solidarities of Africa than with the individualism of the Western World. But it is one thing for him to know this as a piece of biblical doctrine and quite another to be compelled to struggle out of the thought patterns of his culture and learn from Africa how to see Man as the Bible does.*[26]

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[23] John V. Taylor, CMS General Secretary from 1963-1973. Simon Barrington-Ward, CMS General Secretary from 1975-1985.
[24] Taylor, *The Primal Vision*, 85, 189–191.
[25] Ibid., 195.
[26] Ibid., 109.

Through the practice of presence in community, a deeper learning and understanding can grow than would happen through cognitive learning only.

Later, in the CMS News-Letter, Taylor writes about "a new pattern of obedience," and a "brotherhood (sic.) of commitment."

> *With no arrogance or separation, for we know too well our failure and our need of others' help, we would like our Society to be known primarily as a fraternity of men and women upholding one another in a common commitment specific and exacting enough to create a profound sense of direction among those who share it."[27]*

Taylor's desire is that CMS be recognised as a community of mission. He calls it a new "obedience" in need of "single-minded and sustained commitment." And such commitment can be encouraged and realised through relationships of accountability and through "prayer, training, fellowship and mutual care."[28]

When Simon Barrington-Ward, the successor of John V. Taylor as General Secretary of CMS, established Crowther Hall, a training centre for CMS mission partners, his desire was that this house would become a community "of the Spirit" where people would be trained in new ways resulting in reciprocal relationships in mission.

> *How I hoped that we could now, at Crowther Hall itself, start an Ibribina-style revival community of the Spirit in which to train a new generation of mission partners![29]*

Barrington-Ward's inspiration for community as a place of formation towards new ways of relating came from "Ibribina," a "prophetic woman leader" in the early nineteen hundreds in West Africa. She had encountered Jesus, "Jesu Kristi," in a mission church along the Niger river, and she developed, while the First World War was fought in Europe, a theology in which this "Jesu Kristi," a "new all-pervasive Spirit power," brought "the possibility of a new people, a

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[27] John V. Taylor, "CMS News-Letter: A New Pattern of Obedience - 2, No. 290" (Church Mission Society, February 1966).
[28] Ibid.
[29] Barrington-Ward, "My Pilgrimage in Mission," 62.

fellowship of the unlike, bonding together all tribes, all ethnic groups, both black and white, into a new society."[30] This would be a society of justice and peace for all. While the CMS missionaries at that time sought to "regularise" her theology, Barrington-Ward wonders who had a better understanding of the Gospel, Ibribina, or the white missionaries. In establishing Crowther Hall, his choice is for Ibribina. And the formation given in Crowther Hall would, in his view, be based on learning of the diversity of understanding as can be discovered in the different communities around the world, and leading to a giving of one's whole life to the people they are called to serve.[31]

In the terms of the current CMS discourse, the purpose of the community is mission in the sense that it seeks to live out God's presence in the world. In doing so it becomes a community in which all involved are learning more about God, self, and the world. This is a community of deep relationships, of mutual care and encouragement, and one that forms people for transformative action in the world.

This theological development of the community idea is not particular for CMS only. John V. Taylor had been greatly influenced by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who, already from his years in Berlin and throughout his teaching career, had been searching for what he believed to be a true Christian community. In his dissertation *Sanctorum Communio,* Bonhoeffer writes about "Christus als Gemeinde existierend," Christ existing as community.[32] The community is the expression and reality of Christ's presence in the world. And in his book *Life Together,*[33] written as a reflection on his experience of creating the Finkenwalde community, a seminary for the theology students of the Bekennende Kirche in Germany, he also describes how in such a community people meet Christ in each other. Kelly, in his introduction to *Life Together* writes:

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[30] Ibid., 61.
[31] Ibid., 63.
[32] Geffrey B. Kelly, "Editor's Introduction to the English Edition," in *Life Together, Prayerbook of the Bible*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer works ; vol. 5 (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996), 7.
[33] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together: Prayerbook of the Bible*, vol. 5, Dietrich Bonhoeffer works (Minneapolis, MA: Fortress Press, 1996).

> *The Christ of "Life Together" is the binding force of that community in its "togetherness," gracing Christians to go beyond the superficial, often self-centred, relationships of their everyday associations toward a more intimate sense of what it means to be Christ to others, to love others as Christ has loved them.[34]*

For Bonhoeffer, the source of the community, and therefore its identity and reality, is based in Christ. Christ calls people into community, offering his love. And it is Christ who gives the community its purpose, who calls the community and its members to love others, as they are loved by him. The personal identity, as much as the community itself, therefore, is a gift, a gift of God in Christ.[35] Through the individual's acceptance of this gift – or, expressed differently, through placing one's faith in Christ – the person finds her identity in Christ, and is, at the same time, incorporated into the community of Christ.

Yet, being incorporated into the community of Christ does not necessarily lead to a safe and secluded life in community. Bonhoeffer opens the book with:

> *The Christian cannot simply take for granted the privilege of living among other Christians. Jesus Christ lived in the midst of his enemies. […] He had come for the express purpose of bringing peace to the enemies of God. So, Christians, too, belong not in the seclusion of a cloistered life but in the midst of enemies. There they find their mission, their work.[36]*

The community that finds its identity in Christ will also live the life of Christ, which includes suffering and self-giving service to the other, even the enemy-other. The community of Finkenwalde was established by Bonhoeffer to prepare the seminarians for a life in the world, which could well be a life "in the midst of enemies," with the "express purpose of bringing peace."[37]

More recently Stanley Hauerwas, another theologian who has reflected on the role of community in the world as an ethical reality, also underscores the

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[34] Kelly, "Editor's Introduction to the English Edition," 8.
[35] Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 5:34.
[36] Ibid., 5:27.
[37] Ibid.

importance of an outward focus for the Christian community. He opens his book *A Community of Character* with the affirmation that the church needs to rediscover its "social significance" in the world. Yet, this is not just some socially acceptable and positive influence in society; it is a significance built on "the story of God," resulting in a life "faithful to that story."[38] And for Hauerwas this means that the Christian community is a community of virtuous people, who through faith are taken up into the story of God with God's people, living authentically according to the values and truth of that story, in the specific context in which the community operates.[39] Such a community will be separate from the world, even prophetically witnessing to God's truth in the world. And the community is also the place where such virtuous people are formed.

> *But if, as I contend, the church is a truthful polity, the most important social task of Christians is to be nothing less than a community capable of forming people with virtues sufficient to witness to God's truth in the world.[40]*

According to Hauerwas, the community is the place where the story of God is told, where the individual's presence and gifts are celebrated, and where people learn how these gifts can serve as signs of the Kingdom of God in this world. Such a community, therefore, has an eschatological character, impacting the here and now, while looking forward with hope and patience for what is yet to come.[41] The community identity as a "story-formed-people" shapes the life and witness, the ethically lived reality of the community in the society.

Returning to the CMS discourse, it can be said that the community as "home," and the community "for others," are inseparable realities, because the community receives its identity and its calling from God, forming and

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[38] Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character : Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 1.
[39] Ibid., 112.
[40] Ibid., 3.
[41] Ibid., 101, 110, 128; Newbigin, *The Household of God.*, 199, 200. When Newbigin speaks about the eschatological character of the church, he describes the church as both a means and an end. The life of the church, as a community of worship, fellowship, learning, growing and sharing, is a foretaste of the Kingdom. It is a witness and instrument in the world, pointing to the Kingdom of God.

transforming the community from within to become a virtuous community. This community will reflect the character of God, and actively – in word and deed – witness to the presence of God in this world.

 Cathy Ross, a leading missiologist within CMS, regularly uses the metaphor of hospitality to describe mission, emphasising the element of "home," a home that welcomes the other, the stranger and the marginalised, and a home where people are challenged and changed by the other.[42] She calls it the "hospitality of the kitchen table."

> *A missiology of hospitality or a missiology of the kitchen table is essentially a missiology of relationship. It conjures up images of intimacy, homeliness, warmth, comfort, rootedness, safety, and community. It resonates with the community focus of the Eclectic Society and the current status of CMS as Acknowledged Community within the Church of England.*[43]

The home becomes the place of mission through its welcome and the resulting formation of all involved. Letty Russell, in her book *Church in the Round,* also speaks of the church using the metaphor of a table. But she brings the life of community and its formative character together with a calling that is outward and is shaped by an eschatological perspective. Like Ross, she defines the church as a community of Christ, bought with a price, where everyone is welcome. She writes:

> *Church in the Round describes a community of faith and struggle working to anticipate God's New Creation by becoming partners with those who are at the margins of church and society.*[44]

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[42] Cathy Ross, "Pioneering Missiologies: Seeing Afresh," in *The Pioneer Gift: Explorations in Mission*, ed. Jonny Baker and Cathy Ross (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2014), 27, 28; Cathy Ross, "Hospitality: The Church as 'A Mother with an Open Heart,'" in *Mission on the Road to Emmaus: Constants, Context and Prophetic Dialogue*, ed. Cathy Ross and Stephen B. Bevans (London: SCM Press, 2015), 67–83.
[43] Ross, "Pioneering Missiologies: Seeing Afresh," 31.
[44] Letty M. Russell, *Church in the Round: Feminist Interpretation of the Church* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 12, 14.

Using the metaphor of the table, she describes the community as the place where people gather to meet each other, to welcome each other, to find sustenance for the day, to reflect together, and to plan for action and struggle. There they work together as partners, establishing signs of an alternative future.[45] The table connects the welcome and the home with the outward focus and the struggle for justice. The identity as community of faith and the purpose as community of struggle are inseparable. The community that forgets or neglects its purpose is not true to its identity in Christ. The purpose authenticates this identity and is lived out in the community's welcoming home and its active struggle in the world, "in witness to God's liberating action."[46]

The question can be asked if this understanding of the centrality of purpose, as related to both the individual and the community identity, does not signify a return to an understanding of community in which the individual self becomes secondary again to the communal 'we,' especially if people believe that their identity is a gift received from outside of themselves. Is this not a return to a pre-modern idea of community with "pre-existing structures" and "pre-defined rules, which simultaneously guide their members' conduct and attitudes, and oblige them to follow clearly specified principles of interaction"?[47]

The idea of the centrality of 'purposive being' in the CMS community differs from the pre-modern community understanding in the importance that is given to the personal choice of the individual who accepts the gift of identity in Christ and chooses to live a life that authenticates that chosen identity. For a CMS partner in Kenya, this became a real and costly choice during a time of violence in his country. He realised that for his fellow church community members, ethnic identity came before their Christian identity. In that situation he had to make his individual choice to live according to his faith and identity in Christ over against some of his fellow church community members in order to reach out to all the victims of the violence.

> *I realise that when survival comes, people view themselves with an*
> *ethnic perspective first. Uhm… they define themselves ethnically*

[45] Ibid., 12, 40.
[46] Ibid., 43.Ibid., p. 43.
[47] Blackshaw, *Key Concepts in Community Studies*, 15.

first then they do as members of the church. […] During the post-election violence, I was quite shocked, because I was reaching out to all communities, after you know, when the crisis was going on. And one church leader, whom I respected very much, called me and said, …, why are you feeding the people of that community. Because for them, I should not feed them. (Interview 13-34:13-34:42)

The identity in Christ is offered to the individual. And this offer can be accepted with all the actions and consequences related to this identity or it can be refused.

It is true that once this identity is accepted, and once the individual has committed to the life of the community, the person will encounter the high expectations of that community. The person will be expected to live according to its values. Still, according to Hauerwas, this is not a return to old pre-determined structures; it is instead a community of people of virtue. In ethical dilemmas, or in moral choices, virtuous people choose based on their understanding of the interaction between the situation they are encountering, the values and historic influences, the story they have chosen to accept and adopt and in which they want to participate, and the relationships in which they stand.[48] Since each of these elements may be given different weight or priority, and since each situation may be interpreted differently, each person within the community, adhering to the same values and story, may make a different choice.[49] Or, to use Dubar's categories, the given identity, with all the accompanying values and story, plays itself out in the field between self and other, between biography and relationality, resulting in a unique and personal encounter with the particular situation and context and leading to a unique and personal decision or action.

In the CMS community, people indicate that diversity is one of its central characteristics, and a necessary one.

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[48] Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 127, 128.
[49] Ibid., 126.

Unity does not mean uniformity. In fact, if there is uniformity, unity is very boring. […] So, diversity for me is absolutely key. And diversity does not mean we do not have the same values. (Interview 18-5:20)

Yet, this diversity should not be understood in a completely pluralistic way, for they also speak of shared values and a shared life where Christ is at the centre, and of a shared history as a moral compass.[50] As an example, a former employee of CMS tells the story of his local community, where people have come from different cultural backgrounds, becoming Christians. As a consequence, their community worship does not look like any particular church tradition but is a mix of many different influences. He says, speaking about their practice of the Eucharist:

[We] are members of Christ's body, and that is the community [we] are part of. […] But what holds our particular community together is a practice… I have no idea when it started, but for the communion part of the service, people gather in a large circle and sing…. "Shalom my friends, God's peace my friends." (Interview 12-4:29)

He explains that this recurring practice, which expresses and points to what they all believe, holds them together. This is also true when through the week they venture out into vastly different lives and spheres in society. And it holds them together, even in times of conflict. The welcome they extend to each other and the story of God that they celebrate together, keep them united without becoming uniform.

Within the CMS discourse, the mission purpose is central to its identity. It is a purpose that the community derives from its identity as Christian, actively representing God, his character, and his presence in this world. And therefore, the community has as its purpose the character of both home and welcome, and of outward and active focus on the world. Even though the Christian identity is central to the community character, it still is a community in an individualised

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[50] This will be further explored in chapters 7, 9.3 and 10.

world, with strong emphasis on personal choice and conscience. This leads to diversity within the community, with accompanying feelings of ambiguity, sometimes even conflict. How the underlying beliefs and stories shape the CMS community identity and purpose will be explored in the following chapter.

7

BELIEVING

When people are asked to reflect on their experience of, and participation in the CMS community theological language is extensively used to express the values and reasoning that underpin and validate their experience and participation. Concepts such as the Kingdom of God, the Trinity, and mission of God play a role, both as giving meaning to the community and as a calling to shape one's personal life and the life of the community according to the values related to these concepts.

> *I ask, what would Jesus do. It sounds very glee, but it is a much deeper… it is a question for reflection, for deep reflection. What would Jesus do. What made Jesus so… attractive. Why would a Pharisee come at night, a woman caught in adultery feel safe, even if she is going to be, even if she is possibly going to be judged, at this moment she feels safe enough. Why would a Samaritan woman feel free enough to open up? […] Anyway, so… if we are willing to ask, what is it about Jesus, it is not prescriptive, it is instructive. It is… (Interview 7-28:19)*

> *When I realise that as organisation, CMS started in 1799, or thereabout. […] And so… being part of a … a movement that God has used for people to spread the good news of his son Jesus, around the world. And especially when I think about Kenya, you talk about the 1860s or 1870s. But it is a long time ago. […] Forming a bedrock on which we built larger aspects of our Kenyan modern society. That is a blessing. (Interview 7-11:26)*

As we see in the first quote above, the story of Jesus is spoken about both as a foundational and a normative story. This story gives meaning and value to the person's life and choices. At the same time, it calls for behavioural choices that might well be experienced as counter-cultural in the wider context in which the community functions, following what people believe to be the example of Jesus. The same happens in other interviews, where people are speaking about personal choices, as well as the life of the community as a whole.

In a similar way the CMS history is referred to, as can be seen in the second quote above. It is spoken about as a common heritage which draws people in the community together, providing a sense of belonging, over time and place. At the same time, this history is experienced as an appeal to continue to live up to that heritage, both individually and communally, and to live that heritage in a contextually appropriate way. This means that the CMS history shapes the community in an ongoing way up to the current moment and into the future.

In this chapter, I will describe and explore the theological concepts and historical references used by the interviewees, looking at the meaning given to them, their function in the community discourse, and how they shape the community experience as a living tradition. In the second part of the chapter, these concepts will be further explored as they are used in the more formal theology of the CMS community. These are expressed in the books and articles published by people who belong to the community or are connected to it. This will also be done in conversation with other theological voices related to the discussion. The chapter will conclude with reflection on the centrality of mission spirituality in the CMS discourse, emphasising its relational character.

7.1. Mission

Following a conversation about community in general, one interviewee responded to the follow up question on the importance of CMS being a *mission* community with: "It is very important! Because that is what we are! We are all about mission." (Interview 2-16:17) The concept of mission for this person who was an employee in the CMS office in Oxford, on the one hand consisted of the work she did in the office to support the mission partners who work in different places in the world, and on the other hand in resourcing churches and supporters of mission who are living in Great Britain. She clearly felt connected

with these two groups of people and their work and was passionate about it. During the interview, she indicated that she had never stayed in a job as long as she had stayed within CMS and related this to "mission." She experiences her work within the community as her mission, which is related to the wider mission of the community. Others agree with her that mission is at the heart of the CMS community. What this mission of the community means is worked out in a diversity of ways.

The first and most foundational concept of mission, as expressed by the interviewees, is that it is described as the mission of God.

> *When we work together, we participate in the mission of God. We cannot do that without God's help. If we try, we are much less effective, if we are effective at all, doing without God's help. (CMS FG-06:38)*

Individuals or a community may be about mission, but the most defining characteristic is that this mission finds its reality in a missional God – in God's active work, described here as "God's help." Others indicate that ultimately the mission is directed by God, rather than people. One person says:

> *[…] that 'Goddy' thing really, there is something happening there, that is really beyond… It is back to this thing that actually, we don't control this. It is God who is, who is God. (CMS FG-1:03:59)*

Human beings may have no control over this mission, yet God is using people and calling them to participate in God's work. And this carries important consequences for what a life of mission looks like.

First, people indicate that since mission finds its foundation in God's mission, in which people are called to participate with the gifts they have received, mission will exist in diversity. It is the contribution of the diversity of gifts that makes the community effective in its mission. Here the biblical language of the Body of Christ is used: "It is like in Paul's letter, you know, the hands, the feet, everyone has got their own jobs and you are the whole thing." (Interview 22 – 04:05) This interviewee further indicates that if one member does not function well, or is

not allowed to function well, harm is caused to the community and to its mission.

Still, diversity should not lead to hierarchy. God's mission creates a community where the Spirit is given to all, regardless of background, status, education, or any other social qualifiers.

> *God's power, God's Spirit is accessible to, to each one of us. No matter how, how our social status looks. […]and so… in this world of inequalities, God calls and pours the Spirit upon all flesh, rich and poor alike. And so how do we, as a community work with that? How do we, do we understand ourselves as a community that, that respects that the Spirit can, can work with the powerless and the needy as much as he can work with the powerful? (Interview 5-41:02)*

Secondly, what this means for the organised life of the mission community and for the way people live and shape their lives is often related to the life and story of Jesus.

> *And that I think is the whole mission. And you see, if you look at Jesus, the whole of his heartbeat was to echo the heartbeat of the father. To actually work out the father's purposes wherever he went. And that is what I mean by missional. It is living the Father's love, for every individual in every place and every community in society. (Interview 4-05:15)*

Jesus came into this world as part of God's mission, both making participation in this mission possible for humanity, as well as being the model of how that mission can be lived out. The incarnation is not only spoken about as 'God with us', the gift of His presence, but also as the model for missional living. As was said by an employee of CMS Africa: "Anyway, so… if we are willing to ask, what is it about Jesus, it is not prescriptive, it is instructive." (Interview 7-28:19) The life and story of Jesus as model for missional living is not a new set of rules and laws, but more comparable to a signpost, indicating the direction and showing how the values and attitude can be realised in a particular context and situation. Participation in the mission of God is explained as being called to follow Jesus,

and therefore to enter into the life of the other, either in one's own neighbourhood, one's own context, or across boundaries in other places and cultures.

> *It hits my neighbourhood, connects, is incarnational in that sense (PiM FG-03:47)*

> *Jesus constantly crossed boundaries and trained his disciples to cross boundaries. (Interview 10-06:49)*

Thirdly, interviewees indicate that such a missional life will have a prophetic character, because it is based on the values of the Kingdom of God. These values are different from, or even opposite to, the values that people recognise in the world around them. We see this, for example, in the earlier mentioned belief that in a community that participates in God's mission the Spirit is given to all which takes away any ground for hierarchy. Another practical example is of one interviewee who is part of a group that challenges corruption and social injustice in his country and is also involved in initiatives for the protection of the natural environment.

> *So very, very bravely speaking truth to power. But again, it is the faith, and people saying… the truth of Jesus needs to be heard in this situation. What would Jesus do, in this situation. (Interview 7-18:57)*

The prophetic message is shaped by the interpretation of Jesus' life. To clarify what such prophetic mission looks like, people also speak of the Five Marks of Mission, as they have been developed in the Anglican Communion. They emphasise the holistic character of mission.[1]

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[1] The Five Marks of mission were identified by the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) in 1990, and theologically explored in articles written by theologians who are connected to CMS, coming from different parts of the world in: Walls and Ross, *Mission in the 21st Century*. Following the Edinburgh 2010 conference, Ross again edited a book on the Five Marks of Mission, with contributions of young theologians from the Anglican Communion. The overall theme is that the mission of God is a life-widening mission, and a holistic

In sum, the CMS vision is about God's mission, His work and action, and is Christ centred. This will be visible in the life of the individual Christian as a follower of Christ and in the community that seeks to follow Christ in its daily life and in its community organisation.

The following sections explore the concepts of unity, diversity, and vocation within the organised mission community of CMS, and the meaning given to them by its members.

7.1.1. Unity

The unity of the community is expressed in familial language and in the use of theological concepts such as the Body of Christ.

> *I think the worldwide mission community is being the body of Christ, our brothers and sisters across the world where we share our joys and sorrows together. We celebrate our cultural differences. We work in partnership with each other. The friendships that we, that are made, as we work alongside our fellow Christians, either here in the UK, or wherever the Lord sends us, are key to building up the worldwide mission community. (PiM FG-09:11)*

Interviewees use the familial language of "brothers and sisters," indicating a belonging together and the sharing of a common purpose. In several interviews, common goals and values are mentioned. People speak of eating together, working together, doing fun things together, praying and worshipping together. In the quote above, we see that this is related to the Pauline language of the body of Christ, indicating that as a community CMS is part of the wider church. As such they are also an expression of the church, centred on Christ, its members united by their faith in Christ, and in their desire to live a life following Christ.

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mission. Cathy Ross, ed., *Life-Widening Mission* (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2012).

This unity, this belonging together, is believed to go back to creation, since each human being is created by God and in the image of God. Therefore, there is no place for distinction or a hierarchy of value within the community.

> *It means that wherever I am, if I'm alongside another believer. In Jesus we are both, you know, we are both made in the image of God, we both understand the fundamentals of the Christian faith, and therefore, we… it doesn't matter what my education is, how much money I earn, how many children I have, how many children I don't have, where I come from. We stand together, united in the fact that we believe in Christ. (Interview 3-11:09)*

A shared humanity, on the basis of creation and on a shared faith and commitment, is seen as the foundation of the unity within the community. This can be experienced practically in a local context, as well as in the worldwide community. The example of visiting people in other countries, where people sense a connection, sometimes even when they do not share a language, is mentioned by several interviewees. One woman told about her experience of visiting people with a handicap in Peru.

> *Well, I think it was just profound, that something as simple as just being there with them and working out something that we could do together. So that… it was in a sense, what they gave me was as much as what I gave them. […] It was quite interesting, because I did have some Spanish, but a lot of the time we just, we were managing to communicate with each other… without language. It has an effect on me. (Interview 3-07:57)*

People also speak of a shared humanity placing this in an eschatological perspective. An example was given of a congregation, praying the Lord's Prayer together each in their own language, yet when listening, there was no single language that was more prominent than the others. The interviewee explains:

> *There is a strong New Testament theological underpinning for celebrating just that kind of community and discovering that deep unity that we have in Christ that transcends all human barriers. It is what Paul is talking about in Galatians and Ephesians. And I said,*

actually, after that had happened [...] I think we have just heard the language of heaven. So, I was referencing directly the Revelation 7 reference to every tribe, language and people gathered around the throne worshipping the Lamb. [...] It was both about our common humanity and our common identity in Christ. (Interview 1-05:52)

Here again, our shared humanity through creation is coupled with the unity experienced through commitment to Christ. Even though commitment to Christ is a personal choice, this unity within the community of Christ is experienced as a unity that comes from outside the individual; it comes from God, the Creator, and the One who builds His Kingdom.

7.1.2. Diversity

The gift of unity does not mean that all members are alike. According to the interviewees, diversity is a highly valued concept within CMS. This diversity is sometimes a difficult reality in a multi-cultural world of inequalities, but it is also a gift to be celebrated, for it is an opportunity to learn and broaden one's perspective.

You can actually go to the far corners of the world, and find people who are radically different, in their culture, their history, their background, their lifestyle, everything. And yet, there is still this common, there is something in common that really you know, unites you quite quickly. [...] You don't perhaps fully understand God until you see some of the ways other people understand Him from a different culture. (Interview 14-21:40)

As much as diversity is part of the future of the Kingdom of God, with every nation, tribe and language represented (Revelation 7), it already is a gift to the worldwide community now. Andrew Walls' concept of the "Ephesian moment"[2], signalling the break-down of boundaries between the Greek and the Jew and inviting all into the community of Christ is used in this context. The metaphor of eating together, sitting at the same table, is also used.

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[2] Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History*, 72 ff.

Such community life, however, is not always the experienced reality. Exclusion because of difference continues to take place in the Christian community and also in CMS. The difference may be related to a diversity of beliefs, but also to social status. One interviewee indicated that in the church in his country boundaries related to class and finances are clearly present. He evaluates this as wrong, based on his understanding of how Jesus lived.

> *If Jesus is the agenda, at that forum everyone should really have a seat. It should be inclusive enough that people who are choosing not to come are not forced, but that they are not excluded. (Interview 7-26:04)*

Another interviewee also stressed that in the community all should be welcome at the table, regardless of colour, status, wealth, or choices in life. The community

> *[…] needs to be a place of care, accountability, responsibility,.. acceptance,... welcome,.. forgiveness, reconciliation, joy, laughter, tears, peace..(Interview 1-10:46)*

The diversity in the community calls for an attitude of acceptance and welcome, but also for forgiveness and reconciliation.

This does not mean that the diversity is endless, and that people do not see a place for boundaries. Interviewees see CMS as a Christ centred community. One interviewee spoke of "the fundamentals of Christianity," about the resurrection of Jesus, the Trinity, and the Kingdom of God. "Otherwise it is not Christian anymore." (Interview 3-11:09 and 38:17) According to her, it would be difficult to work together with a church or community that would not subscribe to these beliefs. Yet, for her that does not mean that another person, who does not believe these things, would be less valuable:

> *[…] because they are still made in the image of Christ, even if, even if they don't believe in Him. (Interview 3-50:24)*

At several points in the interview she stressed that all are equally loved by God. In this context again, the understanding that the community participates in

God's mission, which cannot be controlled or fully known, is brought up. And consequently, people say that human beings cannot decide on the exact boundaries, because our human understanding is limited.

To summarise, people within the CMS community believe that diversity is part of God's reality, even a necessity to understanding the fullness of God,[3] and therefore it is part of the desired identity of the CMS community. Within this diversity there are some theological fundamentals that seem to create a boundary for the community; yet for fear of judgment and exclusion, these boundaries are hardly spoken about. And when they are expressed, they are placed in the context of God's wisdom, grace, and the hidden work of the Holy Spirit. Judgment is not believed to be the task of the human being or the community, but hospitality is. Exclusion is seen as a sin, inclusion as a Christian virtue, and a missional vocation.

7.1.3. Vocation to Outward Focus

Holding unity and diversity together within a community that has both local and worldwide dimensions is not a small task. Interviewees expressed the need for a conscious effort and commitment towards the community and its mission. They spoke of spiritual disciplines, attitudes, and choices both at the personal and the communal level. A strong identity is seen as central.

As we have seen earlier (1.1.3), this identity is expressed as being Christ centred in which Jesus is both the source, facilitator and norm for the community and its mission. One interviewee draws this identity more broadly, describing the Trinity as central and foundational to the community identity.

> *Our understanding of community has been immeasurably enriched in recent days by our understanding of the Trinity as community, and by an understanding that the Trinity, the community of the Three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, invite us into community with them. That our being in Christ is about us being caught up into the being of the Trinity. So, any understanding, that*

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[3] This is further developed in chapter 9.2.3.

primarily, above everything else, gives us our identity. So… our identity is as a community of people who are in Christ and committed to the mission of God, must take precedence over, over everything else. (Interview 1-24:00)

Since the Trinity is understood to be a relational community, the invitation to enter that reality is expressed as a call towards a relational attitude that reflects the life of the Trinity. Here again, God's reality becomes the source and the norm of community life. It follows God's invitation to participate in mission, an invitation that is also spoken about in terms of vocation. During a focus group in the CMS office, it was expressed as follows:

There is something about the spiritual sharing that we are a community of God. […] And the network of the quality of the relationships beyond the transactional, beyond the hierarchical, beyond the organisational that you need to have. […] I think the purpose is really key. I think many people are here not because it is a job, but because it is a vocation. […] If you are here because it is a vocation, you need the support and encouragement in that vocation, rather than just a boss who may be caring about you. (CMS FG-27:28)

According to this person, the community life, as it is lived in the CMS office itself, is experienced as becoming part of the community of God. And this can have many different forms. In this quote it is first spoken about in terms of spiritual sharing. Other people experience it as praying together and praying for each other and as worshipping together. Secondly, also the relationships within the community become part of the spiritual practice, for they must respond to the norm of "the community of God." This community is said to consist of quality relationships, that allow people to interact on a personal level, "beyond the transactional" and "hierarchical." A community of such character, with these quality relationships, will be able to support its members in their personal vocation, in their response to the call of God to participate in His mission, and so as a whole community to respond to its vocation.

Yet, people interviewed also indicate that it is not enough to be concerned about being a good community. The focus is outward, its purpose in the world

outside the community, participating in the mission of God. Already from the first beginnings of the church, as can be read in the book of Acts, boundaries were crossed. "Since the early days of Acts, it was about spreading amongst people who… who were different from yourselves." (Interview 3-47:13) This also included the crossing of social boundaries and relating to the poor, the marginalized. And since the CMS community is seen as an ongoing and active part of the church, these characteristics are equally important for the well-being and functioning of the community in its outward focus.

> *Because I think.. that at a very simple level, you can be hugely encouraged by discovering what God is doing in the big wide world, compared with what he apparently might not be doing... in your own backyard. But also, because I think, our calling as Christians is to love our neighbour, wherever our neighbour maybe found. And the story of the Good Samaritan tells us to see our neighbour globally and not in local terms. So, churches have a responsibility to not to... think globally and act locally, but actually to think globally and act globally. Which of course means acting locally but isn't just about acting locally. (Interview 1-48:25)*

The outward focus is said to bring inspiration and insight, as well as a basis for action, both locally and worldwide. The example of creation care is mentioned in this context. This is a global issue that needs local action, but which finds its inspiration in the relationship with people who are directly affected by climate change. Yet, if the community is not outward looking, but only focused on itself, it risks its own death.

> *Well, they would die out, won't they? Because, actually, all they are doing, all they are interested in is theirs, and that is not, that is not, that is not my idea of Christianity. (Interview 3-46:19)*

Christianity is not focussed on self. Living the Trinitarian community identity is seen both as a vocation and a norm for community life and it is spoken about in terms of mission spirituality, as a basic attitude of focus on God and on the other, rather than on the community itself and for itself.

> *It is the whole sense of how are we grounding this in seeking Gods*
> *will and reflecting and you know on, on what this means for us, and*
> *so on. So, both the purpose and community. (Interview 8-16:47)*

The focus on God is related to the purpose of the community as community. This is worked out in the three key verbs of: "Pray – Learn – Participate" – praying for mission, learning from mission, and participating in mission. To these the members of the community commit (Interview 1-32:20). The CMS employee who came up with these three words, summarising his view on how the CMS mission community should live its mission identity, was also the person responsible for the resourcing of the community in a practical format that allows the different members, living around the world, to participate in the community and its mission practice.[4]

7.1.4. History as Tradition[5]

CMS' beliefs, identity and vocation are not only grounded and described in theological terms, but also in its history.

> *I think it is a legacy. But I think it is a legacy that we mustn't, you*
> *know that we must build on as well. We must not let go of it.*
> *(Interview 3-22:04)*

The history is seen as a heritage that should be valued and that continues to shape the ongoing values, life, and practice of the CMS community. And, according to one of its leaders, since CMS originated out of a community, it should not seek to be anything but a community.

> *CMS' roots lie in a community of people, committed together to*
> *make common cause, in the course of mission. (Interview 1-23:22)*

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[4] What this looks like in the practice of the CMS community is worked out in chapter 9.
[5] This paragraph describes how the CMS history shapes the values and beliefs of people in the CMS community, as part of the foundational story, its tradition. For a more general overview of the history of CMS, see chapter 3.

And having started as a community with a worldwide focus, CMS cannot escape its worldwide character.

> *We are talking about two hundred years of history, a heritage, doing mission around the world. [...] It has to be worldwide for...people around the world to, to access that heritage. (Interview 5-16:53)*

The Clapham Sect is seen as the foundation, a community of people living together around the Clapham Common in London and engaged in several social projects. These included the abolition of slavery and starting a society for the evangelisation of people in Africa and Asia. This was the beginning of the Church Missionary Society. One interviewee, a member of the CMS Mission Network but not of CMS Britain, speaks of the Clapham Sect being part of the CMS DNA and influencing the CMS agenda.

> *Rooted in... the CMS... history and DNA, you know, CMS UK and Wilberforce, Clapham Sect and stuff like that. [...] I think another sort of strong part of identity [...] is this, there has always been this sort of strong social justice element of it, probably all the way from Wilberforce. (Interview 10-36:24)*

Because of this heritage CMS has a strong focus on social justice. Wilberforce and the abolition of slavery are mentioned, especially in this context.

Another important person in the history of CMS who is regularly mentioned is Henry Venn. He served as honorary secretary of CMS from 1841 to 1873.

> *For instance, Henry Venn [...] he talked about the euthanasia of a mission. You know, a mission doing itself out of a job and the establishing of the three-self-churches that were self-financing, self-governing, self-replicating. Uhm... and that was, that was truly visionary, I think. (Interview 1-37:07)*

Venn's ideas around the "Euthanasia of mission" and the establishment of the "three-self-churches," which would be self-governing, self-financing, and self-propagating, are seen as visionary and counter-cultural in his time. And being visionary, pioneering and counter-cultural continue to be seen as important

characteristics and values for CMS. The interviewee relates this to being a community that has its focus outside of itself: "CMS saw itself as a community that did not exist for itself." (Interview 1-37:07)

Such stories of the forefathers of the CMS community are told as a foundational story. This is the heritage of the community to which the members belong.

> *And you know, just being part of this thing where you have people like Krapf and Rebman (early CMS missionaries to Kenya, BvdTL), and just hearing, we are here now, but we are part of what we were doing two hundred years ago, one hundred fifty years ago. That is amazing. (Interview 7-11:26)*

This heritage provides a shared identity; it is an identity of a worldwide mission community with a purpose of mission and social justice and with a counter-cultural and pioneering attitude. This identity carries a certain authority over the lives of its members and forms the basis for a sense of belonging to the community of the past, and the ongoing practice of community life now and into the future.

Interestingly, this history is not closed; it continues in many shapes and many places. Story telling therefore is an important practice within the CMS community. During the interviews people would tell stories of people in mission, or mention the impact stories of mission, told by other CMS members, have had on their lives. And these ongoing stories continue to shape both the current and future community identity, its beliefs, values, and attitude.

7.1.5. Ambivalent Reality

Most of the historic references made in the interviews were about aspects of the history which were experienced as positive and exemplary. This may have been due to the questions asked in the interviews about the identity of the CMS community and about the perceived importance of the community's character and purpose. Yet, a more complex picture also appeared.

When, for example, speaking about the CMS heritage in Africa, where people continue to identify with CMS because perhaps they have been educated in a

CMS school, treated in a CMS hospital, or been baptised in a CMS church, the colonisation also gets mentioned. A story is told about a Nigerian woman offering forgiveness for the mistakes of colonialism, including the church's, because colonialists also brought the Gospel. Yet, forgiveness is essential.

> *And for all the mistakes you have made, as far as I am concerned, you told us about Jesus and therefore you have made such a difference to our lives that I am willing to forgive all that other stuff, because of what you have done. (Interview 3-25:18)*

Mistakes have been made, and they have been made by people of the community, by "you." They may have been made in the past, and not by the person directly addressed, but still, this person is included in the "you," since the community is inclusive over time and place. And these mistakes continue to have an impact on the community now, especially as a worldwide community.

> *What... I mean, it is a challenge for CMS as a worldwide..., I mean to escape some of the history, and some of the caricatures of history, both the negatives, and the real negatives and the perceived negatives. (Interview 8-33:05)*

This negative historic heritage impacts the community's identity, bringing both feelings of guilt and feelings of victimhood. They continue to impact international relationships. One interviewee from Kenya spoke of persisting colonial attitudes. But then he went on to speak of overcoming this situation. Not only does the perceived positive heritage provide an identity and values by which to shape the community life, the negative and painful parts of the heritage contain a call to overcome, a call to redemption.

> *So, I wouldn't be surprised that conflict does happen, because we live in the real world. But... are we willing to live new, to create new realities, and... relate in new ways, within a ... a redeemed order. (Interview 7-55:48)*

Ambivalence, therefore, becomes part of the whole experienced reality and is both a painful and a useful part, impacting and shaping the identity, values, and beliefs of the community.

7.1.6. Community as Gift and Call

Viewing the general discourse around the community, we see that both theological and historic reasoning play an important role in the self-understanding of the CMS community. When asked about the CMS community's identity, values and organisation, the interviewees regularly used theological concepts, as well as historic and current stories, to support their ideas and argument. This theological and historical reasoning is spoken about as a shared vision and a common heritage; as such it gives meaning to the community experience, beyond the merely social or organisational aspects of it.

> *Right, for me... worldwide missional community is a community which is, is Christ centred, of love, care, share and prayer. A community which stands with the poor and for the poor, fight against injustices in the society, support the truth, but still loves everybody. It is not an NGO, a club, an activist movement. (PiM FG-13:18)*

The emphasis on the theological roots as being Christ-centred places the community within the wider context of the universal church of all times and all places. It also provides a specific identity for the CMS community because of its historic background and the theological choices it has made and continues to make. This leads to a community organisation that is shaped by the values distilled from this history and theology.

Because of the centrality of the concept of mission as the purpose of the community in both the theological and historic discourse, I wondered if CMS might run the risk of becoming an activist community. A similar issue was raised by a participant in the Focus Group of CMS employees:

> *The problem with worldwide mission community is that it can be perceived wrongly as a community centred around an activity, rather than around a person. [...] My fear is that it can be seen as belonging to a worldwide community of mission professionals. (CMS FG-39:40)*

He fears that an emphasis on professionality could have important consequences for the community organisation, resulting in less emphasis on the community life as missional. The relationships within the community would be more pragmatic or utilitarian towards the outward purpose. The question can be asked what this would mean for the internal relational dynamic of belonging, of mutual sharing and supporting, of hospitality and bonding. Would belonging to the community become more narrowly defined by the ability to contribute to its purpose?

Yet, the emphasis that people in the interviews and focus groups place on the concept of the mission of God, the active presence of God in this world, and on Jesus as not only the norm for the community but also as its source, highlights the belief that the community does not solely exist for itself nor for its purpose. The community itself is seen as a gift, with a Person at its centre. "It is Christ who calls us into community." (CMS FG-39:40) Or as another interviewee, highlighting the centrality of the Trinity in the community's self-understanding, said:

> Because the Father, Son, and Spirit are a community, and I think we are called to establish ourselves, the church is called to establish itself in the image of God. And so… I don't think we can be in Kingdom business without being in community. (Interview 9-1:08:36)

God as communion created humanity in God's image and thereby creates the possibility of human community in which relationships are central. And by this very act, God calls people to live that community.

> It is that we are held together. The thing that we hold most important to us is, is common to each of us. And this mission that we talk about, mission is something we take very strongly. So, all the more reason to join together, and then to see what will happen. But we are already joined together by Jesus himself. Yes, and then that is the same as family. (Interview 7-50:22)

The commonality, the being held together as it is given by God in Jesus, creates community, both its realisation and the call to invest in its realisation as a gift and as the norm.

Summarising, we can say that theologically community is experienced as a gift and a call: the gift of a home, a family, a place of hospitality, where both unity and diversity find their place. And community is the call to outward action according to its purpose in the world in which it is placed.

Within this understanding of community, the history of CMS plays the role of identity marker and identity shaper. In this history people discover God at work in the world and the 'community ancestors' participating in that work. In doing so, they have shaped the community. The current community stands on their shoulders. The community, therefore, can again be seen as a gift and a call. The historic CMS community is experienced as foundational and normative, inviting the current community to live up to the ideals and norms of that historic entity.

I contend that, taking together both the theological foundation of the community as a gift and call from God, and the identity and normativity given in the stories of history, CMS is experienced as a community in which its members not only participate in God's mission, but also in the ongoing story of God with God's people. Scripture and the CMS history are part of a specific tradition as a living (CMS) heritage. The story of God with Israel and in Jesus, continuing in the church, and as part of that church in the CMS community, all form part of that tradition, drawing people existentially into the community of the past, present, and future. The history is therefore more than just historic facts and information, that may have a certain moral appeal or authority. Current members of the community are part of that history. They are fully connected to it and they are shaping it, and as in a family, the people from the past are as much part of the community as those in the future will be.[6]

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[6] Two theological arguments that hint at a similar dynamic are given by Miroslav Volf in his book *The end of Memory,* and by Andrew Walls in an essay on *Worldviews and Christian Conversion.* Miroslav Volf, *The End of Memory: Remembering Rightly in a Violent World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2007); Andrew F. Walls, "Worldviews and Christian Conversion," in *Crossing Cultural Frontiers: Studies in the History of World Christianity* (New York: Orbis Books, 2017), 35–48. Miroslav Volf speaks about "sacred memory," as being

It needs to be noted that not all stories from the historic community are told, neither are all values and ideas given the same weight. The current CMS community makes choices according to its understanding of the reality and the needs of the current contexts in which it exists. At the same time, when choices are made and new ideas are developed, elements of the CMS history are repeatedly told as support, or as an appeal. This may include the 'ambivalent history', the mistakes made in the past that give a hindsight perspective indicating values for a better community practice in the current context.[7]

Within the community experience and performance, the theological understanding and historical background play an active role and are used in an active way. Community members make choices as to what part of the history they tell and how they tell it. They also make choices as to what theological concepts they prioritise and where they place them in the discourse. What they believe about the community therefore is the result of an active choice and a reflective practice. It is a reciprocal conversation between theology and history on the one hand, and the current community in its context on the other hand, and is within a living 'tradition.'

Bennett et al., exploring the concept of tradition in Practical Theological research, write:

> *There is […] an uneasy balance between commitment and challenge as well as a dialectic of continuity and discontinuity in*

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incorporated, existentially drawn into the living reality of the Exodus and the Passion. Facing the pain and injustice of the experience of violence, such memory restores identity, community and the future of a person, within the embrace of the memory of God, who acted in the past and who has given promises for what God will bring about in the future. (p. 102) The life and memory of the individual is restored in the communion of God. Andrew Walls speaks about the need for "theological activity outside of the West […] to overcome major deficiencies in the Western theological tradition."(p. 47) As an example he pleads for "a richer family reality of Africa and Asia," in which the ancestors are a living reality in the community, as much belonging to the family now, as into the future. (p. 48)

[7] It has not become clear to me how much the CMS history is also used as a corrective of the current community, in the sense of a critical voice in the current community and about its values and practice.

human inhabiting and interpreting of the traditions they have received.[8]

Each context and situation in which the community finds itself calls for a renewed understanding of, and relationship to, that tradition, shaping and changing it. It is an ever-ongoing conversation that sometimes brings joy, sometimes pain and conflict. It is a conversation that shapes the believing itself, the theological and historical reflection and discourse, while it also shapes the values and practice of the community.

Within CMS, this conversation is spoken about in terms of mission spirituality, a spirituality that nourishes and shapes the community member, while it is at the same time the foundational force behind the active life and presence of the community in its world. [9] The following section will explore this mission spirituality, as it is described in the CMS literature, and by theologians who are, and have been, part of the CMS community.

7.2. Mission Spirituality

CMS' self-understanding is deeply theological, using concepts such as vocation, the mission of God, God's global church, God as Father, Son, and Spirit. Theologians who have stood at the helm of CMS are referred to.

> *It was a spirituality of vocation, a sense of being called by God himself, which led CMS to take risks, sometimes indeed to be injudicious, in the cause of mission, with remarkable results in shaping God's global Church. More specifically, Max Warren saw mission as our participation in history of that which God had initiated in Christ, and John V. Taylor awoke us to the essentially*

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[8] Bennett et al., *Invitation to Research in Practical Theology*, 106.

[9] It may be seen as significant that Cathy Ross and Naomi Rose from CMS, together with Wonsuk Ma and Tom Harvey, were the convenors of the study process around mission spirituality at the Edinburgh 2010 Conference. Wonsuk Ma and Kenneth R. Ross, eds., *Mission Spirituality and Authentic Discipleship*, Regnum Edinburgh 2010 Series (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2013).

missionary nature of the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit. CMS
from the very first has been infused with a deep pioneering spirit –
and spirituality.[10]

And CMS' purpose, vision and mission are believed to come out of the mission spirituality of the community.

The Community is defined by its mission spirituality: our purpose,
vision and mission. CMS is an association of those bound together
by a mission spirituality expressed in mission practice.[11]

This concept of mission spirituality is expressed in both the interviews and the formal theology as it is published over the last ten years, in different books exploring mission. These have been written by members of the CMS community, by people working for the CMS organisation, and by people connected to the CMS community.[12] In all of these publications, mission reflection and mission practice are understood to be only truly possible if it comes out of and is shaped by a mission spirituality.

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[10] Philip Mounstephen, "Foreword," in *Pioneering Spirituality: Resources for Reflection and Practice*, ed. Cathy Ross and Jonny Baker (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2015), xii.

[11] Tim Dakin, "Sharing Jesus Changing Lives: The Constitution of CMS as a Community of Mission Service," 2009, 6.

[12] Between 2008 and 2009. A series of monographs was published, called the Crowther Centre Monographs, exploring issues in mission in a theological, applied and engaged way. Other examples are: Walls and Ross, *Mission in the 21st Century*; Cathy Ross and Stephen B. Bevans, *Mission on the Road to Emmaus: Constants, Context, and Prophetic Dialogue* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2015); Cathy Ross and Jonny Baker, *The Pioneer Gift: Explorations in Mission* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2014); Cathy Ross and Jonny Baker, eds., *Pioneering Spirituality: Resources for Reflection and Practice* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2015); Cathy Ross and Colin Smith, eds., *Missional Conversations: A Dialogue between Theory and Praxis in World Mission* (London: SCM Press, 2018); Colin Smith, *Mind the Gap: Reflections from Luke's Gospel on the Divided City* (Portland, OR: Urban Loft Publishers, 2015); Mark Berry and Philip Mounstephen, *The Forgotten Factor: Placing Community at the Heart of Mission* (Cambridge: Grove Books Ltd, 2017). And recently the publication of the journal *Anvil*, a journal for theology and mission, has been moved to CMS. https://churchmissionsociety.org/anvil-journal-theology-and-mission/ Accessed 15/09/2020. This list of publications is focusing on publications about mission reflection and practice and does not pretend to be exhaustive.

> *Mission can only be done, in the final analysis, by women and men who pray regularly, who spend time in contemplation, who share their faith in theological reflection, who study and read the Bible individually and in community, who steep themselves in the wisdom of the Christian tradition, who constantly hone their skills in reading cultures and contexts, who understand cultural trends and current events. Mission is also done with a posture of curiosity, creativity, imagination – being curious about the world and the context, rejoicing in 'strange' ways of being and doing, imagining that another world is possible (to pick up the Occupy slogan) or indeed already here![13]*

Mission spirituality is described as an attitude of attentiveness to God, the wisdom of tradition, the self, the world, and the events of and in the world. Baker and Ross also call this an attentiveness to story, place, people, and posture.[14] And this attentiveness – a deep listening – leads to an active practice of mission.

> *[…] searching for a spirituality that fuels the practice of mission that sustains a life of faith in Christ where the priority is to be with those beyond the borders of the Church as we know it, to share Christ and join in with God's mission, with creation's healing. This is a spirituality of the road; a mission spirituality (Bosch, 2001). This is also a spirituality that looks for treasure in the other's place and space.[15]*

Attentiveness leads to the discovery of a treasure, of God at work, especially outside the church "as we know it."

Johnny Sertin describes how mission and spirituality are regularly seen as different and separate elements of the Christian faith. Spirituality is understood to be an inward reality, wherein the individual person relates to her God, while mission is seen as an outward activity, engaging other people and acting in the world. He describes how the coming together of mission and spirituality for him

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[13] Ross and Bevans, *Mission on the Road to Emmaus*, xvii.
[14] Ross and Baker, *Pioneering Spirituality*, 2–11.
[15] Ibid., 1.

turns out to be an event of reconciliation, "that brings together the personal and the social, one that reconciles 'being' and 'doing' – in our current cultural context."[16]

In a somewhat different way, Tim Dakin, CMS General Secretary from 2000 to 2011, applies this unity of 'inward' and 'outward' dynamics to the reality of community by quoting John V. Taylor,[17] who states that a community does not exist for itself but is "thrust" into the world by God. The Christian is part of the world and needs to be in the world rather than separate from the world.[18] Dakin then interprets this to mean that the Christian community is a "means" for outward presence and action, a "Community of Mission Service."[19]

Dakin's focus is more on the active outward mission as service, where Ross, Baker, and also Sertin, place a stronger emphasis on the treasures found through the attentive activity of mission in the world, in the other, and in being with the other in diversity. The emphasis of the three is on the learning and discovery of God in mission. Yet, these differences of emphasis are not to the exclusion of each other.

These ideas are also taken up by Berry and Mounstephen, who compare the unity of the community's 'inward' and 'outward' reality with breathing in and breathing out.

> *It is no surprise that the assembly, which is a body, must breathe in air, drink water, and ingest food in order to survive. The centripetal movement of the liturgy draws people into the centre of Christian worship and its supper. Yet one of the core insights of Luther is the insistence that in the Lord's Supper Jesus Christ is given the life of the world. [...] Along with breathing in, the body must also breathe out in order to survive. Set next to the centripetal movement of*

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[16] Johnny Sertin, "A Spirituality of Getting Dirty," in *Pioneering Spirituality: Resources for Reflection and Practice* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2015), 117.

[17] John V. Taylor was influenced by Bonhoeffer's idea of the Church existing as Community as explored in his dissertation *Sanctorum Communio.* In his book *The Go Between God,* Taylor especially quotes Bonhoeffer's book *Ethics.* Also Hoekendijks *The Church Inside Out* is quoted.

[18] Dakin, "Sharing Jesus Changing Lives," 3.

[19] Ibid., 4.

> *gathering inward is the centrifugal movement of sending outward*
> *into a beautiful yet threatening world.[20]*

The "breathing in" of the community is found in its practices and worship and result in discovery and learning. The "breathing out" is the source of the active service in and to the world outside the community.

Inspiration for theological reflection within the framework of mission spirituality comes from CMS theologians from the past, such as John V. Taylor[21] and Max Warren, [22] as we have seen in the above. Inspiration also comes from theologians in the wider theological discussions around mission. [23] The discussions about the Fresh Expressions movement and the *Mission-Shaped Church*[24] with a focus on the British context within the Anglican Church are an example of this. But the discussions also include such Roman Catholic theologians as Stephen Bevans,[25] Robert Schreiter, Roger Schroeder, and the anthropologist Arbuckle. In particular their focus on culture, contextualisation, inculturation and catholicity, and their attention to posture, attitude, and the development and dynamics of community in mission, seem to strike an important chord within the CMS discussions and reflection. The CMS mission experience in different parts of the world, where it meets a diversity of cultures and contexts, resonates with their reflections. [26] These writers express an

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[20] Berry and Mounstephen, *The Forgotten Factor*, 12.

[21] Taylor, *The Go-between God*.

[22] Max Warren, *I Believe in the Great Commission* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1979); Warren, *A Theology of Attention*; Warren, *Partnership*.

[23] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Lesslie Newbigin, David J. Bosch, John Zizioulas, Miroslav Volf, and Darrell L. Guder, are writers of theology that are referenced in the CMS conversations, even though they hardly figure in the interviews of this research. They may be given as recommendations for reading in a conversation, or may be alluded to in relation to specific subjects.

[24] Graham Cray, *Mission-Shaped Church: Church Planting and Fresh Expressions of Church in a Changing Context* (London: Church House Publishing, 2009).

[25] Stephen Bevans, especially, has a long-standing relationship with CMS, having spent a sabbatical at the CMS Crowther Centre and regular visits through the years. He has given lectures, taught in the Pioneer Mission Leadership training, and edited and published a book together with Cathy Ross: Ross and Bevans, *Mission on the Road to Emmaus*.

[26] Bevans, "The Mission Has a Church, Perspectives of a Roman Catholic Theologian"; Stephen B Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992); Bevans and Schroeder, *Prophetic Dialogue*; Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*; Gerald

attitude of attentiveness toward the other, to God's self-revelation in context, and a practice of prophetic dialogue. This includes an attitude of listening and learning and discovering God's reality and God's will for one's own life and for the life of the community in the crossing of boundaries, and it moves toward a reflective missional practice.[27]

And inspiration comes from the practice of a mission life itself. It is important to note that most of the aforementioned publications that reflect CMS' mission understanding, express this by using stories of practice and personal stories of transformation as their starting point. Reflective practice is expressed in the conversations that take place within the books.[28] This theology is based on and grows out of the practice of mission and can also be understood to be part of the spiritual practice of attentiveness, which is understood to be a deep listening to God, self, other, and the world, as well as to story, place, people and posture.

In the following sections, some of the leading themes within this theological conversation will be explored. What do the theological concepts of mission, the Kingdom of God, and the Trinity mean in the formal CMS discourse, and how do they relate to the missional understanding and practice of the community?

7.2.1. The Story of the Mission of God

In CMS, Christian mission is not seen as a human endeavour; mission is believed to originate in God, to be realised by God, and to move toward a goal set by God.

> Twenty years since I moved overseas, my passion is still alive but it
> has been tempered by a more realistic understanding of my own
> weakness. It has also matured with a fresh understanding that this

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A. Arbuckle, *Refounding the Church: Dissent for Leadership* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993); Clemens Sedmak, *Doing Local Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003). These are some of the regularly used titles by Tim Dakin in the formulation of the CMS constitution, and by the leaders of the CMS Pioneer Mission Leadership Training.

[27] A strong example of this is Ross and Bevans, *Mission on the Road to Emmaus*.

[28] The clearest example of this is the publication by Ross and Smith, *Missional Conversations*. But also Ross and Baker, *Pioneering Spirituality*, and Ross and Baker, *The Pioneer Gift* are built around stories of practice.

mission is not actually my mission. I'm learning that mission starts and finishes with God. He is the main actor in mission not me. I have a part to play in mission because God himself has a mission. And his mission flows from his character as a loving, giving being, who always reaches out to redeem and reconcile. He invites me to share in mission.[29]

The human being participates in this mission in the realisation of her own weakness and failures. Mission is also described as "evangelistic mission" and "sharing the love of Jesus"[30] Or, as Tim Heathcote says:

What is God's mission? It is God making himself known to his creation and working to redeem and restore all creation to a good relationship with God.[31]

And as becomes clear in the Bible Study resource: *What is Mission?,* the restoration of relationships consists of the relationship with God, with each other and with the whole of creation.[32]

The emphasis on God's primacy in mission underscores first the importance of humility and of careful attention to the other. When God is made known in a specific context, people in mission need to realise that God is not entering into that context for the first time through them. God is already present and at work. The task of mission is only to join in with that work of God, to be its human face.[33] This realisation of God's primacy in mission influences both the mission

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[29] Tim Heathcote, a CMS mission partner, in: Helen Brook and Naomi Steinberg, *What Is Mission: A Myth Busting Bible Study for Small Groups* (Church Mission Society, 2018), 9. https://churchmissionsociety.org/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/What_Is_Mission_Bible_Studi es_CMS_2018.pdf. Accessed 19/11/2018.
[30] Tim Dakin, 'Sharing Jesus Changing Lives: The Constitution of CMS as a Community of Mission Service', 2009, 2.
[31] Brook and Steinberg, *What Is Mission: A Myth Busting Bible Study for Small Groups*, 9.
[32] https://churchmissionsociety.org/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/What_Is_Mission_Bible_Studi es_CMS_2018.pdf. Accessed 20/11/2018.
[33] See the questions of the first Bible Study *What is Mission?:* 1. Where have you glimpsed God's glory at work in the world? 2. Have you ever seen God at work before Christians "arrive"? 3. Are there ways in which you feel responsible for producing "results"? 4. What

strategy and the attitude of the people in mission. First, God turns out not to be a 'Western' God, but a God whose self is revealed in all different contexts and cultures. In this self revelation God takes on the local and contextual 'dress.' And therefore, when people in mission seek to join God in this mission, they will have to listen and learn before they can share some of their own belief and wisdom. Ross and Bevans, quoting Claude Marie Barbour, write:

> [...] the minister/missionary needs first to be evangelized by those whom she or he evangelizes. The people that we serve, she insists, must be the teachers before we dare to teach.[34]

John V. Taylor describes this listening as the loving attitude of prayer through which God can reveal himself.

> In the prayer of silent listening, and nowhere else, can the Christian acquire the habit of this first silence from which the Word can be born in a foreign culture. [...] Only the very brave, says Illich, dare then to go back to the helpless silence of being learners and listeners – 'the holding of hands of the lovers'- from which deep communication may grow. 'Perhaps it is the one way of being together with others and with the Word in which we have no more foreign accent.'[35]

In this loving and listening attitude, all are learners.

Secondly, in God's mission, participation is understood to move from everywhere to everywhere rather than being a Western privilege. In 1990 the then General Secretary of CMS, Michael Nazir-Ali wrote a history and theology of mission, entitled: *From Everywhere to Everywhere: A World View of Christian Mission. His book* emphasises the changing dynamics of mission in a post-

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could you do this week to notice where God is working in your life, community and the wider world?

[34] Ross and Bevans, *Mission on the Road to Emmaus*, xiv.

[35] Taylor, *The Go-between God*, 229. Quoting Ivan Illich in a meditation introducing an hour of silent prayer at a course that he initiated to prepare ministers, teachers and social workers for the Spanish-speaking ghettos of New York.

colonial world where the centre of Christianity is moving out of the Western countries toward other regions in the world.

> The number of Christians in Asia, Africa, the Pacific, the Caribbean and Latin America now exceeds the number of Christians elsewhere, and the trend is that an increasing proportion of Christians will be found in these areas of the world. In such a world context, it is not surprising that many initiatives in Christian Mission, both within cultures and across cultural boundaries, are now coming from churches and Christians in these parts. [...] There have been allegations that they are merely surrogates of Western missionary organisations and receive funds from them. However, many are very independent in terms of policy and some have strict rules about not accepting financial assistance from outside resources.[36]

Churches in other parts of the world than the West are becoming the centre of activity and initiative. And some of them are reaching out to the West to support the church there in its mission.

Harvey Kwiyani, director of Missio Africanus,[37] lecturer at Liverpool Hope University, and a former employee at CMS, says:

> I first came to Europe many years ago at the invitation of a Swiss pastor who asked for someone from our church in Malawi to 'come over to Switzerland and help us'. [...] The shock of seeing beautiful cathedrals empty and hearing people ridicule Christianity has never left me. Europe is a continent that needs to hear the gospel again. Indeed, it is a continent that needs a new missional engagement – to receive the good news again, even from those who are not Europeans.[38]

Thirdly, people in CMS emphasise that participation in God's mission needs strength and guidance from God. Because the mission is God's, and because

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[36] Nazir-Ali, *From Everywhere to Everywhere: A World View of Christian Mission*, 208, 209.
[37] https://decolonisingmission.com/ Accessed 10/02/ 2021.
[38] Brook and Steinberg, *What Is Mission: A Myth Busting Bible Study for Small Groups*, 15.

Christian mission will be ineffective without God's help, an attitude of humility and dependence on God is required.

> When we work together, we participate in the mission of God. We cannot do that without God's help. If we try, we are much less effective, if we are effective at all, doing without God's help. (CMS FG: 06:38)

The goal of this mission of God is linked to the Kingdom of God. Interviewees speak of "spreading the Kingdom, a message of salvation" (PiM FG-04:22), and of "the Kingdom dynamic" in mission as an indication of the values of God's Kingdom shaping the practice of mission (Interview 18-15:05). This idea of the Kingdom of God is further developed in a study resource: *The Possible World: Practical Ways to Join in God's Mission.*

> To follow Jesus in prophetic mission is to wrestle with the tension that a new world – the Kingdom of God – has come in the person of Jesus, yet we must wait until he returns to experience it fully. To live prophetically is to imagine, long and wait for a world that is healed and set right with God, and to do what we can to join with him in bringing that to life. [39]

The Kingdom of God is connected to Jesus, finding its beginning in his life and work, yet awaiting its fulfilment as an eschatological reality. God's act of salvation in Jesus gives hope for the promise of God's future of peace, justice, and restored relationships. At the same time people are called by God to join in now through small acts of salvation, as signs of that coming Kingdom. Or, as the study resource formulates it:

> We don't simply have to wait things out. We can actively join in with what God is already doing in the world. In each small act of hospitality, generosity, justice, kindness and care of creation, God's

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[39] Debbie James, *The Possible World: Practical Ways to Join in God's Mission* (Oxford: Church Mission Society, 2013), 33.
https://churchmissionsociety.org/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/CMS_Possible_World_Booklet_FINAL_USE_2018.pdf. Accessed 20/12018.

future shines into our present reality and we see the possible world, God's Kingdom in action. The God who raises the suffering, forsaken, crucified Jesus is the God of hope for a new world of peace, justice and restored relationships.[40]

And this realisation that the mission of God is about the Kingdom of God also calls for humility. It reemphasises that God is not just the source and the true actor in mission; God also determines the goal and the shape of mission.

We are not building nations. It is the Kingdom. It is about the Kingdom of the Lord. (Interview 7-57:08)

Mission is about God's world and not primarily about human preferences, programmes, and visions. And that is why this vision is also understood to be a prophetic vision. It will not necessarily fit naturally in every human context, culture, or societal structure. It may expose the need for change. Ross and Bevans write:

Prophets speak boldly and clearly – and sometimes angrily – not because they are against people, but because they are so totally for them. Karl Barth wrote powerfully of God's 'No' which is ultimately God's 'Yes'. In Barth's spirit, Hendrik Kraemer spoke of how the gospel offered to the world's cultures heir 'subversive fulfilment.'[41]

This exposure of what needs change is not meant to be an eradication of what was but a "subversive" fulfilment; what was is changed into its good and full self through a life that is shaped by a vision of God's Kingdom. The prophetic life is therefore not seen as only exposing sin; it also takes the shape of a life lived according to Kingdom values This is a life that is a sign of the Kingdom to come, while it at the same time exposes that which is in opposition to this Kingdom.

In both word and deed, Christians offer a message of hope to a world that often finds itself in what seems a hopeless situation –

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[40] Ibid., 44.
[41] Ross and Bevans, *Mission on the Road to Emmaus*, xvi.

violence, greed, poverty, oppression. And Christian individuals and communities live as counter-witnesses and 'contrast communities' in a world that values success over authenticity, wealth over sharing, exploitation of creation over its protection and care. […] Prophecy is about living Christian life and Christian community authentically. It is about the communication of the gospel, about offering a word of hope, about commitment to justice, peace-making and reconciliation.[42]

The prophetic life in the CMS discourse takes the form of local community living and it seeks to facilitate community across boundaries both regionally and worldwide.

7.2.2. The Story of the Community of God

People link CMS as a prophetic community that participates in the mission of God to the understanding of God as Trinity. The communion of the three persons in the one God is believed to be active in creation, inviting it to participate in the mission and community of God.

Our understanding of community has been immeasurably enriched in recent days by our understanding of the Trinity as community, and by an understanding that the Trinity, the community of the Three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, invite us into community with them. That our being in Christ is about us being caught up into the being of the Trinity. So, any understanding, that primarily, above everything else, gives us our identity… So… our identity is as a community of people who are in Christ and committed to the mission of God, must take precedence over, over everything else. (Interview 1-24:00)

Participation in the community and mission of God happens at God's initiative and gives CMS its identity; it therefore must have priority at all times and in

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[42] Ibid., xvii.

every situation. To my question why community is believed to be so important, a former CMS leader responded:

> Because it is at the heart of the Godhead. Because the Father, Son and Spirit are a community. And I think we are called to, to establish ourselves… the church is called to establish itself in the image of God. And so… I don't think we cannot be in Kingdom business without being in community. (Interview 9: 1:08:36)

Community as characteristic of God is understood to be the call for those who want to live according to the will of God. In their essay: *The Forgotten Factor,* Berry and Mounstephen write:

> Community is not best practice; it is not a solution or a strategy; it is who we were made to be – in the image of a God who is community.[43]

They argue that God as a community, creates community. And that community is shaped in the image of God. Berry and Mounstephen argue that this started in the creation of Adam and Eve. It was not good that Adam was alone. And together they received the call to be fruitful. Jesus too created community in the calling of the disciples. And at Pentecost a community was created by the Holy Spirit; it was a community that draws many to itself, and that goes out into the world.[44]

> That in a nutshell is the ministry of the Holy Spirit: the creation of missional community, as a reflection and an extension of the community of love at the heart of God.[45]

The story of the Bible is not only one of God's mission, it is also a story of mission in community. God draws people into community. And this life of community is called to be a blessing to the whole world bearing the love of God which flows

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[43] Berry and Mounstephen, *The Forgotten Factor*, 5.
[44] Ibid., 6–8.
[45] Ibid., 9.

over into the world. "The community God creates and indwells does not exist for its own sake."[46]

According to Dakin, in the introduction to the new CMS constitution, this community is a Christ centred "new humanity where there is no Jew or Gentile and where, through a generosity of giving and receiving, there is true justice for all."[47] Quoting John V. Taylor, he states that it is a community in the world, rather than separate from the world.

> *The church is essentially scattered, like seed in the earth salt in the stew, yeast in the dough. The Christian's milieu is the world because that is the milieu of the Holy Spirit.[48]*

Dakin recognises that the CMS community is a part of God's community and reflects God who is community. Scattered and fragmented though it may be, it is a sign of God's Kingdom in the world. He also indicates that community is never perfect but is on the road to being made perfect. It consists of people who are intensely connected with other people from around the world. And again, quoting JohnV. Taylor:

> *'Corporateness is not an end in itself, but God's means for thrusting us into the life-stream of the world' so that there is 'the least possible withdrawal for Christians from their corporateness with their fellow men [sic.] in the world'.[49]*

Corporateness, or community, does not exist for itself, nor is it separate from the world. And in this experience of corporateness with and for the world, the community itself is changed more into the likeness of Christ and is transformed to the values of the Kingdom, while also becoming a transforming factor in the world.

> *CMS is thus an interpretation of the gospel in practice, shaping our understanding of the church as Christ's transforming community:*

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[46] Ibid., 7.
[47] Dakin, "Sharing Jesus Changing Lives," 3.
[48] Ibid. Taylor, *The Go-between God*, 147.
[49] Dakin, "Sharing Jesus Changing Lives," 3. Taylor, *The Go-between God*, 148.

a community that is changed even as it transforms its context through mission service. […] As a transforming community spread out by the Holy Spirit in the world CMS will seek to transform other communities by being the sort of community of disciples and leaders that bonds, bridges and links people around the transforming centre of the vision and values of Jesus' mission.[50]

The transforming community, as it is led by the Holy Spirit, is centred, and realised around the vision and values of Jesus' mission. This calls for a community of disciples, who stay close to the centre. Berry and Mounstephen write:

The communion draws our eye to God incarnate and sacramental, to a sent God and a sacrificial God, a God who creates in community, who redeems in community and who sustains in community.[51]

To summarise, in the CMS discourse, community is at the heart of who God is. It is the creative and redemptive act of God in the world. And the redeemed and transformed community is missional, participating in the mission of God.[52]

7.3. 'Missio Dei,' Some Questions Considered

Placing the CMS discourse in the context of the wider theological conversation, a more focussed look at the concept of the 'Missio Dei' can clarify the link that is made in CMS between its emphasis on the Mission of God and the mission

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[50] Dakin, "Sharing Jesus Changing Lives," 3, 4.
[51] Berry and Mounstephen, *The Forgotten Factor*, 11.
[52] Within the discourse and formal theology, there are differences in priorities and emphases. Certain ideas may be more or less contested by different groups within CMS. But these differences are spoken about in terms of the necessary diversity in the whole of the community worldwide (see 7.1.1 and 7.1.2). I realise that power issues may be at play here. How much of this discourse is enforced? How free are members to critically question this discourse? However, I have heard serious critical questioning around the lived reality of the community, and around the experienced discrepancy between that lived reality and the formal theology, but not about the theology as described in this chapter.

spirituality of the community. This can clarify the relationship between the being and agency of God and the agency and felt responsibility of the community in the world, in its context and neighbourhood.

The theological themes, as they are used in the CMS discourse, are not uncontested. In the following paragraphs, some of the questions raised around the ideas of the 'Missio Dei' and the social Trinity, as expressed especially by John Flett and Mark Chapman, will be considered in conversation with the CMS discourse.

> *The key flaw of missio Dei is its deficient trinitarianism. Despite the supposed range of positions associated with the concept, they all stem from this same base. The problem is one of dividing who God is in himself from who he is in his economy. While mission is often understood as bridging the divide between God and the world, the Trinitarian problem of missio Dei is actually a problem of God himself.[53]*

Flett's question is how God's being from eternity relates to his action (economy) in the discourse of 'Missio Dei.' How does God's being relate to creation? According to Flett it is of ultimate importance that God's economy is not secondary to his being, since that would mean that there is division in God and that God's being is hidden or unknowable.

> *If Jesus Christ's acting in the power of the Spirit is not who God is from all eternity, then how can humanity trust that the gospel is the good news it claims to be? [54]*

The resulting uncertainty about God's being has, according to Flett, consequences for the ability of people to trust God. When the 'Missio Dei' is understood to be related to, or founded on a Trinitarian understanding of God, the problem persists when mission is solely understood in terms of sending – mission as the sending of the Son by the Father, the Spirit by both the Father

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[53] John G. Flett, "Missio Dei: A Trinitarian Envisioning of a Non-Trinitarian Theme," *Missiology* 37, no. 1 (January 2009): 5.
[54] Ibid., 7.

and the Son, and the church by the Son under the guidance, strength, and action of the Holy Spirit. [55] In this case mission remains part of God's economy as secondary to God's nature.

There is also a problem when the goal and locus of mission is considered. Is the Kingdom of God to be found in the church or in the world?[56] Whichever one chooses, God's mission of establishing the Kingdom, either in church or world remains separate from God's being from eternity. Both are seen as external to God's being.[57] This topic created an important discussion at the IMC conference in Willingen (1952).

> *While the statement (IMC Willingen, BvdTL) holds that 'the missionary movement of which we are a part has its source in the Triune God Himself,' this develops in terms of a choice between God's being and act – that is, between God in himself and his redemptive act in history.[58]*

Because of a desire to distance the missionary enterprise from its colonial past and ongoing Western paternalistic tendencies, the concept of the 'Missio Dei' changed the mission understanding from a church activity to an attribute of God. God is a missionary God.[59] And an eschatological focus of mission, in which the establishment of the Kingdom of God rather than the church becomes the goal, was believed to liberate mission from its cultural and localised tendencies and beliefs. A focus on the Kingdom of God allowed for a humbler attitude in mission, with an openness to the different and the other. This is especially necessary since the Kingdom of God is believed to be wider than the church. God works in the world and calls the church to participate in this work.

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[55] John G. Flett, *The Witness of God: The Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth and the Nature of Christian Community* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2010), 48.
[56] An important discussion at the IMC conference at Willingen (1952), where under influence of Hoekendijk the action of God is fully based in the world, rather than in the church. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 392.
[57] Flett, "Missio Dei," 6.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Flett, *The Witness of God*, 5. See also: Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 390.

For Flett, the answer to these questions can be found in understanding the Trinity as a relational reality. God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is communion.[60] And this communion includes God's act of creation as well as God's ongoing activity in creation. God's being is not a static reality; God's self is dynamic from eternity.

> *The Father's act of sending the Son and Spirit into fallen creation is not separate from who God is in himself. [...] Nor does God's becoming complete his perfection, as an actuality completes a potentiality. God is who he is from eternity, and he includes within himself our existence, for in the Son 'God, in the beginning of all His ways and works, was not alone, and did not work alone: not without the human' (rev., KD IV/2, 34; ET 32). [...] This is who God is as the living God.*[61]

This dynamic, living God is a missionary God. And humanity that exists in God is called to participate in the missionary act, "by virtue of our being *in* Christ."[62]

> *Participation in the missionary act is the true nature of Christian piety, for it shares in God's own work and, with this, shares in God's own life.*[63]

Flett calls this participation in God's mission the "true nature of Christian piety." And this participation takes shape in the church as the community that lives in fellowship with this missionary God, and in a continuing transformation of understanding who Christ is in the world.[64] Quoting Karl Barth, Flett states that the church's understanding of Christ is always incomplete and in need of ongoing learning and growing, until she will be made complete in Christ, in the Kingdom to come.

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[60] See also: Jean Zizioulas, *Being as Communion : Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), 134.
[61] Flett, "Missio Dei," 12.
[62] Ibid., 13.
[63] Ibid., 14.
[64] Flett, *The Witness of God*, 295.

> *This is part of the living history of the divine and human fellowship as the missionary community moves from the origins in which she is already complete to the visibility in which her community will be manifest.*[65]

The eschatological reality is also part of the ongoing and "living history" of God and God's people.

Mark Chapman also raises some serious questions in relation to the understanding of God as a social Trinity. His questions come from "theology as a practical discipline;" he questions the "being-in-relationship" that is connected to the understanding of God as communion.[66] According to Chapman, the "being-in-relationship" of God, and therefore also of human beings as they are created in the image of God, is interpreted in a too optimistic picture of harmony, justice and peace. First, this glosses over the separate, possibly even opposing, characteristics of God – God's qualities of justice and mercy. And secondly, the assumption that human societies or communities would be able to mirror God's being is too facile.[67] It is the practice of daily life that brings this opposition to the fore. The history of the church and of orthodox doctrine is an example of this, as it is a process full of conflict. Still, this conflict may well be a necessary element of the church.

> *[…] indeed, neither peace at any price, nor harmony, strike me as the most manifest characteristics of doctrinal development at the beginnings of what became orthodoxy. And that is perhaps because harmony and order are not obviously central to Jesus' proclamation. […] and perhaps we can suggest that disunity and conflict between competing groups held together in an often fragile communion is the best way in which we might begin to understand the early Church; and similarly such a state has become the normal condition of the Church ever since.*[68]

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[65] Ibid., 295.
[66] Mark D. Chapman, "The Social Doctrine of the Trinity: Some Problems," *Anglican Theological Review* 83, no. 2 (2001): 240.
[67] Ibid., 248.
[68] Ibid., 249.

The idea of "Gods perfection" is, according to Chapman, totally different from that of real societies and denies the possibility of conflict, healing and restoration as normal structuring realities in human living.[69] This also seems contrary to the violent conflict lived out in the death of Jesus on the cross. Rather than thinking about God in terms of perfection, both of God's qualities of justice and mercy should be taken seriously and should lead to a practical reflection on how they promote reconciliation and transformation. "How are justice and mercy to be combined? How is God's all-loving nature to be reconciled with the moral demand for justice?" Practical wisdom is needed here.[70]

> *God's being is manifested in the practical activity of solving the problems of life together. Christianity is thus a life, not a set of propositions, and cannot be based simply on an ontology, even an ontology of being-in-relationship, however appealing: instead it is founded on a God who was alive as we are alive, and who is present with us in today's world. And that will mean that we can never rest content with what may ultimately prove to be facile solutions – and we are thereby forced to engage again in the messy conflict-ridden thing we call human relationships, just as God did.[71]*

This reflects a practical wisdom that grows out of the contemplation of God revealed in human form in human society where God faced the reality of conflict and division. And still today, God works in and with the world towards transformation, while never offering facile solutions that hide or negate the painful and conflict-ridden reality.

7.4. Attentive Living and Passionate Believing

Both Flett's and Chapman's concerns can be seen in the CMS discourse. The fear of arrogantly promoting a god according to our understanding and reality rather

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[69] Ibid., 250.
[70] Ibid., 252.
[71] Ibid., 253.

than meeting God as revealed in different times and places is clearly shared. Also, Flett's concern for the eternal unity of God, both in his being and acting, can be observed in *The Forgotten Factor*, albeit from a different perspective. Flett's concern is especially for the right understanding of the being of God, where God's acting must be an inherent part of God's being rather than a secondary reality. On the other hand, Berry and Mounstephen emphasise the unity of being and acting in the human life as a spiritual reality resulting in an authentic unity in the life of the community as it relates to both God and the world.[72] Chapman's concern for an understanding of God that takes the mystery and the multi-faceted reality of God seriously, may be less obvious in the formal theology as presented in the CMS literature. This is especially true when speaking about the mission of God or the Trinitarian reality of God and community. Ambivalence, on the other hand, appears in the interviews (see 1.1.6.) and also, for example, in the book *Missional Conversations,* where Elisa Padilla gives a description of the Christian community of which she is part:

> *Rather than conceiving community from the perspective that the philosopher Edgar Morin would call 'a paradigm of simplicity', we approach the experience of community in the framework of complexity. [..] The model of complexity is an attempt to dialogue with the intricacies of life, embraces disorder, ambiguity, uncertainty and contradiction.[73]*

Whereas for Flett and Chapman these concerns come out of a systematic reflection on God and his relationship to the world (Flett), as well as from a reflection based on a theology of practical wisdom (Chapman), for CMS they primarily come out of the encounter with God in the daily practice of living its mission spirituality. It is a discourse of worship and discovery, of faith and action. And this spirituality takes the form of community life, as given by God, and lived out in the everyday reality.

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[72] Berry and Mounstephen, *The Forgotten Factor*, 12.
[73] Elisa Padilla, "An Ecosystem Called Community," in *Missional Conversations: A Dialogue between Theory and Praxis in World Mission*, ed. Cathy Ross and Colin Smith (London: SCM Press, 2018), 109.

A consequence of this reality is that the CMS discourse is not necessarily always a systematically consistent or unified discourse. Neither is it analytically detailed and argumentative. The theological foundation for community life may be based on an understanding of the Trinity inviting people into their being, and as a result participating in the being of God and living God's character in the world. It may also be based on the experience of God's call as people created in the image of God and sent by Jesus as the Father has sent him (John 20:21). This is where people would ask: "What would Jesus do?" Yet, it is a discourse that has grown out of a desire and commitment to be attentive to God, self, the other and the world. It is a discourse that seeks to take the stories of God, Jesus' history, the history of the church, and today's world seriously. It grows out of "paying attention."[74]

The main threads of this story, distilled from the interviews, written publications, as well as the CMS history, are that God is a triune God who exists in three distinct persons in unity and lives in a loving relationship. God is a missionary god who invites humanity, created in the image of God, into the Trinity to participate in the relational being of God, and therefore in the mission of God. First, this calls for an attitude of humility, since participation in the mission of God requires discovering where and how God is acting in the world to be able to join in. The initiative and direction are always God's, through the Holy Spirit, made possible in Christ. Secondly, this reality also calls for a humble attitude toward diversity, realising that God created difference, and that diversity reveals God's self within it. Thirdly, this reality takes the form of community; the church is invited into, participates in, images, and responds to the being-in-relationship of God. This is a community of both worship and action, a community that is in its very being a witness to God's love; it is a prophetic community and also a community that pours itself out in an active search for justice and reconciliation. It is a sign of the Kingdom of God.[75] It is also

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[74] Baker, "Yes to Mission Spirituality," 397.
[75] Even though there is a strong emphasis on the understanding that the community does not exist for itself, but for the world, it does not follow Hoekendijk in saying that the church empties itself into the world. The church is itself a sign of the Kingdom of God, the community is taken up into the being of God and therefore a permanent part of the Kingdom of God, while realising that the Kingdom of God is not restricted to or confined in

a community of transformation. In the process of joining in God's mission to heal injustice, sin and conflict, it is not only the world that is transformed, the community is as well.[76] This is first because the community still is part of the world, and therefore in need of transformation. And, secondly, in paying attention to God's active presence in the world, the community discovers and learns more about God and about itself. This also calls for humility. The community is the place where the mystery of God is encountered along with conflict and division; it is where human shortcomings and egoism within oneself, the community, and the world must be faced.

Baker and Ross write in the introduction to their book *Pioneering Spirituality*:

> *It is a spirituality shaped by a story that enables deep transformation in the world, and in our own hearts and minds.[…] A Christian spirituality requires an unlearning and a freeing from addiction to this wider spirituality of consumption and a conversion to the service of a different God out of a different story, a different way of living.[77]*

Mission spirituality tells an alternative story to that which is told in the world (including the world that is in ourselves). And these stories are part of the story of God as found in Scripture, in the life of Jesus, and in the life of the church through the ages, including in the past life of the CMS community. But they are also the stories of people today who are living out their understanding of God in the different places and with the people they encounter. These are the mission stories published in the literature of CMS, whether placed on the website or shared when people meet. These formative stories are full of passion,[78] of lived experience, of God encountered, and of signs of his Kingdom in a broken world. Some of them also are stories of a hidden God, a God who is incomprehensible.

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the church. God works in the world, and the church participates as instrument. Berry and Mounstephen, *The Forgotten Factor*, 12, 27.

[76] Dakin, "Sharing Jesus Changing Lives," 4.

[77] Ross and Baker, *Pioneering Spirituality*, 4, 5.

[78] Baker, "Yes to Mission Spirituality," 396, 397.

And this is one of the reasons[79] why within CMS a strong emphasis is placed on mission spirituality. God's mysterious being and action in the world are discovered through paying attention to God, to the world and to oneself, or, as people might say, through prayer and action. And God's mission is understood to be about relationships between God, people, and creation. Mission spirituality, therefore, is understood to lead to a relational approach to mission, involving the whole person.

In this context it is helpful to consider the distinction (not necessarily opposition) between theology as a propositional reality and theology as a searching for God. This point is made by Sarah Coakley at the start of her exploration of the doctrine of the Trinity.

> *'Orthodoxy' as mere propositional assent needs to be carefully distinguished from 'orthodoxy' as a demanding, and ongoing, spiritual project, in which the language of the creeds is personally and progressively assimilated. [...] It is to set the story of the development of the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity within a constellation of considerations – spiritual, ascetical, sexual, social. [...] in order to expose a narrative of an explicitly prayer-based access to the workings of the divine.[80]*

Coakley speaks of desire as an "ontological category belonging primarily to God," an attribute of the triune God-in-relation which intensifies human desires, while it at the same time purifies human desires, as the person participates in the divine desire.[81]

Flett also seems to point in this direction when he closes his book on the Trinity with a paragraph on joy. The contemplation of the triune God leads to joy, which leads into the "missionary act," as a form of doxology.

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[79] Other reasons are found in the relationships of belonging and the performance of community as a worldwide entity. See chapter 8.
[80] Sarah Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self: An Essay "On The Trinity"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 5, 6.
[81] Ibid., 13.

> *Joy is the wellspring of the missionary act. It is an involuntary cry that results from finding that pearl of great price. […] Mission is the abundant fellowship of active participation in the very glory that is the life of God from and to all eternity. It is life in community of reconciliation moving out in solidarity with the world in the active knowledge that God died for it, too. It is the response of doxology as we follow the Spirit's lead as captives in the train of the living glorious Lord, the lamb that was slain.[82]*

Human participation in mission is based in searching for God; it is a mission spirituality of passionate desire as a response to God's initiative, to God's desire and action. And it is lived out in a mission community focussed on realising the vision and the beginning of the Kingdom of God.

In this chapter, we have looked at the theological underpinning of the CMS community, as it is expressed by the members of the community, both in its lived and formal theology. Deriving its identity from God and the story of God's people, the community is described as a missional reality participating in the mission of God. Mission spirituality is therefore a central theme and motivation for the members of the community in their life together. In the next chapter we will see that this theological self-understanding of the community influences the experience of belonging and how that belonging is shaped in the lives of the members.

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[82] Flett, *The Witness of God*, 297, 298.

BELONGING

Belonging to the community can have varying shapes and forms. It happens through different relationships, raising the question of who belongs to the community, and what membership really is. First, for the purpose of this chapter, CMS membership is defined as a membership in the CMS Britain community. It happens through the official membership process in which members commit to a life based on the CMS values and participate in the community life itself. A declaration of intent is signed, and the new members sign up to specific news publications of the community, such as "PrayerLines" and others. How one further connects with the community depends on personal choice and preferences. Events are organised and there is a CMS presence at several big festivals in which people can participate. There are possibilities for regional groups, training, encounter trips, and other ways of engagement on a more personal level.

Second, according to the people interviewed, belonging to CMS does not seem to be limited to the official or formal membership, especially when CMS is understood to be a dispersed community that is worldwide. Relationships are developed through living and working together. Shared values, experience and purpose create a sense of belonging. Face-to-face contacts and mutual visits result in concern for each other and an experience of bonding.

In this chapter the CMS community membership experience will be explored, both in the institutional sense and in the sense of belonging relationally. The first part will describe the experience as it has been described in the interviews of this research. In the second part of the chapter, this experience will be related

to a sociological and psychological understanding of community belonging, focussing on how the individual relates to the communal, and why people choose to belong. Finally, these questions will also be looked at through a theological lens, with a special focus on the theological reflection as it is published by members of CMS. They relate belonging to the self-understanding of the community as both a gift and a call.
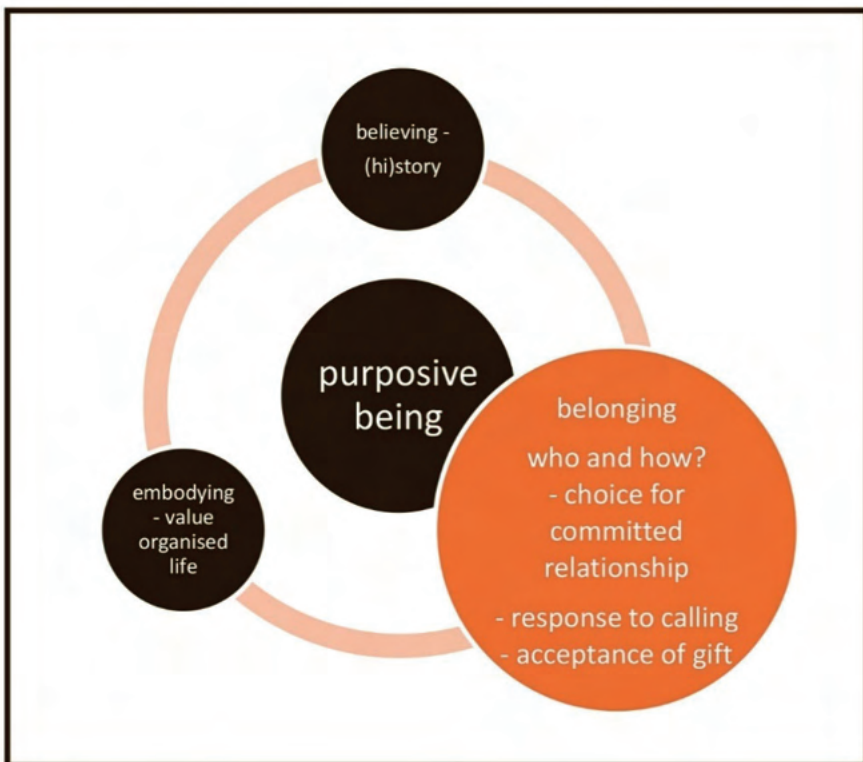
8.1. Those who Belong

Each person whom I interviewed to gain insight into the lived experience of the CMS community has a link with CMS, either with CMS Britain or internationally

through the CMS Mission Network. These links exist through working as a CMS employee in the office in Oxford, being a CMS mission partner, being a member of a church or community that is linked to CMS and supports the CMS work, being an individual member of the CMS community, or being part of the dispersed CMS Britain community through international relationships and the CMS Mission Network.

Yet, not all these interviewees have signed up to be a CMS community member. One person who did not sign up, even though he has strong links with CMS, said that he does not feel part of the community.

> So, when they say CMS is a community, I see my local church, where I find common peers, is actually my community. So, I don't see CMS as a community. (Interview 13-24:15-6)

This person believes that community is only possible by living together and sharing life locally, on a regular basis. Others do not see themselves as part of the community, because as employees they feel that their organisational relationship cannot at the same time be a community relationship. During the focus group in the CMS office, one person explained it as follows:

> It is always a tension there between people who say, well I am here to do a job of work, and therefore if I am distracted in my work, by people working out personal, personality, tensions and all the rest of it, which is a thing of community… (CMS FG 12:53)

In their experience work and personal relationships cannot be mixed.

Yet, people do indicate a sense of belonging to a wider community and a greater story, including the person who raised the above issue during the focus group. Some indicate that they value the resources created by CMS Britain to encourage them to have a personal missional lifestyle. The sense of accountability that membership brings is mentioned. And meeting other CMS members at events, conferences and international visits is said to provide a

sense of belonging.[1] Relational words are used, such as "together," "each other," and "unity."

> "togetherness, and unity between people, people looking out for each other and providing for each other if they need it." (Interview 19-04:10).

And speaking about the dispersed community, where people feel connected even though they are in different countries or even continents, she explains how the internet continues to facilitate the experience of being connected.

> I guess, the internet and email are very helpful. That is a big thing. It is uh… very good. Keeping up contact, even though they are far away, and keeping up to that with prayer requests and uhm… just news in general. (Interview 19-08:11)

A former employee explained that she became a member while working for CMS because of the promises of membership. She felt that they expressed her values and purpose in life, and she wanted to join a wider community with people like herself. After leaving CMS as an employee, she remained a CMS member. Yet, she feels ambivalent about the quality of her commitment to the community.

> I was probably a far better community member when I worked there, then when I left. It is funny, because I am still very passionate about CMS. And I will always sing its praises. […] But yes, I do still feel part of it. And particularly when the PrayerLines appears, and the various things pop through the letter box. And I think Oh, and I open them, read them, and then they are passed on to my Mum. Yeah, she loves them. (Interview 22-139:144)

The ambivalence about her own participation in the community does not translate into an ambivalence to the community itself. Even though she has left the organisation as an employee, she values the ongoing connection through the different publications and resources. And as she explains further on during

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[1] How these relational elements and events are facilitated in the community is worked out in chapter 9.1.

the interview, she also values the sense of being accountable, having signed the promises which nudge her towards an authentic missional life in her current context.

In all the different categories of people with CMS links, there are those who have chosen to sign up as CMS community member and those who have chosen not to sign up. Still, these non-formal members also express a sense of belonging to the community, sharing its values and purpose and investing in its life. And then there are people, who are not part of the CMS membership nor directly part of the mentioned categories of CMS links but who still feel a connection with CMS. This connection is largely through a relationship with CMS people. They are, for example, supporting mission partners, or working together with mission partners, or are part of a community related to CMS, or participate in training provided by CMS. One mission partner explained:

> *I tend to see, as mission partners, I tend to see the worldwide mission community as consisting of ourselves, the mission partners, the friends we make, the places we are send, the people we work with, the people who support us, our churches that has called us, and our family members, so... each mission partner will bring that group of people, and so it grows. (PiM FG-09:11)*

It is also possible that some people feel part of CMS because they have benefited from historic CMS presence and involvement in their community.

> *I remember someone in a team, in Oxford, who had been born in a CMS hospital, raised, went to school in CMS churches, in Sri Lanka... I think... and went to CMS churches. So, all three institutions were all CMS and that was, they were more CMS, had more CMS DNA, than anyone else I had ever met. (PiM FG-54:39)*

The CMS connection then becomes not just a relational one but also a cultural one, part of a person's history and identity – a person's "DNA." Yet, it is possible that this person could never become an official CMS community member because their place of residence is outside the CMS Britain's home region.

To summarise, belonging to the CMS community can be organisational through official membership, or a more informal relational belonging. The experience of

being part of the CMS community is much larger than the formal membership. This is reflected in the responses of the interviewees to the questions around belonging.

To my surprise I found that formally belonging to the organisation was seldom mentioned by the interviewees themselves. And if mentioned, it was regularly in the context of questions around boundaries – around inclusion and exclusion. Does this mean that organisational membership does not have added value for the interviewees? Or is membership problematic for people who value relational belonging and who want to include people beyond the organisational boundaries? This will be explored in the following section

8.1.1. Tangible Relationships

As described in chapter 5.1. the interviewees experience the CMS community as a relational event in which people and relationships are central, supporting and shaping both the members within the community and the outward focussed active existence of the community in the wider society. The sense of belonging to this community also develops through the experience of having things in common, such as sharing the same values, beliefs, history, lived experience, work, and purpose.

Next to the experience of commonality, this relational belonging has an emotional character; people feel connected, and there is a sense of recognition. One example of this is the relationship of a Link Church with a mission partner living and working in Chili. When the church was invited to start a relationship with this person, they found out that he spent his childhood in their area. This established a sense of connection and encouraged their involvement in the building of a relationship.

> I think there was a desire that we, we linked with CMS. [...] I think it felt good and his links being not just Chilean, but also the UK..[...] I think he comes roughly from this area, doesn't he? Did he not go to school not far from here? (Interview 17-30:01)

Other stories are told about how people travel to various countries and meet people whom they have never met before and who sometimes do not even

share the same language. A sense of recognition and of a common faith and shared values is experienced. However, for these relationships to continue they need to be maintained. For bonding to happen, according to the interviewees, relationships need to be tangible and intentional. A couple in a Link Church tells about their experience of visiting a church in Bujumbura, Burundi, with a group of people from their church. Because of this visit, and because the Archbishop of Bujumbura made a return visit, a sense of emotional involvement developed. A personal link was established. But they realise that an ongoing effort is needed to maintain this personal link.

> *I think that has to be ongoing, because life moves on. If that was it, you would then be moving on to something else. But if somebody else is in touch or comes over from Burundi. You know, it needs to be ongoing. And maybe Skype and other things. We should have more contact. (Interview 17-40:35)*

Such an effort is not made automatically. The interviewee hints that the current effort is not enough.

This story indicates that face-to-face contact is an important vehicle in building and maintaining these relationships. Other ways are sharing news and information, joys and concerns. This can happen through letters and publications. Ongoing involvement in each other's lives and mutual care can happen through the sharing of resources, prayer, and active investment in the wellbeing of the other. Such intentionality of relationships and commitment leads to a solidarity with each other and with the ethos and vision of the community. This was spoken about in the focus group in the CMS office.

> *but I think for me somewhere in there would have to be something in there around the quality of relationships that exist. We worship, pray, celebrate, eat, work together.[...] Uhm... and so I think there is an intentionality about being a community which has a sense of, some sense of... expectation, or ??? attached to it. (CMS FG-08:08)*

Following the CMS discourse, belonging to the community consists of the experience of commonality, an emotional connection, and face-to-face contact. Such belonging requires intentional and deliberate investment in the

relationships and commitment to the shared values and purpose. Because of the high value-expectations within the community, belonging is also a call demanding a choice and a commitment to and investment in the relationships in the community. This commitment can both be a formal and an informal personal commitment. For some it is expressed through the official organisational membership while for others this formal membership is not seen as necessary.

8.1.2. Relationships Around the World

The concept of tangible relationships, with the expectations connected to them, extends beyond the boundaries of the local community into the community relationships worldwide. A local church in the UK experiences ongoing relationships through mutual visits and communication with people from communities in other parts of the world. The communities become involved in each other's life and ministry.

> *So, we had, we often had people from, from Burundi, or India, staying with us for two or three weeks. So, it wasn't just a quick in and out on a Sunday morning. Uhm... but they were getting to know folk. And they were really teaching and, and, and bringing transformation, I think. Well, transformation of thinking and therefore perception […] But people did begin to get it. […] they support a whole sort of charity, and I don't know what it is called now, but Theodore is part of it.[…] It was, it was uhm... you know the whole church felt part of it. (Interview 4-26:11)*

It may well be significant that this interviewee did not remember the name of the charity but did remember the name of the person leading that charity. The relationship with the person, built over time and over geographical boundaries, through face-to-face contact, is more influential for the relationship than the project itself. It is the relationship that is the motor behind the ongoing support and solidarity.

In general, such tangible and committed relationships will be easier to realise in a local community than in a dispersed community worldwide, where the

different members may never meet each other because of geographical distance. The question can be raised as to who has access to the community relationships worldwide, since travel to different places and communities around the world is possible for only the few.

One interviewee from CMS Africa emphasises the unavoidable reality of globalisation. In today's world we belong together if we want to or not.

> .. the church or mission agencies tend to run behind the secular world. Kodak Color is one global company. IBM. You name it. So, should we be asking that question? Is, is that ... we have been the last ones to catch up with the global world. So, to me CMS... has no choice, really. We will have to figure; how do we make that work. And uh... learn, even learn from, from uh... from global companies. (Interview 13-16:08)

According to this person's understanding, the church is running behind in today's world. Though strong in local structures, she is not adapting well enough to the globalising dynamics in the world. Consequently, the communities become insular, disconnected from the reality of their context, mono-lingual and mono-cultural.

> and so.. even, even in CMS, whether in fact we become smaller and smaller, what do you call it, homogeneous units, mono-cultural units, or... we actually just collaborate, so actually flex the... multicultural context in which all of us find ourselves. We have just had this consultation, where there are Chinese in Africa and Africans in China, where we are Europeans in Africa, and in Europe we find an African, so we need to start to talk to each other. (Interview 13-18:22)

For communities to stay relevant in our current globalised world, they must face the multicultural context and engage in conversation. In practice, it falls to the leaders within the community to be the linking factor. They are the ones who will travel and therefore are able to connect communities. They will have to listen to, and work together with, the local leaders who are rooted in their local context.

So.... one question is how do you keep the balance between the local and the global. The global leaders can bring connection, but the local leaders will understand the local context very, very well. (Interview 13-20:22)

Yet, for this person, CMS as a worldwide entity should not be seen as a community but rather as a network, a hub for mutual support and resourcing. In his view, a true community can only be local, since that is the place where tangible and committed relationships can be formed. The relationships at the global level are more transient because they are linked to the travel and visits of the few. They are mainly purpose focused – an important but limited part of our lives. What will happen when he retires from his work? How will his connection to CMS then be shaped?

It is a network; it is a platform for shared vision. I mean, one of the things that happens, you know, when I am retiring, when I hit 60, will I stop with this mission? I will have a different platform, but legally I am supposed to retire. (Interview 13-26:34)

It is, in his view, only at the local level that relationships and belonging become holistic, inclusive, rooted in history, realised in the daily life, committed and without the uncertainty of transience.

A partner from Eastern Congo has another view of CMS as a worldwide community to which he belongs. He emphasises the historic and ongoing relationships of CMS with the church in his country. He tells of the investment from CMS Britain in the church in his country by naming the names of different missionaries who have worked in the region and so making it a personal connection. He also tells of his discovery that his father received his education through CMS structures, bringing the relationship with CMS into his family circle.

A part ça aussi, je pense que je me souviens, mon papa, quand il était décédé, j'ai trouvé un document là, il était de... ils ont eu un document de la CMS. Il a étudié dans une école, qu'on appelait l'école de CMS Boga. Alors, c'est CMS qui avait commencé cette école. Maintenant mon papa, quand j'ai découvert, j'ai dit oh... vraiment enchanté. (Interview 16-03:02)

> *Apart from this, I think that I remember my father, when he passed away, I found a document. He was… he had received a document from CMS. He studied in a school named the CMS School Boga. So, it was CMS who had started this school. Now, my father, when I discovered, I said, oh…. Really, delighted! (Translation BvdTL)*

And he describes the current relationship as a relationship of support, both spiritual and material, through visits and through the communication of prayer and prayer needs. He believes that this relationship is no longer a one-directional relationship, as it was before. The visits, prayers and encouragement have become mutual and reciprocal.

> *Malgré des crises financières parfois, celle qui est normale dans la vie, mais avec l'encouragement spirituel CMS est toujours là. Les gens de la CMS nous visitent. Ils viennent souvent nous voir, nous visiter, avoir des réunions, ça ça crée encore une autre relation que la communauté continue à parler sur ça. […] Maintenant les gens disent, oh... on est là avec les gens, on est ensemble, on est ensemble, on est ensemble... (Interview 16-11:59)*

> *Regardless of the financial crises that we have sometimes, which are regular in our life, CMS is always there with spiritual encouragement. CMS people come to visit. They often come to see us, visit us, have meetings. This created a new relationship, such that the community continues to speak about that. […] Now the people say, oh… they are here with the people, we are together, we are together, we are together. (Translation BvdTL)*

These relationships have, in his view, such a quality of commitment and durability over time, that for him it counts as a community relationship in which the people belong to each other, regardless of the physical and geographical distance.

To facilitate these community relationships, it is necessary that there be people who can bridge the distance, who can make the relationships tangible, who can give the relationships a face. Where not all members of the community worldwide have the opportunity to travel and meet people around the community, there are some people who do have that. Especially the mission

partners are named in this context. They are called to invest in their host community but also called to be "bridge people." They are the people who are able to link the communities to which they belong, located in different places around the world, through their stories and photos and through the perspectives and discoveries they have gained and are willing to share. One mission partner verbalised it as follows:

> *I think there is a sense where ... you are it. You are the connection. You are the bridge; you are the link. For some of them you are the only link they have. You make... […] I mean, the person they see in front of them, that tells them the stories about the context that they know about, becomes the link, the window into that world, and people, and people then start to get a glimpse of the... the wider... uh... picture... the wider ... story, but bigger picture. (PiM FG-46:59-47:32)*

And this sharing and connecting of communities results in a sense of belonging together, a sense of actively participating in the reality of the other. A woman working in the office tells how she had this experience when she heard a story about people in Syria during a prayer meeting at the CMS office.

> *There is... it is not an enormous great thing. There is a sense that the only reason we heard the story from Syria this morning is that it came via somebody who we are partnering in mission with. Ok. It was not just a random story from the church of God around the world. So there is something special about that story, because we have helped as, as, as the rest of that community, to... to... fund that guy and and, or the family and their work. Uhm... and I think that is important. (CMS FG-08:31)*

She indicates that many stories are told but this particular story had a greater impact on her, because it came through a person with whom she had a special connection in CMS. She felt that through that special connection she played a part in that story and felt actively involved.

Therefore, it can be said that the sense of belonging, and the bonding through intentional relationships, in a community existing across geographical

boundaries and physical distance, will have a different character from the belonging and relationality in a local community. For most members, it will be a more mediated relationship, and the experience of belonging requires a commitment to this mediated relationship. People who are bridging the distance and mediating the relationship play an important role, and the communication through internet and other media is needed to maintain it. Is such a mediated relationship one through which people feel they belong together? Some people will see it as such, whereas for others this is better described as a network relationship that is mutually beneficial. It is important to note that this network relationship offers support and encouragement but requires commitment and investment. This involvement is experienced as less personal and less existential than belonging to a local community would.

8.1.3. Boundaries to Belonging

Belonging to community is related to a sense of connection and commonality. But are there boundaries to belonging? I see the CMS community with its strong emphasis on values and purpose[2] as a 'value high' entity, where belonging is linked to shared values and purpose and carries high expectations. This means that not all will belong or would even want to belong. The membership process within CMS took that reality into account. People had to sign up to become a member. They were invited to commit to the CMS Community promises, or affirmation.[3] Beliefs, values and commitment were seen as marks of belonging

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[2] See chapters 6 and 7.
[3] The CMS Community affirmation
"I'm a member of the CMS mission community because:
- I believe God is still working in our world and I want to be part of this.
- I want my life to be about mission and I know that mission isn't someone else's job - it's mine.
- I want to live for Jesus daily and I realise I need fuel for this journey.
- As a member of the CMS mission community, I desire to help my local Christian community keep mission a priority.
- I also wish to join other CMS members in regularly renewing my mind and spirit and my commitment to mission."
https://www.churchmissionsociety.org/welcome-community Accessed 28/02/2018.

to the community. And if one is not able to make these promises, one cannot be a member and belong to the community in the same way.

During the focus group in the CMS office, there was a discussion about boundaries to belonging. The question was asked if people working in the CMS office as security staff or cleaning staff belong to the community, since they often don't share the same core-values or live for the same mission-purpose as the others within the CMS office.

> *There are people who are working in the office who are not part. You know, and I think the security guards are part of that, partly because they don't share some things that we are sharing in terms of the quality of the relationships that we have with them. But also, their ability to contribute to the organisation, and that spiritual position and their, their commitment to our common purpose, which is beyond, you know, beyond being an employee. (CMS FG-18:02)*

This observation was followed by different people in the focus group mentioning the names of those who might fall outside of the community according to the above statement. But the moment these names were mentioned, the boundaries seemed to break down. For example, the person preparing the food in the café area of CMS was named, and the immediate reaction by another participant of the group was:

> *But he is also at the heart of some of the things that we do, you know, when we eat together, or celebrate together, he is there. (CMS FG 18:33)*

This was perceived as different from the people cleaning the office building, since their names were not known to the people in the group.

> *It is hard to speak of somebody being part of a community when you don't know something as basic as their name. Uhm... that then there is an anonymity that is beginning to be, beginning to stretch beyond boundary of community. (CMS FG-19:25)*

But this statement was again qualified with the comment that within the community, though one person may not know all people connected to CMS, each is known by someone.

When speaking about the boundaries of community, the CMS interviewees move between two positions. On the one hand, it is important for them that the values and purpose are shared and lived out in committed relationships. On the other, there is a fear of exclusion, which is opposite to the value of hospitality. During the discussion described above, one person even called the attitude of exclusion a sin.

> But I think it is also partly our, our obvious sinfulness of excluding people. You know, that is also true. (CMS FG-28:33)

Later in the discussion, this seeming opposition is explained in terms of a community as a "centred set" rather than a "bounded set," a distinction coined by Paul Hiebert.[4] One interviewee explained that people may either rally around maintaining boundaries and being clear of who belongs, or around the central values and purpose of the community, which may blur the boundaries.

> My mind.... goes to... what, what we call centred set theory, where you almost have no boundaries at all. But you have a covenant community at the centre, and, and people... uhm... are on a journey, either towards the centre or away from the centre, at any point in time. And, and the people that belong to the centre have, have become part of this covenant community, at the centre of this worldwide community. An, and so... I would, I would not have boundaries, but... I would... I would... think of people as... you know... maybe they are walking towards the centre and it, it may take them long, it may take them short to get to the centre, but from wherever they are if they get the vision, if they feel like this is what the spirit is leading them to do, they are welcome, and, and... and welcome to journey to the centre. (Interview 5-211)

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[4] Paul G. Hiebert, "Conversion, Culture and Cognitive Categories: How Much Must Papayya 'Know' about the Gospel to Be Converted?," *Gospel in Context* 1, no. 4 (1978): 24–29.

In this way of thinking, belonging is not decided by correct beliefs and behaviours and their related boundaries. Belonging is instead defined by a person's choice to commit personally to the central values and purpose, allowing for diversity as belonging is lived out. And people indicate that this is of great importance in a community that understands itself as worldwide. There diversity is inescapable.

> So... we have got to admit that diversity is also going to define us. And also, diversity is not necessarily going to be limited according to geographical location, because in every geographical location we are going to have diversity. So... theological diversity, cultural diversity, geographical diversity, and so... [...] And so we are going to have to accept those who are different from us. And know how to speak a language that seeks to bring about communication and inclusion, defining our terms and our words, and understanding each other's experiences. And uh... this is just the reality of the world we live in. (Interview 13-13:42)

For this person, diversity calls for an attitude of listening, of seeking to understand and to accept each other, rather than judging each other according to one's personal, cultural, or theological standards.

> I think we, soo... we cannot think and exclude anyone and say OK you are a church, but you are not missional in the way that I understand it, and therefore you are not part of this community. (PiM FG-21:17)

Exclusion is felt to be inappropriate. The Spirit's work is greater than our understanding and is uniting people around the world.

> But there are so many fluid things that every church shares, or the global mission community shares in common. We may not uh... see it, we may not accept it, but it is there. And I think that is where the spirit of God works and unites us into the global worldwide community. (PiM FG-19:57)

Unwillingness to define the boundaries of the community is a recurring theme in the interviews. Different reasons are given, such as the inescapable diversity within the worldwide community, the diversity of people's lives and realities, the importance of hospitality, and the wrongness of judgment and of exclusion based on a lack of understanding. The question is not who can belong to the community, but who would want to belong. The emphasis is not on the boundaries but on the commitment to the identity and 'raison d'être' of the community.

8.1.4. Self-Defining Membership

If, in the experience of the interviewees, belonging is not linked to the establishment of boundaries, then it becomes difficult to define membership and belonging as an objective category. People themselves will have to decide if they want to belong to the community. They will have to make the conscious choice to commit to the relationships within the community and to its values and purpose.

> I think, yes, this community is self-defining, to a certain extent that you can opt in or opt out for a certain period of time. (PiM FG-12:40)

Belonging becomes a self-defining category which is based on personal choice and limited in time.

This is as true for the official and formal membership as it is for the more informal relationships of people. Nobody was told to become a member. The membership process was an open invitation. Each person had to make their own personal choice whether or not to belong and commit. Still, this choice created a diversity between those who became a "real" member and those who did not and between those who could apply for official membership and those who could not. Several interviewees experienced this as a form or degree of exclusion. In the CMS Office Focus Group, for example, one person compared the membership process with an exercise of jumping through a hoop, or over a fence, making it a process that is focussed on boundaries and on in- and exclusion.

> *I think that has been one of the difficulties that we have had around the whole community exercise, that is that the idea that you actually have to jump through a hoop, or over a fence to get in. Whereas if people rallied around a flag-point, it would be easier. (CMS FG-18:02)*

And the result for this interviewee was that the community lost part of its diversity at the centre of its being.

Yet, on the other hand, people also describe their desire to belong to the community and the welcome they have received.

> *We worked with a multi-denominational agency before, uhm.. and my experience, and our experience of working with CMS has been actually a lot more inclusive. (recognising humming in group). I was saying today that CMS is being elastic. It sort of stretches for people to come in. (PiM FG-52:23)*

Compared to other agencies, and in this case a multi-denominational agency, CMS (an Anglican denomination) is experienced by this mission partner, as intentionally inclusive, "elastic."

In the experience of the people interviewed, they are inspired by those who are part of CMS; they are motivated by what CMS stands for, by the way they are welcomed into the CMS community, and by how the CMS community operates. They are invited to be part of the community, recognising the things they have in common, through intentionally building relationships with other members of the community and through participation in the activities and mission of the community. And in this participation, it becomes possible for them to contribute to the community, and even help shape it. The community may "stretch itself" to be able to welcome them in.

Again, according to the experience of the people interviewed, belonging to the CMS community is not (or should not be) defined by formal rules and categories, but by a person's individual choice, commitment, and participation, resulting in a diversity of community members who welcome and respect each other.

8.1.5. Belonging as Family

Next to this picture of an active belonging by choice and through investment, people also speak of being part of CMS as inclusion in a family. This familial language is not only used for the community as it is experienced in the CMS office, or in any other local community within CMS, it is also used for the community as it is dispersed throughout different regions and worldwide. This also is the context in which people speak of "brothers and sisters."

> *I think the worldwide mission community is being the body of Christ, our brothers and sisters across the world where we share our joys and sorrows together. (PiM FG-09:11)*

They may never meet each other, but they feel connected through the CMS links, by the stories they hear about each other as they are told by "bridge people," or in other forms of communication as it is mediated within the community.

Familial language expresses the warmth and connection, care and support within the community. It is also linked to the concept of "the Body of Christ," indicating that this family is centred around Christ and is lived out in the diversity of gifts and realities of the "brothers and sisters" around the world.

> *Uhm.. uhm... yeah, so I think it is just an encouragement by seeing that, you know, you can go not just to another town in England, and find people who are Christians, and for whom there is a natural affinity, because you all know the Lord. But you can actually go to the far corners of the world, and find people who are radically different, in their culture, their history, their background, their lifestyle, everything. And yet, there is still this common, there is something in common that really you know, unites you quite quickly. So... yeah. You do genuinely belong to a worldwide family. (Interview 14-21:40)*

Regardless of difference, unity and commonality are experienced. Even though this family is dispersed around the world, its members belong together because they "know the Lord." They recognise each other when they meet. In their

commonality, they feel united. Yet again, as within a family, the people are at the centre and meeting each other is essential.

> *Unless... Well obviously, you can get involved in simply just reading literature, and praying and those sort of things. But I am not sure that that perhaps makes you feel part of the community. A community is by definition people, I suppose, and so if you don't, if you are not involved with people, you are not really involved in the community. It is a bit like saying, I belong to a family, but I don't have parents, or any brothers and sisters. It doesn't actually make much sense, does it? Uhmn... so you have got to be involved with people. How that works out is obviously is going to be desperately dependent on what you are able to do physically, financially, timewise, and... (Interview 14-31:43)*

If the relationship does not become tangible by a physical face-to-face encounter, or even a mediated one, the relationship might be experienced as rather distant and theoretic. And such a relationship would not easily generate the experience of belonging together nor a commitment to the other.

Reflecting on this approach to community, the familial language may seem to emphasise the welcoming and caring character of the community as a home. This may be a less demanding picture, where belonging is less connected with the high expectations of the purposive being of the community. Yet, as described above, people are very much aware of the fact that even within a community that feels like a family, belonging can only happen through choice, which is not usually a familial category. The experience of connectedness will only develop through commitment to the people and an active involvement in the relationships in the community.

On the other hand, from the perspective of the question of who can belong to the community, the familial language can allow for an open and welcoming attitude, making space for diversity, since family members are never chosen, but given to each other.

> *The worldwide mission community is all those Christians, committed and involved in spreading the Kingdom of God and a*

message of salvation across the globe. It is not a community in which we can choose who else belongs. (PiM FG 13)

It is the family relationship that brings people together and makes them feel that they belong to each other, rather than their character, preferences, or beliefs. Within the CMS community people will say that it is Christ who brings them together, unites them, makes them belong to each other as brothers and sisters. When I asked one member of the community why she joined CMS, and continues to commit to the CMS community, she explained that it is the experience of commonality across boundaries, in the recognition of a common faith in Jesus.

I think that CMS seeing people who had worked overseas and come back, they gave me a picture of the global community, of Christianity. And ever since then, I think, the thing that really excites me every time when I end up meeting people from other countries, is that even though I have never met these people and they are culturally probably incredibly different from me…, I have one, you know, I have something in common with them which is our, is our common belief in Jesus. And that is something which I don't think happens in any really other way. And so that's CMS in a sense, is the conduit of that. (Interview 3-01:34)

The differences in how this faith and the Christian life are expressed and lived out in the different places and cultures around the world are not seen as grounds on which people can be excluded from the community family.

The question then is how the welcoming character of the community as family relates to the 'value heavy' character of the community as a purposive entity and the high expectations of community commitment. This is a question that is a challenge and it is regularly expressed in the stories of ambivalence, to which we now turn.

8.1.6. Ambivalent Belonging

The term 'belonging' is used in a positive way, as an expression of a relational home, and as a reason for and an enabler of commitment. Yet, due to the

different ways of understanding of belonging, how a relational home should be shaped and what should be prioritised in one's commitment, this is also the area where frustrations grow.

At the local level, people might be committed to the idea of community, yet what that looks like for different people might not be the same. If, for example, the CMS office is understood to be a place of community, what form should that take? Is working together in a caring and relational environment the same as creating community to which one belongs? Or does belonging together mean that people should also commit to each other outside of working hours, expressing CMS values in their activities?

> *Whereas […] would be like... organising the members day for instance. That is about our supporters and our members feeling loved and encouraged to come over. And have like the different workshops, the different people speaking, different talks. And that was one on a Saturday. And I think they cancelled the last one, last minute. (Interview 2-09:41)*

This person expressed deep sadness about a cancelled CMS members' day because of the lack of involvement and investment it indicated. In her experience, people in CMS do not really live out their belonging together. Even though she felt loved and cared for by her colleagues in the office, she did not want to sign up for official membership. She also indicated that the organisational side of the CMS office was a barrier to her. What does community mean, what does belonging together mean when the office needs to be reorganised and when people are made redundant? In her view, this is not how people who belong together deal with each other.

Another issue raised is how belonging together may develop an insider culture, which creates a stronger bonding experience and commitment in the community but is difficult to understand or enter for someone outside. A student at the CMS Pioneer Mission Leader Training tells about his experience of recognising the community in CMS but feeling that he is on the outside.

> *I think a lot of my fellow learners are in Church of England contexts. So, there is a lot of reference to parish, Diocese, and .... and I just*

> *think... there is no reference. I cannot reference my.... Not that I*
> *don't understand it.. It is just so... It feels like maybe I am in the*
> *wrong place. […] In-talk. Yes, very much. (Interview 11-09:23)*

Even though one of the values of CMS is welcoming the other, the reality turns out to be more difficult. CMS is shaped by its history and functions within the structure of the Anglican Church. This influences the conversations, expectations and reflections as well as the way people behave and relate to each other. Someone who is coming from a different cultural or denominational background might have difficulty in recognising or understanding the internal language and dynamics of the CMS community which have developed historically, and they therefore have difficulty in participating, feeling like an outsider. The insider culture becomes a barrier to a feeling of welcome.

This dynamic also plays out in the encounter between the local and the wider community. During a focus group conversation with mission partners, a participant who does not have English nationality tells about his experience. When he meets people from the UK in his own country, they relate very well. But when he comes to the UK and wants to integrate into the church there, it is much more difficult. He experiences a distance and a lack of welcome. And this is not only his experience; it is something he hears from others as well. In the People in Mission Focus Group, the story is also told about non-English people entering Christian communities in the United Kingdom, and the lack of welcome they experience.

> *When they go to the English-speaking white congregations, they*
> *are not accepted. That is why they end up mostly in Pentecostal*
> *Evangelical places. And if you are talking about such a community,*
> *so there is a lack of hospitality and welcome, which I think is, is*
> *necessary, or if you want such a community, it has to be there that*
> *if we are saying we are one universal family, then these people*
> *come. (PiM FG-58:00)*

This story drew affirming nods and silence. A bit later, another participant came back to this story, trying to explain what happened.

> *I think that here the British culture is not... has been in some of those more small-town churches for long time quite mono cultural and does not know how to welcome people outside their own culture. (PiM FG-1:08:08)*

The mono-cultural lived reality causes people to have no idea of how to relate to people of other cultures.

What struck me in this comment and the following reactions was that it seemed that people wanted to distance themselves somewhat from this so-called British culture. This was not about them. They were different. Still, they would all describe themselves as members of the CMS community and also of the Church of England. Is it fair to say that belonging to the community does not mean that one agrees with all elements of the community? Would it be possible to say that there is a diversity in levels of belonging? The quality or depth of belonging one experiences with the other member(s) of the community is not the same for all. This is influenced by the experience of encounter, commonality, and cooperation or partnership, or the absence of it. It might happen that one knows one belongs to the community, but that emotionally one distances oneself from it.

> *So, our felt experience whether you are part of the community or not. Like, you don't feel like you are being a community to me, today, is different to whether we might label, have an overall umbrella of who technically belongs... (PiM FG21:48)*

Belonging becomes a category experienced in different gradations, depending on the situation.

The experience of distance from the community, even though one knows one belongs, can result from the practical realities of life. An interviewee told the story of his own life, in which he, as a leader operating in the globalised world, at one point became fully disconnected from his local community. When a problem hit, he realised that he was unable to ask the local community for help. He had been travelling so much that his first support group could only be contacted through telephone and internet, because they were living on different continents around the world. He said that even though he knew he

belonged to the local community, neither he nor the other members experienced it.

> *I have had to intentionally try and come back […]. Uhm.. and try to be part of a small group that meets once a week. Uhm... so that I can actually get some roots here, but when you have a job that you travel a lot, it is very difficult to actually create, create ah... a local context. (Interview 13-38:42)*

He felt he belonged to the local community as to a family, but that belonging could not be taken for granted. A renewed personal investment in the relationships, intentionally creating the opportunity for physical encounter, was needed to restore the experience of belonging within that community.

We can say that the relational home is full of diversity. And even though diversity is seen as a welcome part of the community, it also creates ambivalence in the experience of belonging. Different expectations and commitments, as well as the experience of being an outsider to an 'insider culture', will influence the quality or intensity of belonging but not necessarily its reality, since belonging is not defined by the experience alone. Choice also is an important factor.

8.1.7. Diversity in Belonging

To summarise, within the CMS community, people are central. The community defines itself by its central values and relationships, rather than by the boundaries of doctrine, culture, or background. People who are inspired by or attracted to the CMS community, its members and what it stands for, are invited to join. Belonging to the community originates in the choice of the individual to participate in the community relationships as well as the active, purposive lifestyle. Welcome and inclusion are the communities core attitudes, as long as the beliefs (the tradition) and the community purpose remain central. The choice to join the community is seen as essential. Belonging needs the commitment of the person to invest in the community, in the relationships and in the purpose of the community. This can be both an informal commitment that is personal and a more organisational commitment through formal membership

in the community. It is important to note that the modes of belonging are not mutually exclusive; rather, the relational character of belonging is present in both the formal and the informal mode of belonging. Within this relational belonging some will choose the formal membership, while others will not.

Next to the diversity in the mode of belonging, there is a diversity in the experience of belonging. On the one hand, this is related to the lived experience of shared commonality, shared values, history, vision, and commitment. On the other hand, this diversity is related to the realities of life, such as geographic distance, face-to-face encounters, or the measure of one's ability to participate and invest in the community as defined by limitations of time, place, and resources.

Frustration with difference does exist and the experience of belonging may be more or less intense, but this does not necessarily negate its reality. Choice and commitment are more stable and foundational than the experience itself.

There is a question as to gradations in belonging. Are some people more part of the community than others? People in the community will differ in their answers to this question. Formal organisational belonging through membership and relational belonging through bonding are sometimes seen as two different categories. Formal membership was created with the aim of reinforcing community commitment and bonding. It was believed that by consciously and publicly committing to an active participation in the CMS community and its purpose and mission, members would feel welcomed and invited into its life. This was the experience of some members, but for others it was the opposite. These members felt that because of the organisational character of the membership the relational was made secondary to the personal, which in their view was opposite to the character of Christian community in mission. Instead, the person should be at the centre as a relational being. The membership structure made the community too exclusive and impersonal. The boundaries became too pronounced and organisational.

> *I think the fact that we ended up with this organisational entity of an acknowledged community is... has really seriously distorted the way that we might otherwise identify either with the world church*

or with CMS, just as a, just as a family of people doing stuff together. You know. (CMS FG-1:07:14)

In this view the real belonging is defined by a personal commitment to people and to the community, including its vision and purpose.

The community is a relational event, where people choose to belong, to bond with and commit to the others in the community, while at the same time being shaped by it. Conversely, their commitment and participation in the community will also shape the values and beliefs, the vision and understanding of the purpose of the community. It is in this interaction that the community is experienced as an entity of shared existence, bringing both joy and frustration, vision and ambivalence. And it is in this interaction that the community and its members live out their shared values, and that the vision is embodied.

8.2. Belonging as Choice and Commitment

Comparing the CMS discourse of belonging to the community through committed and tangible relationships of commonality and solidarity (as described above) with the sociological discourse, as described by Bauman and others (see chapter two), it is clear that both are searching for an understanding of belonging in the context of diversity and individuality in a world of nearly unlimited possibilities. For both discourses, personal choice is central. And consequently, both are facing questions around the level of commitment and the extent and durability of commitment, especially since the individual can choose to belong to several different communities, either at one time or consecutively.

Commitments of 'till death us do part' type become contracts 'until satisfaction fades', temporal by definition and design – and amenable to be broken unilaterally whenever one of the partners sniffs better value in opting out rather than continuing the

relationship. Bonds and partnerships are viewed, in other words, as things to be consumed, not produced.[5]

The following paragraphs will look at the concepts of choice and commitment, as they feature in the CMS discourse, in relation to the wider sociological and theological literature.

8.2.1. Choice to Belong by the Whole Person

If, as is sometimes suggested, belonging and commitment to the community are based on the free choice of the individual for personal profit or satisfaction, then community becomes part of the insecure world, as a group of individuals choosing to be together for as long as it suits them. In chapter 2.2. we saw that for Bauman this leads to the loss of the 'common cause,' with the result that the only community possible is a surrogate, a community of individuals.[6]

Yet, Bauman does leave a door open to other interpretations, especially when he revisits his book *Liquid Modernity,* and reflects on important changes and developments over the ten years since its first publication. This is found in "Foreword to the 2012 Edition: Liquid Modernity Revisited," where he cites Elinor Ostrom, who in 1990 in her book *Governing the Commons* states that people do not come to decisions on the basis of their search for personal profit and short-term gain only.[7]

> *relationships, families, neighbourhoods, communities, meanings of life, and an admittedly misty and recondite area of vocations in a functional society that places value on the future.*[8]

Bauman wonders if it is true that there will be a renewed place for true personal relationships and a common cause.

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[5] Bauman, *The Individualized Society*, 156, 157.
[6] Ibid., 151, 152.
[7] Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, xviii, xix.
[8] Ibid., xviii.

It is significant that in *The Individualized Society* Bauman starts the third section of the book, reflecting on the ethical implications of individualized living and thinking, with a chapter on love and reason. He argues that reason is focussed on the self, where love leads people to solidarity with the other, and even to a "subordination of the self to something endowed with greater importance and value."[9] Yet, at this point he does not see love as a sure road to a 'common cause', since the needs of this world are so great and overwhelming that love does not know how to respond, and since reason is so often (wrongly) used to give love an excuse for not responding to this overwhelming need. Selfish reason seems stronger than love.[10] And so community remains a questionable reality.

A comparable discussion plays out in the secularisation and religion debate. In a time of individualisation, how can religion be understood? Does religion remain a viable option, or will it just disappear? In 1962 Charles Glock published an article on religious commitment from a psychological perspective, seeking to develop a conceptual framework, which would allow the description and measurement of commitment to religion.[11] He emphasised that religion is a concept with great variability around the world, while at the same time there is consensus about the areas in which religion should manifest itself. He calls these the five dimensions of religion.[12] What is important for our discussion on community belonging is that these dimensions of religion deal with the emotions, beliefs, knowledge, practices, and moral choices and actions, as they are related to and impacted by religion. Adherence and commitment to religion is a personal choice. Yet this is a choice that involves the whole person, not just a person's reason or intellect. While it is true, according to Glock, that the different dimensions may play a more or less important role in the religious experience and choice of the individual, the religion as a whole will expect to

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[9] Bauman, *The Individualized Society*, 167.
[10] Ibid., 173, 174.
[11] Charles Y. Glock, "On the Study of Religious Commitment," *Religious Education* 57, no. 4 (July 1962): S-98.
[12] The experiential, ideological, ritualistic, intellectual, and consequential dimension. Ibid., S-99.

have an influence on each of these dimensions in the religious person's life and the way she develops her presence in society.[13]

Vassilis Saroglou continues the debate by creating a model of four religious dimensions: beliefs, rituals and emotions, moral rules, and community. These four dimensions correlate with four psychological dimensions: believing, bonding, behaving, and belonging. [14] According to Saroglou, these four dimensions summarise and integrate the different dimensions as they are described by other psychologists and sociologists seeking to describe religiosity. The four dimensions describe religion as a unified construct, in which all four dimensions interrelate, while at the same time being a multidimensional construct, since the four elements each have their specific place, which may differ from person to person, and context to context.[15] Compared to Glock, Saroglou adds the dimension of community and belonging, indicating that in the quest for self-understanding and 'meaning-giving,' a person has a need to belong, a need for a social identity. Belonging to a religious community gives a point of reference and moral framework as well as a history, present and future. The religious community understands itself to be different from the world outside itself, creating a certain level of exclusivity. And therefore, it implies self-transcendence, conversion and change of allegiance. [16]

The decision to belong to such a community is a choice. As Glock, Saroglou indicates that this involves a person as a whole. In the choice to belong, the other three dimensions of religion also play an important role. The beliefs and the extent to which they are understood to be meaningful, the emotional dimension and religious experience (including rituals), and the moral expectations that flow out of the beliefs and religious experience, will be decisive for a person's choice to belong or not to belong.

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[13] Ibid., S-102.
[14] Vassilis Saroglou, "Believing, Bonding, Behaving, and Belonging: The Big Four Religious Dimensions and Cultural Variation," *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 42, no. 8 (November 1, 2011): 1322.
[15] Ibid., 1321.
[16] Ibid., 1327.

This means that different people will belong differently to the religious community. Or, to quote Dubar, each person in each context, will seek to construct an identity between the self and the other, between one's biography and the relationships one values. The particularities of each person, such as character and context, will shape the extent to which certain beliefs, experiences and practices are deemed to be meaningful. These particularities will also influence the way in which the different dimensions of community relate to each other, and therefore the way that the dimension of belonging is experienced and shaped. And, to complicate things further, these personal particularities are played out and highlighted in a globalised world, where difference is encountered.

8.2.2. Choice to Belong in a World of Unlimited Possibilities

Bauman writes that today's world is one of unlimited possibilities and therefore one of unavoidable choices. Consequently, he is sceptical about the possibility of belonging and of community in an individualised world which is full of insecurity. The unlimited choices add an extra layer of complexity to the dimension of belonging. How can an individual choose to belong, when reason shows that one choice may result in the loss of all the others? Michel Maffesoli, in a much more "celebratory" approach, [17] does not see this multitude of possibilities as a problem for the individual. It is instead the reality in which the person discovers a new way of existence in relating to the self and the other. Whereas in Bauman's *Individualized Society* the individual is central, struggling to discover and maintain a personal identity, [18] Maffesoli speaks of the "fragmentation of the identity into a series of identifications."[19] In a world of unlimited possibilities, the person is characterised by passion and desire rather than reason, not as an individual but as a member of a tribe, with shared tastes, and "marked instead by an expenditure of one's self – a loss of self in the

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[17] Michel Maffesoli, "From Society to Tribal Communities," *The Sociological Review* 64, no. 4 (November 1, 2016): 743.
[18] Bauman, *The Individualized Society*, 151, 152.
[19] Maffesoli, "From Society to Tribal Communities," 741.

other."[20] Relationships are central, not necessarily relationships within one single community, but relationships in a social network. And this social network may well exist of many and diverse communities, even opposing communities. One person can belong to several tribes at the same time, sharing space and taste. Where Bauman sees a danger of the fragmentation of the self in an unstable identity resulting in a society of lonely individuals all fighting for their own survival, Maffesoli speaks of the possibilities of ancient *res publica* in which "the flexible and open coherence of heterogeneous elements" is made possible – "the public entity which allows opposing forms and forces to coincide."[21] He speaks of a "social mosaic."

> *The social mosaic according to this view would be the adjustment of these little communities brought into being by day-to-day allegiances, by the traditions and customs of the tribe and by the specific rituals which inevitably come into being in the midst of all this. […] There are moments when – beyond centralizing and unifying principle – co-existence in its uniqueness is defined by reciprocity, interaction and the sharing of passion and emotion.[22]*

In this reality, a person can have multiple belongings. And temporary belonging is less connected with insecurity (Bauman) then with opportunity and adventure – an adventure met and engaged by the person with emotions, desires, and social longings.

Where Maffesoli speaks of an "expenditure of one's self, a loss of self in the other," Haslam, Reicher and Platow describe how different psychological research projects indicate that when people choose to belong to a group, they engage in a process of "depersonalisation." Yet, they indicate that this does not result in a loss of self or an immersion of the self in the collective, it results in a "redefinition" of the self. The person redefines the personal identity, the 'I', to

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[20] Ibid., 740.
[21] Ibid., 746.
[22] Ibid.

a social identity, the 'We,' making the 'We' the measure and guide for behaviour, values, and norms.[23]

> *Depersonalization is simply a process of self-stereotyping through which the self comes to be seen in terms of a category membership that is shared with other in-group members.[24]*

Haslam, Reicher and Platow too have found that the choice to belong, to engage in the process of depersonalisation, is not based on personal gain or reward only. The example they use is that people choose to belong to a fan-group, even though this group may lose or perform in a disappointing way. People join a group because they self-identify, they find meaning and a social context to relate to. People join because they believe that "it is the right thing to do" and that it may lead to social influence.[25] According to this research, this does not preclude multiple belongings. It is possible to belong to several groups at the same time and through these groups to adhere to multiple value systems. The example used here is a person who may go to a church in the morning and a football game in the afternoon. Both communities have their own specific value system and behavioural norms, which may at some point be in opposition.[26] This can be an example of Maffesoli's *res publica* too*.

8.3. Choice for Committed Relationship

It is possible to find this emphasis on choice for commitment also in the analysis of belonging in CMS. It is a dimension of community that involves the whole person, including one's beliefs, emotions, and behavioural choices. This is based on personal choice and is related to and shaped by the person's particularities and context in a world of unlimited possibilities. Yet, this may not show the whole picture. To understand this, we will first look at the story told by a former

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[23] S. Alexander Haslam, Stephen Reicher, and Michael Platow, *The New Psychology of Leadership: Identity, Influence, and Power* (Hove: Psychology Press, 2011), 53.
[24] Ibid., 52.
[25] Ibid., 48.
[26] Ibid., 53.

CMS Africa member. This will be followed by a further theological reflection on how the 'I' and the 'We' relate as part of a community that has its purpose not only within the community but also in its outward focus.

A former CMS Africa member who lives in Africa and joined CMS because of his work serves as an example. Because of his work he travels much, has many contacts around the world, both friends and work colleagues. In answer to the question asking for his experience of community as a person functioning across borders, he explained that at one point he realised that most of his friends did not live in his home community but instead around the world.

> *I have more global friends then I have locally. And it became a crisis for me, in that locally I was actually rootless. Because I spent so much time on the roads and the planes. […] So… my job actually killed my local community. And uh… established to me a globally, a global network. (Interview 13-06:14)*

The discovery of the global network of friends also brought the realisation of being rootless and disconnected from the home community. The local community even started to forget him in invitations to important functions and events.

> *You are not there. So, the phone stops ringing, people forget inviting you to functions. I missed some weddings, because nobody thought of inviting me to those. So, that is the price of the role, the role that I play. (Interview 13-07:13)*

He explained that he had to make a conscious effort to reconnect with his local community, through regular attendance at small-group meetings. He also changed his pattern of travel, to stay connected with his local community and family.

For him, there were two aspects to this experience. On the one hand he values his international friends. They pray for each other and support each other, connecting during the travel and in meetings, but also through ongoing and regular internet and social media contact. On the other hand, the disconnect with the local community brings a deep experience of becoming rootless. It is

significant that he uses the word community for the local community and network for the international relationships. He feels connected, both internationally and locally, but it is only the local that is experienced as true community. He describes this as the place where he meets people like himself, the place where he receives support, the place that is like a family.

> *I see my local church, where I find common peers, is actually my community. […] A family is the local church. So, we (CMS Mission Network, BvdTL) work together because we are a mission agency and a … we have a common vision. But I would say that when a crisis comes, in the local church community is where I am supposed to go to. (Interview 13-24:15; 25:02)*

Because he values both the international connection and the local community, he chooses to commit to both, making sacrifices to invest in both. Choosing the local community is described as a choice for social connection with like-minded people and a support network, and as a choice to be meaningfully connected with and rooted in a local identity. The choice of the international network also provides support but differently; it is especially focussed on the shared vision and ministry.

> *I see CMS as a platform for my mission and my ministry. (Interview 13-25:02)*

> *CMS Africa is a network that gives people a chance to fulfil their passion. (Interview 13-26:34)*

It is important to be aware that in this context, support and connection in mission and ministry are experienced as profoundly important. They allow people to "fulfil their passion" for they are built on shared beliefs, a shared vision, and a shared desire.

The person quoted above is committed to both the local community and the international network, investing in the relationships which offer support and satisfaction but also sacrifice and costly decisions. Belonging brings an experience of rootedness, and of flourishing along with freedom to shape his life in accordance with his beliefs, vision, and passion. It needs to be noted that

this vision and passion focus on service to the other. For example, he also explained in the interview how the choice for this vision resulted in a painful conflict within his local community during a time of unrest and insecurity.[27]

8.3.1. As Response to a Calling

The example above from the CMS community highlights important elements of the discussion around belonging as encountered in the social sciences, such as the search for rootedness and identity and the availability of and demand for choice. Yet, it is around the elements of vision and passion that the CMS discourse also has a particular understanding of what it means to belong to a community. Bauman, Glock and Saroglou look at belonging to a community from the perspective of the individual. The 'I' of the individual is at the centre. Reflection touches on how the 'I' relates to the 'We,' why the 'I' would want to relate to the 'We,' and what it means for the 'I' to have chosen to relate to the 'We.' What it does not account for is the prioritised emphasis in the CMS discourse on the well-being of the other, including the other outside the 'We.'[28] The purpose of the CMS community lies both in- and outside itself.[29]

According to CMS discourse, belonging to the community means investment in people outside of it, since the purpose of the community lies outside the boundaries of self in the participation in God's mission. To understand community belonging in the CMS context, not only the question of how the individual and the community relate should be posed but also how belonging should be understood from the perspective of the 'We' and the other, from the perspective of the purpose of the community. Community belonging is not only a gift and opportunity, it also is a call, a call to the world outside the community. People choose to commit to the community, because they long for connection,

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[27] See chapters 6.5 and 9.2.2. Interview 13-34:13.
[28] This touches on the debate around the concept of altruism, a debate that goes beyond the argument of this thesis. This is a wide ranging debate within different disciplines such as philosophy (i.e. Thomas Hobbes, about self-interest disguised in so-called altruistic behaviour), economy (i.e. Adam Smith, in his book *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*), and in more recent years in the fields of anthropology, psychology, and sociology addressing the issue of motivation towards behaviour and action beyond self-interest.
[29] See chapter 6.

because they need support, because they agree with what the community stands for, but also because the community supports them in their quest to answer the call to serve in the world outside the community. Haslam, Reicher and Platow approach this when they emphasise the importance of the vision:

> People sign up because they want to and because at a group level, they believe it is the right thing to do.[30]

For Haslam, Reicher and Platow this is the basis of "collective social power," yet particularly a social power of the group over against the world.[31] For people belonging to the CMS community, this collective social power is a power to *enter the world*, to be *one with the world*, and to *work in the world* on the basis of a vision that encompasses the whole world; it is the vision of the Kingdom of God.[32]

In order to understand how this focus on the call to committed relationships for the benefit of the other is related to the emphasis on the personal and free choice of the individual for community belonging, we need to look at the self-understanding of the individual and the community.

This is where the theological self-understanding of the community plays an important role. Mounstephen states in the opening chapter of the brochure *The Forgotten Factor:*

> So, community for me will never be an optional extra. Rather, as we will show in these pages, it is fundamental both to Christian identity and to Christian mission.[33]

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[30] Haslam, Reicher, and Platow, *The New Psychology of Leadership*, 48.

[31] Ibid., 60. On the other hand, one interviewee decided not to sign up to the CMS membership, because she was not sure what it would bring her. Membership would not contribute to her life, especially since the CMS community did not respond fully to her expectations of community. (Interview 2-13:10) This shows that also in CMS the experience of community belonging is a complex reality. See chapter 10.

[32] See chapter 7.

[33] Berry and Mounstephen, *The Forgotten Factor*, 4.

He describes community as a central part of the Christian identity. And a bit later in the chapter:

> Community is not best practice; it is not a solution or a strategy; it is who we were made to be – in the image of a God who is community.[34]

Because people are believed to be created for mutual relationships in community, people will only truly become themselves and flourish in these relationships. This is a flourishing that will be experienced in the belonging together and in the working together to realise the shared vision and the purpose of the community. This means that the source of the experience of belonging is not primarily found in the emotional ties or the similarities between the members of the community, nor in the moral expectations of others. The source lies outside the community in God; it is a gift of God given when humanity was created in God's image and invited to participate in God's mission.[35] The freedom of the individual is not found in the individual's self, but in the response to the individual's self-in-relation, in the answering of the call.

When Max Warren writes about unity in the context of the church and "the ecumenical idea," he brings the commitment and the freedom of the individual together in the concept of "family." As in a family, the community of the church exists both organically and as a covenant in relation to Christ. The church exists organically in that she comes into being and is alive through the Holy Spirit and governed by Christ as the head of the church. And the church is a covenantal reality in the personal obedience and faith, the commitment of the individual members to accept the grace of God and to respond to God's call. Comparing this with the family, Warren writes:

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[34] Ibid., 5.

[35] Taking a closer look at the image of God, the theological discussion around the 'Missio Dei' shows that this should not be understood from the human perspective, simply collating our limited human perspective and experience on the being of God. It is the other way around; God's being shapes our being, a being experienced in our longing for relationships and the well-being of the other, even though our understanding of this experience is limited and regularly even conflicted. See the discussion around the concept of the 'Missio Dei' by Chapman and Flett in chapter 7.3.

[…] in the family there is a blending of both the organic and the covenant relationships. The organic principle is represented by the biological character of the family unit. […] The covenant principle is no less truly represented in the creative encounter between free personalities in which tension and reconciliation, adjustment and comprehension together make for the growth of each in the company of all.[36]

The givenness of community in God and the obedient response of the individual to God's call are both part of the unity in the one community, as in a family. Where, according to Warren, the family is present in every member, every member only finds true meaning in "the life of the whole." It is in the interplay of these two that "a growing togetherness as well as a developing freedom […] a fulfilment of the destiny of the individual within the framework of the corporate whole" comes into being.[37]

Where the community is experienced as a gift of God, the individual self is understood to come to fulfilment in relationship. Answering the call of commitment to the other is not only a denial of the self of the individual, nor a self-interested choice for the expectation of reward, but a realisation of the relational character of the individual and the mutually dependent experience of well-being of both the individual and the community. Warren, going back to the family metaphor writes:

In a very real sense the family is embodied in every member: the parts attain their true meaning only within the life of the whole.[38]

The choice for committed relationships, as a response to a calling, can therefore be explained as a coming home, and a finding of the true self in the acceptance of the gift of the other as they belong together.

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[36] Warren, *Partnership*, 69, 70.
[37] Ibid., 71.
[38] Ibid.

8.3.2. As Acceptance of a Gift of Difference

The experience of community belonging as an acceptance of the gift of the other and as a choice for committed relationships, involves a vision beyond oneself for the world, and it inevitably involves encountering difference. This difference is experienced in the intensity and strength of commitment to the community and its members, and in the expectations of what community should be like. For some people, the community experience is mainly a positive one, while others are disappointed with the community because it does not respond to their expectations. And in the CMS context, diversity is also more specifically experienced because of its worldwide character. The people who belong to the community come from different places and cultures, from different churches and theological backgrounds with different priorities and practices. Their belonging may be formal through the formal CMS membership, or informal through their relationships with people from the community. The question can therefore be asked, how can one experience connection with those who are different, and why one would want to be committed to them?

To return to the family metaphor, as used by Warren, the answer to that question would be that members are given to each other and because they love one another. Within the church, a community which is an organic reality, people are given to each other, different though they may be. Warren indicates that this givenness may well be an experience of "tension and reconciliation, adjustment and comprehension." He also emphasises that this "unity in diversity" is the destiny of the individual within the whole, coming to fullness and flourishing. Diversity is in this case not "contradictory," but "complementary." [39]

A community may seek "uniformity," which according to Warren is an important risk that he calls "the low instinct of men [sic.] […] to try to make others like themselves," and which he evaluates as contrary to obedience to Christ. In this context he compares the church with the family.

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[39] Ibid.

> *But do we really imagine that the Church is adequately symbolized by a mass-parade of goose-stepping automata? Is not a more appropriate symbol a family walking to worship. We do not all walk in step when we walk as a family.*[40]

The givenness to each other means a recognition of diversity as part of the belonging together. Seeking uniformity may be the result of a seeking for truth and obedience to Christ, but it is a misguided understanding of Christ and the church.

> *For, if the Church is an idea embodied in the flesh and blood of humanity as well as in the flesh and blood of the Son of God – as well as, because of – then the unity we pursue must be consistent with the variety of God's creation.*[41]

Diversity is given as part of creation and is lived out in the incarnation of Christ, and therefore also in the church as the Body of Christ. Truth, therefore, "can only be understood in love." Encountering diversity in love can be painful, or bewildering, but it always demands engagement and commitment and therefore is risky.

> *For love is involvement, responsibility, liability – love is one colossal risk.*[42]

But, according to Warren, it is a risk worth taking, since it will lead to "fellowship" that includes the "rich variety of individuality."

The experience of belonging in the context of diversity within the CMS community happens when people meet total strangers and experience a sense of recognition and belonging because they both belong to the same community, or, at a more basic level, because they both are Christian. This gift of God is experienced when people pray for each other even though they may never have met face-to-face, for their stories are shared within the community.

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[40] Ibid., 74.
[41] Ibid., 73.
[42] Ibid., 75.

This diversity goes beyond a diversity of preferences or tastes; it may well be a matter of self-understanding and 'meaning-giving.' Difference of nationality and culture may well also include an experienced difference in voice and power, or even a hierarchy in value.[43] It is a diversity that should never be negated but instead be honoured, since the "irreducibility of the other" [44] should be honoured.

In this context, it is helpful to consider the concept of the "In-Between-Space," as it is used by Anne-Claire Mulder.[45] Where the 'We' is not the loss of self, but the re-definition of self on the basis of the 'We,' Mulder emphasises that in the process of the encounter the 'I' and the other need to be recognised as separate and particular.[46] Without the recognition of this separateness, creative and peaceful living together is impossible. Yet, even though being separate means that we will never be able to fully know and understand the other, we are able to meet. There is a space between the two, where the encounter can happen if we enter that space with an attitude of openness and eagerness, of "wonder."

> It is […] the space they share, the space (and time) in which they share communicate and co-create a We.[47]

In the In-Between-Space people meet and are shaped by that meeting. It is not that the two will become one, or that the 'I' becomes the other, but neither will they remain the same.[48]

Miroslav Volf, basing his argument on a context of diversity that leads to injustice and conflict, states that this is a process of reconciliation. In the

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[43] See chapters 9 and 10.
[44] Anne-Claire Mulder, "An Ethics of the In-Between: A Condition of Possibility of Being and Living Together," in *New Topics in Feminist Philosophy of Religion* (London: Springer, 2010), 299.
[45] Mulder, "An Ethics of the In-Between: A Condition of Possibility of Being and Living Together."
[46] Mulder follows Luce Irigaray and Alison, Martin, *I Love to You: Sketch for a Felicity within History* (New York, N.Y.: Routledge, 1996).
http://catdir.loc.gov/catdir/enhancements/fy0651/94013218-d.html. Accessed 20/12/2018.
[47] Mulder, "An Ethics of the In-Between: A Condition of Possibility of Being and Living Together," 315.
[48] Ibid., 307.

"embrace" the 'I' truly recognises and meets the other as other but also transcends the self in self-giving love and making space for the other in the self.[49] And again, this inclusion happens as a response to the gift of inclusion by God.

> … that God's reception of hostile humanity into divine communion is a model for how human beings should relate to the other.[50]

In theological reflection published by members of CMS, as it relates to diversity, concepts such as attentiveness, hospitality and solidarity are used. Ross situates her description of hospitality at the table, the kitchen table, as the place where different people meet, discover each other, share together, and share in abundance.[51]

> As we welcome people into our homes, share food with them around our kitchen tables and spend time with them, our perspective begins to change. When we eat together we are 'playing out the drama of life' as we begin to share stories, let down our guard, welcome strangers and see the other.[52]

The table is the place where difference becomes a part of truly meeting the other.

This is a hospitality that is first lived out by God in Jesus where God is the host who welcomes the "children, tax-collectors, prostitutes and sinners." But it is also lived out by God as the guest, where Jesus is "portrayed as vulnerable guest and needy stranger who came to his own but his own did not receive him. (John 1:11)"

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[49] Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 100.
[50] Ibid. Mark Chapman's warning for a romanticised understanding of this needs to be taken serious in this context. God's gift of inclusion and participation does not dissolve the possible tensions and oppositions in the relationship nor in the mystery of God. See Chapman, "The Social Doctrine of the Trinity." See also chapter 7.3.
[51] See also chapter 6.5.
[52] Ross, "Pioneering Missiologies: Seeing Afresh," 28.

*The three major festivals of the Church – Christmas, Easter and
Pentecost – all have to do with the advent of a divine stranger. In
each case this stranger – a baby, a resurrected Christ and the wind
of the Holy Spirit – all meet us as mysterious or strange visitors,
breaking into our world, challenging our world-views and systems,
and welcoming us to new worlds.*[53]

Hospitality as God's welcome, and hospitality as the incarnate God's human
need, both meet us in the particularity of our personal being and context, and
are open to our gift, while offering us change and growth.

When the other is a stranger who challenges us, or even provokes us, she gives
us the gift of a new being and a new way of relating.

*We need the stranger. We need the stranger if we are to know
Christ and serve God, in truth and in love.*[54]

Hospitality then is a true openness to the other in their difference, mutually
giving and receiving and – to follow Mulder – co-creating the 'We.' It allows us
to truly know Christ beyond our personal imagination, and it is the source and
foundation of true service, true mission.

Ross also indicates that in our communities we need the stranger to become a
true community because of God's hospitality. She quotes John V. Taylor:

*If one is closed up against being hurt, or blind towards one's fellow-
men [sic], one is inevitably shut off from God also. One cannot
choose to be open in one direction and closed in another.*[55]

God welcomes us into that reality, painful though it sometimes may be, where
diversity is not an obstacle to belonging, but the essential character of
belonging, and the prerequisite to flourishing. This is who we are meant to be,
as an individual and as a community, as 'I' and as 'We.'

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[53] Ibid.
[54] Ross and Baker, *Pioneering Spirituality*, 8.
[55] Ibid., 9.

And such hospitality changes people in such a way that they cannot stay in the safe space of community, but they are called to go out to become a needy guest themselves. And in becoming such a needy guest, crossing boundaries and in need of hospitality, they also become participants in a reciprocal solidarity. Colin Smith expresses this process in his book *Mind the Gap.* Reading through the Gospel of Luke he explores the gaps between people and communities, especially in the gap between wealth and poverty. He opens the book with the story of a beggar at the gate of his home in Nairobi, who prays for the rich brother (Smith himself) to open his heart towards him, the poor beggar. Where this is first experienced as a manipulative encounter, at the end of the book Smith concludes that:

> *…this man's prayer identified my need at least as much as it articulated his. […] There is no simple or elegant solution that would have resolved the differences and tensions between our two worlds. But had I been more sensitive to the workings of grace, more attentive to the promptings of the Spirit, there was in that encounter the possibility of finding an alternative, redemptive space that would have made a difference to both our lives.[56]*

Smith worked in the largest slum of Nairobi in solidarity with his brothers and sisters living in that area. Yet, in that solidarity he was not only the person giving, supporting, and doing good; it turned out that he too was a needy person. And the encounter at the gate was one way of discovering this mutual reality, a place of solidarity, where both experience the redeeming grace of gifts that are shared reciprocally.

This chapter explored the experience of belonging within the CMS community. Belonging is experienced in tangible relationships and in a commonality as the result of a personal choice of commitment to these relationships and to the community purpose. The fact that this experience of commonality is also experienced in the context of difference is related to the theological self-understanding of the community as gift of God and as a calling to the world. The

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[56] Smith, *Mind the Gap*, 178.

following chapter will describe how the CMS community seeks to embody this gift and calling in the practice of daily life.

EMBODYING – LIVING VALUES TOGETHER

The conversational movement of believing and belonging gives the community an identity providing it with a value framework that unites and seeks commitment; an active choice is required to identify with and commit to the community identity and its members and to live according to its values. It asks for an embodied reality of believing, belonging and purposive being.[57]

This chapter will first describe how the experience of community, both locally and worldwide, is facilitated in CMS, through intentional relationships and organisational structures. These relationships and structures, influenced as they are by the values, theology, and the relational character of the community, make the CMS a high value entity with strong expectations, leading to both intentional commitment, to disappointment, and to a feeling of ambivalence. Secondly, Bauman's question about the feasibility of community as an intentional project rather than a given is applied to the CMS experience. This

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[57] I use the concept of 'embodying,' as practically and physically living in a material world, relating to the "complexity of contemporary bio-social reality" and to theological meaning and understanding. See also Bennett et al., *Invitation to Research in Practical Theology*, 12. Henriksen speaks of "negotiated practices of embodiment,
materiality, power, and discipline, and these are normatively articulated in practices of faith, hope,
and love." Jan-Olav Henriksen, *Christianity as Distinct Practices : A Complicated Relationship* (London: T&T Clark, 2019), 185.

leads to a theological reflection on the place and function of practices in the community life and experience, while listening to theologians from CMS and the wider theological field.

In the following paragraphs, the value based life is explored as it is worked out within the different parts of the CMS community and in its internal relationships – in CMS Britain (office), in the CMS Link Churches in Great Britain, in CMS Africa and in the worldwide CMS Mission Network.
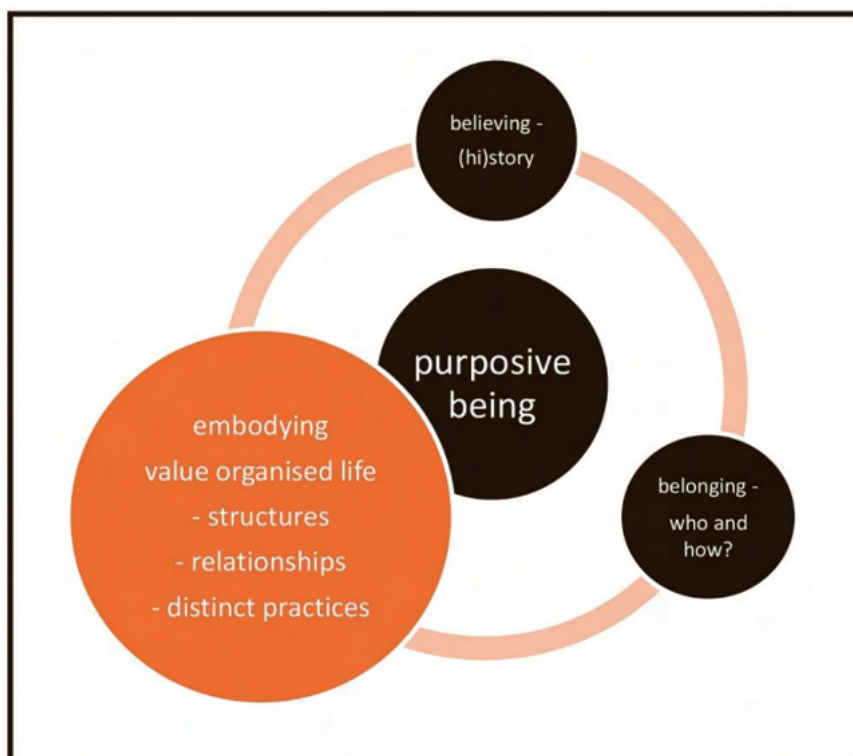
9.1. Lived in Structures

As a community in mission and in conversation with its historic and theological tradition, CMS members describe their community as worldwide, and as part of

the universal church of all times and all places. But how is such a worldwide community realised? How is this community facilitated when its members are dispersed over different continents? And in addition to the physical distance, questions of feasibility, and the diversity of cultures and experience along with values and priorities may put into question the lived reality of a shared existence and a common purpose. According to the interviewees, as we have seen in chapter eight, the facilitation of relationships is key, both locally and across the boundaries of geographical distance, politics, social difference, and culture. The following sections describe how these relationships are formed, facilitated, and lived according to the experience of people who are part of CMS.

9.1.1. In Tangible Relationships

When people indicate that relationships are central to the community, they refer to both personal and working relationships. And in both cases the people are at the centre; community and the relationships in that community are person oriented.[58]

At the local level, within the CMS office, people express a desire to connect beyond the structures of work. Friendships are formed, and social activities are encouraged. Within the office working structure, employees express a commitment to and care for each other. One interviewee highlighted how even the architectural structuring of the office seeks to facilitate this. She mentioned the open office, where the different teams are all sitting together, and where the directors decided to leave their separate offices in order to sit in the same place with the other members of staff.

> *Physically they are all giving up their offices. […] was one of the first people to say, I don't want my office. He wants to sit outside with us. […] it just feels like… the change, you know. Since […] has taken over, is just… he shares so much with staff. (Interview 2-06:03)*

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[58] See chapters 3.1 and 8.

This person mentions several names of directors and managers, and she uses words such as "sharing," and "close to us."

Personal relationships are also key elements in the community worldwide. One interviewee told her story of meeting people in a country in Latin America, where she went for a couple of weeks:

> *And ever since then, I think, the thing that really excites me every time when I end up meeting people from other countries, is that even though I have never met these people and they are culturally probably incredibly different from me.., I have one, you know I have something in common with them which is our, is our common belief in Jesus. (Interview 3-01:34)*

And later in the interview:

> *Yes, they have grown.. they speak a different language, they live in a different country, and.. their health issues are very different from mine. But fundamentally we were people together, just having fun. (Interview 3-08:24)*

Others also tell these stories, of how they feel connected because they have met people face-to-face. The names become faces, the other becomes a person. And one realises that there is a shared reality, something they have in common. These stories are not just told by people interviewed in Great Britain, but they are also confirmed by interviewees from Africa.

The face-to-face meetings result in a feeling of connectedness, expressed in ongoing contact, through the internet and other communication channels, in prayer for each other, in reciprocal visits, and, when needed, in support for each other. This can be at a personal level, but also in a linking together of communities. An example is British CMS Link Churches connecting with CMS communities in other parts of the world.

Yet, in a worldwide community, face-to-face contact is not always possible, surely not for all members. Therefore, another way to facilitate this sense of community is through people who bridge groups, who can mediate the experience between different communities. Mission partners, for example, who

are connected to churches and communities in Great Britain, while living and working in communities in other places around the world, are often 'vehicles for contact'. They share stories and experiences of one community with another, and they connect people through their experiences. During the focus group with the mission partners, they spoke about their visits to British churches, and how they tried to help them connect their local community experience with the reality of the worldwide church. Even though this was not an easy task, they saw this as part of their calling. During the focus group in the CMS office, the group which is based in Britain and receives the stories from around the world told of the importance of the stories shared by the people who visited and even called this "transformational."

> *I think hearing those stories, and meeting some people, is actually transformational, uhm... that Goddy thing really, there is something happening there, that is really beyond ... […] Uhm...so, I think yes, to hear stories like that is personally challenging. But it is also the sense of look, you know, this is a place, nothing should be happening, but look what God is doing. Isn't that amazing? (CMS FG-01:03:59)*

The stories told give a sense of wonder and a new perspective.

And when the stories are told, they are not just experienced as any other story; they create connection across boundaries and bring challenge and transformation to the receivers, because they are part of the shared community and the shared commitment to God's work, the 'Missio Dei'.

> *it came via somebody who we are partnering in mission with. Ok. It was not just a random story from the church of God around the world. (CMS FG 08:31)*

Communication through written stories also plays an important role in the realisation of the community across boundaries in the form of publications in social and other media. The news about other communities, and the people who belong to them, with their joys, their struggles, their experience and wisdom,

and their resources, are seen as an encouragement to the whole community, and an invitation to mutual learning, support and prayer.[59]

And finally, this communication informs, in its turn, the community rhythms of care, prayer, reflection, learning, and transformation, that are established within the community and which are an essential part of its realisation.

> *We want to share our stories; we want to hear the stories of others and so on. And as a Christian organisation, if you like, uhm.. we would want to pray about it, and we would want to ground in our understanding of our hermeneutics, our missiology, all of that. We would want to ground it in the bible and in prayer and in spirituality. (Interview 8-19:08)*

In the CMS office elements that constitute this community rhythm are the weekly prayer meeting Mondays@10, where community news is shared and prayed about, as well as through SMT Conversations, a meeting in which the main topics discussed by the Senior Management Team are presented to the wider group of employees in the office for their ideas, feedback and questions.

> *Because if you talk about yourselves as a community it is brilliant, you have got to have your rhythm of prayer, and your Monday's@10 and all the rest of it. (CMS FG-31:33)*

For the wider CMS Britain community, events such as vision days, conferences and reflection days are organized with a view to fostering relationships and encouraging reflection, learning and commitment. Within the worldwide community, mutual encounters and visits are organized, as well as speaking engagements of mission partners which bridge the distance between the different communities and connect people across boundaries. And every member can contribute to the prayer diary that is published on the website, no matter who or where they are.

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[59] See the CMS journal, *The Call* and the Prayer resources:
https://churchmissionsociety.org/resources/the-call-prayerlines-summer-2020/ Accessed 16/06/2020 And: https://churchmissionsociety.org/pray/prayer-emails/ Accessed 16/06/2020.

This spiritual rhythm of community is not without consequences.

> *[…] as a Christian community, we need to.. to ground this and move forward in this through, you know, and see our spirituality as part of it. So therefore, the prayer kind of is a shorthand for talking about spirituality. You know, in the sense it is not just intercessory prayer, it is the whole sense of how are we grounding this in seeking Gods will and uhm.. reflecting and uhm.. you know on, on what this means for us, and so on. (Interview 8-16:47)*

Participation in the community means, for this CMS employee, participation in the community rhythm. To him this requires an openness to God and to the other, allowing himself to be touched and transformed. Relationships that are an experienced and tangible reality are central.

9.1.2. In Organisational Relationships

To facilitate these relationships within the worldwide community, partnership is a central theme. These are relationships based on the value framework that prioritises participation in the mission of God as a community of people who are united in their humanity and their calling. It is where people and communities live and work together as equals, each contributing their gifts to the wellbeing of all and to the realisation and success of the community's vocation. One interviewee from CMS Africa expresses it in the strong words of mutual submission, because it is not about our own lives or successes, it is about the Kingdom:

> *It is mutual. And, and there will be difficulty, because we are human beings. But, in a pure, with pure hearts, we will find a way. But it is critical, that we mutually submit. It is critical. We are not building nations. It is the Kingdom. It is about the Kingdom of the Lord. (Interview 7-57:08)*

Established during the early days of colonialism, people in the CMS community regularly realise that they have a long road to travel in this area of mutual submission; in an effort to see this happen the community has gone through

some important organisational changes over the last decade.[60] The first change was the regionalisation of CMS, later spoken about as the creation of the CMS Mission Network. One of the former directors of CMS speaks about this network as a place where the church from outside the UK could become an equal partner in mission rather than a receiver of mission.[61]

> We... as directors of CMS, we.... looked at the way we were working. And we saw that it was no longer appropriate for... uhm... the mission of the CMS community globally to be directed from London, or... Oxford in these days. Uhm.. and that... really, we needed to be looking at whether there were ways in which the world church could own some of the heritage of CMS. And start directing the mission themselves. (Interview 9-32:20).

As a consequence, in 2008 CMS Africa started and in 2012 Asia-CMS was established, meaning that the regions Britain, Africa, and Asia each became "local mission movements," each with their own governance, policies, and priorities, while working together in a network relationship of "interchange."

> Moving away from "the West to the rest," the moving away from, from monodirectional to a multi directional understanding of mission. As in the title of Michael Nazir Ali's book as mission "From everywhere to everywhere." Uhm... which invites you therefore into relationships of mutuality, where before they were monodirectional. Uhm.. and I think that is exactly the kind of thing that we are... working on, are committed to. (Interview 1-38:47)

A second change was the merger of CMS and the South American Mission Society (SAMS) in 2009. Until then CMS had not worked in Latin America. Both societies felt that they had a similar vision and would be strengthened by this merger. For CMS members this meant that they had to reapply for CMS

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[60] See also chapter 3.4.

[61] It is interesting to see that this is spoken about in terms of owning the CMS heritage. How does the new CMS Mission Network with the new communities of CMS Africa and Asia CMS relate to the CMS heritage, as it is originating in the UK? Does this language indicate an ongoing but more or less hidden inequality, or is it just a reflection of the historic and organisational process of CMS, as it is developing over the years?

membership for legal reasons, because CMS and SAMS became one community under the name Church Mission Society.

The membership reapplication process was linked with the third organisational change, which was the recognition of the CMS community as an 'acknowledged community' within the Church of England. Partnership not only involves the local or regional communities within the wider CMS community, but also the participation of each individual member of the community. By joining the community, people are no longer simply supporting other people in mission, they become participants in mission themselves in their daily lives, connected both locally and with the community around the world.

> I mean I think.... there is an opportunity, and I think it is intended in the community, to be a participant as opposed to a supporter. And I think that is a different perception. You know, at one time, people supported CMS, supported a CMS mission partner, they prayed for them and things. That is all good, but they were a supporter. Now the message of a community, a family is, they can be part of something that is happening. And there is a slight difference of perception there. (Interview 14-35:56)

As the interviewee indicates, community membership moves him from being a supporter to being part of the family. Where, in his view, support can happen at a distance, especially when one speaks of financial support, being part of the family demands a deeper commitment to the other and to the purpose of the community, a sense of living, working, and belonging together.

9.1.3. Between the Margins and the Centre

As an acknowledged community within the Church of England, the aim of CMS is to create a structure that facilitates relationships and commitment within the Church of England in its relationships worldwide and gives a structure of accountability for CMS within the wider church. One interviewee emphasises that CMS is and continues to be a voluntary community.

> I think it is the distinction between statutory and voluntary. You know, we are people who make voluntarily... make common cause

together in the cause of mission. Because we do that voluntarily, that gives us... a flexibility and a responsiveness to... to go where the Spirit leads us in a way that ... that the church in its more ecclesial structured... form doesn't allow us. (Interview 1-25:22)

The CMS community is part of the church but not its possession; it is under the episcopal oversight of the church but has its own governance structure, develops its own strategy, and chooses its own priorities. The community moves between the centre and the margins of the church.

So.. for us, negotiating our position between the edge and the centre is really important. You know, I think, we serve the missional, I think we serve the missional edge... If, if we get too close to the edge, as it were, we can't influence the centre, but if we... if we get too close to the centre, we literally we lose our edge. So, you know, we have to kind of keep between the two. Negotiate that position carefully. (Interview 1-27:47)

And in the focus group of mission partners it was recognised that this position requires a flexibility, which is hard to organise and regularise.

Part of it is about being open and pioneering and doing a new thing under God. But that very flexibility, which I think is a good thing, is very hard to kind of legislate for. (PiM FG-31:27)

Moving between the centre and the edge is seen as a creative place which allows CMS to contribute and to relate both ways. The community in mission moves to the margins, bringing liberation and transformation; it consequently is shaped by the margin. This is seen as part of the identity of the CMS community and follows the Jesus model of priority for the poor and marginalised.

As is, we have a holistic gospel, and Jesus talks about, you know, his mission was very biased to the poor, the under privileged, marginalised. And so, hence is the fact that our worldwide Christian mission should be reflecting the way Christ went about his mission. (Interview 23-52:44)

And at the same time, the very existence of such a community is an influence on the so-called centre of the church, bringing change and transformation to that historic and institutionalised entity. An example of this is the former CMS Interchange programme through which CMS people from around the world came to Britain, to serve the church there, bringing with them the experience and insight from their home context.

> *The objective was to inspire (laughing softly) British churches to get more involved in evangelism. […] But also, to build up links with the church globally, and help the church in England feel more part of the global church. To have sort of exchanges. […] Uhm… why was this important? Because the Church of England was quite insular form the Anglican Communion. Uhm.. It, it has changed, thank goodness. (Interview 9-098:106)*

This programme was meant to move the Church of England, which was perceived to be the centre, towards the so-called margins. But, if from any place within the worldwide community gifts are shared, and a mission life is lived truly as a movement from everywhere to everywhere, then the question can be asked, where the centre is and where the margins are. The CMS community seeks to build its relationships and live its mission in each, and in between.

9.2. Lived in Relationships

The distinguishing character of the CMS community, as it is experienced and expressed by its members, combines the two elements of community purpose: it is inwardly focused as a home and a family, and as outward focussed and active. And this identity is not only worked out in structural arrangements within the community (as described above), it is also lived out in the personal lives of people and of local communities within the wider CMS community.

9.2.1. As a Home

A community of 'home' ideally is a place where people are known, welcome, safe, and cared for. Stories are told about the joy of meeting up with people

again, of sharing news, and of support for one another in difficult situations. And these stories cover the different parts of the community, from the local, to the worldwide, where people meet again in conferences or read about each other in the newsletters. These stories are also told about the CMS office, where people work together as employees of the organisation, yet at the same time feel connected beyond the work relationship. One interviewee tells of a difficult situation in her workplace at CMS, and how one of the Directors of CMS Britain personally came to her to hear her story, and to reassure her in that difficult situation. She said:

> *Yeah, he knew I was upset. And he actually physically came down to see me. […] And he did, and he heard me, and he listened to me. […] I feel very, very much cared for. Very much cared for. (Interview 2-75:79)*

It made the workplace relationship for her one of community, a safe place for the employee as a person. She could express her fear and pain and be accepted.

Such a safe place does not come into existence by itself. Relationships of attention and care cannot exist without the investment of the people involved. Mutual commitment to each other and to the community is necessary. And such a commitment is not always easily lived out when people participate in a worldwide community, as we have seen in the life story of a former CMS Africa member. He had to travel often for his work, and therefore has many relationships around the world. Yet, in his experience, this participation in the worldwide community is at the cost of his participation in the local one.[62] He had to make a conscious choice to reconnect to his local community, making time to be present, to participate in communal activities, to invest in the lives of other members of the community, and to share his personal needs and questions. He describes this as becoming rooted again. This language of 'being rooted' indicates the importance of the local community for this person to have a healthy participation in the worldwide community. Without belonging to a

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[62] See chapter 8.3.

local home community, the international relationships are not enough to sustain him.

Yet, the community does not only need to be a safe place of support, but also a place of growth where its members develop their gifts. Within the CMS office, people tell of the courses they have been able to take, for professional development, but also for personal growth. The possibility for CMS employees to participate in the study of modules of the CMS Pioneer Mission Leader courses is especially appreciated. [63] Even though these modules might not contribute specifically to a better professional output, they do broaden the employee's horizons and give them a deeper insight into mission thinking and theology. And this desire for the growth and development of its members is also reflected in the stories that are told about the events and publications organised for the wider community, in which words are used such as: "learning," "gaining insight," "finding inspiration and encouragement." One interviewee tells how someone within CMS, during a training for people in mission, had told her about the importance of always meeting the human in the other, including in the beggar along the street, and how this had changed her attitude towards the homeless people.

> So, I am treating them as a fellow human being instead of dirt that is sitting on the side. Yeah? And I think that is really important, because they are still made in the image of Christ. (Interview 3-50:24)

The image of Christ is also recognised in the homeless person. This underscores the importance of a basic attitude of hospitality, welcoming the other as a person within the community. This is seen as an important element of participation. The community as home is not just a safe place of comfort and welcome for people who are alike, it is also a group of people bound together by a common hope and purpose, where the outsider and marginalised are both welcome and valuable. It is a place where people discover and are encouraged to grow in insight and understanding and to develop their talents as the gifts

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[63] This was one of the outcomes of the initial survey that I held in the CMS office on the experience of community.

they can share. Therefore, it is also a community that does not primarily focus on itself, but on its vocation to serve the world around.

9.2.2. For the World

Several stories are told about local communities which are actively involved in the wider world in which they exist. Their life leads to an active outward attitude which seeks the well-being of the wider community. One woman tells how, several years ago, she was invited by a group in a church – even though at that time she was not a Christian – and what a difference that has made to her life. Now she too is involved in the wider community in organising so-called "fun days."

> So... and also... so you bring a picnic lunch, bring and share... so that starts to build community. [...] You are interlinking people who might... you know, I have helped out on one or two of those. So that is what I call reaching out to our community, who might not necessarily know about [name of the church] but in a sort of... well, in a, in a gentle way... sort of... showing them love... you know... just saying, we actually are really nice people (laughing). You know, we would love to, sort of, you know, include you. A common inclusiveness. (Interview 20-64:68)

Another person expresses this with the following words:

> And uhm... with the feeling that uh... if we don't support and help the local community, you know, it is..... you need to bless and help them to prosper. (Interview 17-15:31)

The CMS community exists for the well-being of the other, those who are local and close by, but also those throughout the world. Yet, this may be difficult. Reaching out to the other is not always appreciated or understood by all members of the group because of the consequences it might have for the "community as home" experience. It may feel dangerous when strangers are welcomed in. CMS Africa, for example, seeks to reach out to the Chinese community in Nairobi. Many Chinese workers are living there but are very much

in their own separate communities. They often live on their own, without family, in a strange culture and they can be quite lonely. They are considered a "mixed blessing" by the Kenyan population. They bring work and economic progress, but they are also seen as people who take away jobs, as managers who treat local people badly, and as people who have strange habits. During a conference organised in Nairobi in 2015[64] this situation was explored, and the question was asked how relationships could be built with these people. It turned out to be a difficult question. How do you build relationships with people who are so different? Will they be able to integrate into the community? Will all the members of the community be happy to welcome them? And who are the people who are willing to befriend them? Still, these questions were not seen as possible excuses for non-engagement. "Breaking down prejudice" was an often-mentioned goal. The Chinese are the strangers in the city, and strangers need to be welcomed. The participants at the conference agreed that this is what the example of Jesus, during his life on earth, has taught the church.

An even more costly example mentioned, also from Kenya, was around the post-election violence in 2007. The interviewee tells:

> *Uhm.. during the post election violence, I was quite shocked, because I was reaching out to all communities, after you know, when the crisis was going on. And one church leader, whom I respected very much called me, and said, …, why are you feeding the people of that community. Because for them I should not feed them. (Interview 13-34:13)*

Feeding the enemy was considered as going too far; yet for the interviewee it was the only possible course of action in a situation of division, violence, and hatred. He continues:

> *And so, I think, when in a crisis, we are forced to think how to deliberately reach out across, beyond my ethnic identity. […] It is because we are one in Christ. (Interview 13-142:146)*

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[64] Observation notes CMS Mission Network and China Awareness conference, Nairobi 12-18 September 2015.

The shared humanity and unity in Christ, experienced within the vision for hospitality, invites members to meet each other as they are and where they are. The outward focus as a community for the world also results in encountering difference. This lived diversity may be costly, but it also is an invitation to mutual learning.

9.2.3. Mutual Learning

When describing CMS as a mission community, a CMS employee started with the community as a place of learning.

> *Well as a Christian community,... or as a mission community, the thing is that we... you know, community is a group of people who are learning together. Learning to live, learning to .. reflect on what is going on, learning about the things, it has got a purpose, it is a mission community. So, we are learning together about that. And also, a community is when people all feel […] that their, they are able to both share in and take from the community. (Interview 8-12:13)*

For a community in mission, the learning occurs through and from the mission experience. He also emphasised in the interview that this was not an academic learning per se, but a "holistic learning," a learning through the whole of the community experience. And this learning is not one-directional, from one person to the other, but it is mutual. All are learners. And all have wisdom to share and to receive.

Much of this learning happens organically as people meet each other, live the life of the community, participate in the community's purpose. Some of the learning is intentionally organised through courses, events and conferences. An interviewee from Kenya tells about his participation in a conference in the Philippines:

> *I was in Philippines recently. It was a meeting bringing together people from creation care advocates. People committed to being good stewards of God's earth. And they were from South East Asia region. […] The issues again are different. Yet everyone*

encouragingly sharing how they have heard the Lord, how they have seen progress. Acting locally, thinking globally, hearing global perspectives, but bringing them to bear in local contexts, very relevantly, bringing the communities together with them. (Interview 7-20:56)

The learning during this conference happened both through the organised talks and lectures, and in the informal meetings where people shared more personally their experiences and ideas, their struggles and successes. Even though the contexts from which people shared were quite different, recognition took place. Also, surprising discoveries were made, precisely because the diversity was bringing a new light and insight into known situations. The diversity was experienced as an asset and richness, rather than a barrier for learning.

Diversity plays out in different fields of community living. First, as in the example above, in geographical placement, context and culture. Coming from different backgrounds, being shaped by different contexts, people come together in the community and can help each other discover new things and widen their perspective. One interviewee tells of her experience within CMS:

I suppose a mission community is, is where people are aware of each other, and.. can learn from each other, and... are dependent on each other. […] So, what is happening in Pakistan with women, or the blasphemy act and these sorts of things, I think we can learn from our brothers and sisters in other... churches. So, is... I mean that to me is what a mission community is about. It is about being interdependent perhaps (Interview 3-05:13)

Even though the situation in Pakistan may be unique, and the Christians in Pakistan may face issues that this interviewee will never have to face to the same extent, she explains that through this encounter she learned to reflect more fully on social justice as part of her missional engagement. She also mentioned the impact of global warming on the communities in Bangladesh. Learning about the plight of the people in Bangladesh taught the Christian community to which she belongs to live more responsibly with their natural resources, and to work towards the reduction of their carbon footprint.

The second area of diversity is in social relationships. How do the manager and the employee, the rich and the poor, the educated and the less educated relate to each other? People indicate that within the community mutual learning should also be happening concerning difference in status. This is said to be an important value within the CMS community, related to the understanding that each human being is created in the image of God. One interviewee emphasized this attitude with a reference to the Holy Spirit, who is given to all.

> *Now... ... God's mission, God's spirit.. I think... deals with power in a way that really flattens the hierarchy. So that the, the, the needy and the rich, the educated and the uneducated, male or female, Jewish or Greek, they can all belong together, and God's power, God's spirit is accessible to, to each one of us. No matter how our social status looks. (Interview 5-41:02)*

A practical example of this learning across status difference, which is mentioned several times, is that the CMS Executive Leader started regular meetings in which the topics and discussions of the Senior Management Team meetings are presented to the wider staff in the CMS office.[65] The staff is invited to ask questions and to share their thoughts and insights in these meetings. The leadership learns from the employees, especially because the employee has a perspective that would be difficult for the managers and Directors to access, given the position they have within the organisation.

Thirdly, diversity of heritage also creates a diversity of experience. In the worldwide community, one of the obvious differences of heritage is the result of colonisation. Unequal relationships continue to exist because of the unequal distribution of financial resources and power, even within the Christian community. Ideas of superiority, on the one hand, and victimhood, on the other hand, play a role. The fact that one interviewee from Kenya posed the question of how African leadership would be accepted, together with that of African willingness to accept leadership from outside, is significant.

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[65] Each week, following the SMT meetings, a short summary of what is discussed is communicated to the CMS staff, which then is discussed further in the "SMT Conversations" meetings, following the Monday's @ 10 prayer meetings, to which also all staff are invited.

Would we be willing to allow CMS Africa to provide leadership? I think it is humbling. That is a Christian value. But is CMS Africa at the same time, at the same token, willing to accept leadership, even in locally… and give leadership to some people from outside to do certain things? I think that is humbling. (Interview 7-55:48)

Within the CMS community people express their belief in the equality of all partners, regardless of financial resources, or the socio-economic and political reality of their context. Regarding the community's purpose and missional vocation, people define their commitment as a mission from everywhere to everywhere, which is realised in programmes such as the "Interchange" programme. This programme brought mission partners from churches around the world to Britain to help the British church find new ways of living missionally in their context. The development of the CMS Mission Network, with CMS Africa and Asia-CMS becoming independent sister communities, is a practical and structural way of realising this vision of a worldwide mission community in which all members participate and collaborate, and in which all members enrich and support each other.

The desire for mutual learning, difficult as it may be, is a foundational attitude for people within the CMS community worldwide. It is mentioned both in relation to the organisational structures of the community and the personal and local lived structures. It follows the strong value placed on the rich diversity of the community members around the world, and in the various layers of society, while at the same time recognising their shared humanity and purpose.

9.3. Failing the Expectations – Ambivalent Reality

This value-based life is clearly a high calling, which creates strong expectations. And not all these expectations are met. Stories are also told of disappointment: disappointment with the community and its ethos, which is not realised in the lived reality, and disappointment with oneself for falling short of personal values and expectations.

9.3.1. No Home for the Person

The CMS community as a home is not always a place where people feel accepted and secure. Also, a home places expectations on its members, and for some people this means that they will not measure up, at least according to their own estimation.

> *I am a dreadful one. […] I am sure I don't do everything I should do as a CMS community member. I read my bits and pieces that I get, but I never manage to go to any of the various meetings that are advertised or other. (Interview 22-127:131)*

The balance between accepting and welcoming people as they are, and the focus on the community as existing for the world, as a community of purpose, is a precarious balance.

Another precarious balance is the way the home is expected to be a place with its own culture and habits, and at the same time the place that is open and accessible to the outsider. One interviewee complains about the "insider language" used in CMS. He says: "Not that I don't understand it.. It is just so... It feels like maybe I am in the wrong place." (Interview 11-09:23)

The experience of being an outsider has also been one of the unintended consequences of the process of membership renewal, organised after the merger of CMS and SAMS when CMS became an acknowledged community within the Church of England. A person explains during a focus group discussion that the process excluded people whom he regarded to be part of the community before they had to sign up for membership.

> *When the community first appeared, we were in Nairobi. And so, the people that were closest to us, as being representing, being part of the CMS community, could not be part of the CMS community, because it was an acknowledged community in the Church of England. (CMS FG-1:08:47)*

Rather than drawing people together into a shared identity and commitment, and welcoming them into the home, he felt distanced from people who really

mattered to him and who for him should be part of the community. They were excluded only because they could not belong to CMS Britain.

Regarding the CMS office, the question is if an organisation, which is a place of work, can also be a community. What about the organisational structures and needs? For example, is it possible to make people redundant in such a context?

> *Possibly it is the redundancies. Lots of people were upset. Uhm...*
> *and it is a different character. (Interview 2-12:44)*

Some people wonder if possibly the workplace should be seen as only an organisation, with a cause to which the employees are committed.

9.3.2. Diversity as Division

As we have seen, diversity is celebrated as an enrichment of the community experience, as a characteristic of a community that is not limited to one culture, time, or place. Yet, living with diversity is not always easy, especially since the community is so value laden, with strong convictions and a strong ethos.

> *But actually, there is another CMS. That is why a lot of it is so*
> *confusing, so many stories of communities. I mean, it's so wide*
> *now, it can mean so many different things. That is confusing. (CMS*
> *FG-302)*

One interviewee gives an example of where he makes a different choice from most people in his local community.

> *They keep hacking on alcohol is bad, alcohol is bad and Christian*
> *men don't drink alcohol. I drink alcohol. I am not going to tell them*
> *about it, because, I am not about to break down this fellowship*
> *because of my views. I honestly think my views are right. […] So, I*
> *am forced to live irregular. I live a double life. And that is difficult.*
> *(Interview 7-171)*

He does not dare to speak about his thoughts, for fear of offending people in the community and for fear of being misunderstood. Since he cannot adhere to the view of the community, he experiences this situation as living in hypocrisy.

In the relationship between the sister communities within the CMS Mission Network, diversity of methodology is described as a possible factor for division. Where, for example, the traditional CMS Britain focussed mainly on the sending out of mission partners, CMS Africa focusses on leadership development and local grass root capacity building. One of the CMS leaders wonders about the shared missiological focus and praxis. "I think there is a particular challenge about coming up with what you might call integrated missiological praxis." (Interview 1-43:19)

This possible division becomes even more pertinent when one looks at the difference of available financial resources between the different CMS sister communities. Also within the CMS Mission Network the reality continues to be that those who provide the financial resources for a particular project have an important voice and authority in the final decisions, even though the people involved may feel uneasy about this. A person from CMS Africa explains:

> *The resources... it is a power issue. Because they don't .. when it is not exactly how the Trustees want it, the resources are... are not given automatically. And not intentionally. It is more legally. […] Which I am really thankful for. But still, there is still a power relationship. (Interview 13-40:05)*

The power relationship is not what the people involved want to have; it is something they seem unable to escape.

Other issues around which people disagree are mentioned. Yet, what surprised me was the fact that the different views on the acceptance of homosexual relationships within the church was hardly brought up in the interviews, even though, at the time of interviewing, that was a much debated issue within the Anglican Communion and therefore in the Anglican Church. And since CMS is operating between the Anglican Communion and the Anglican Church, it is hard to imagine that it is not affected by the conflicts and discussions. The few times it was referred to were in the context of reflecting on diversity and the

boundaries of community, indicating that the disagreement around homosexual relationships should not be at the centre of attention. It was said that people should work together, regardless of their different views on the issue.

> *I think we have got to recognise that we are diverse, and we would never agree on everything. We have got to major on the majors, and ... not on the minors. And so, as long as we work towards finding some common understanding of the things that are basic, we will be able to achieve … a worldwide.. community. (Interview 10-23:42)*

> *Particularly of the homosexuality issue, we are trying not.. we are trying to find where we can have common ground, and say, well actually that is not the main issue. The main issue is about spreading the Kingdom and trying to concentrate on that, rather than being side-lined by issues to do with gender, sexuality, or whatever else. (Interview 3-35:07)*

According to these interviewees, the community should focus on its mission, "spreading the Kingdom," rather than highlighting its boundaries, which is seen as a focus on secondary things. Probably, members of the community in Africa would see this differently and demand a clear choice, as would many members of the Anglican Church in the USA, even though they are on the opposite side of the issue from the church in Africa. This is an example of difference in prioritisation of values and elements of vision and belief of what should be "major" or "minor." It is hard to see how this particular experience of difference, in the polarised reality of today's world and more particularly in the Anglican Communion, can be seen as a gift to be celebrated and an opportunity to learn.[66]

9.3.3. Not for the World

Being a community for the world, that welcomes the other into it and reaches out into the world, also can be an ambivalent experience. At the local level, in churches that are connected with CMS, the realisation that one is part of a

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[66] See chapter 7.1.2.

worldwide community and a church of all times and all places is not necessarily strongly held.

> *I think one of the great weaknesses of the church of this country is that it does not see itself from a global perspective. Uhm... it sees itself, to use the right English adjective, it sees itself parochially. (Interview 1-47:10)*

And this has consequences for the level of commitment to the missional lifestyle of the people in their local community. People tend to stay within it and relate to the people they already know rather than look outside their common circle. And extending that circle to people from outside of the country, in other regions and cultures, seems even more difficult.

> *And try and get people to be enthusiastic about mission and say to them, you know, this is what they are doing, it is almost like, you know, you feel it is over there. It does not really affect me. (Interview 22-11:17)*

Physical and geographical distance result in diminished interest. Relationships, on the other hand, become easier when people have met, for example, through visits and encounter trips.

However, these relationships can also be difficult because of misunderstanding. When an African Bishop asks for money of CMS Britain, is that an expression of a relationship of dependency, a post-colonial power inequality, or is it an expression of the reality of one brother asking the other brother for what is needed? Is it an expression of a faithful relationship in which each can share what they have and ask for help when and where that is needed? One of the leaders speaks about this complexity in relationships, where a commitment to mutuality can also be a dynamic of dependency at the same time.

> *You know we do belong to a worldwide mission community, a worldwide network of people who are committed to giving and receiving in mission. Or.. that is what I want us.. or want us and them to see ourselves in. And of course, you know, there are still, significant vestures of dependency culture around the place, and,*

and, we are as much to blame for those attitudes remaining as, as the people who hold them. (Interview 1-40:01)

The balance between faithful relationships and strategic and purposeful ones, in which resources are allocated wisely, is not always an easy one. This is due to the culturally different expectations of what such a relationship looks like, as well as to the related legal issues around financial accountability within the non-profit sector.

To summarise, the value framework of the CMS community is strong, encompassing its self-understanding, and shaping its community life and its purpose. Yet, within the community, the experience is not only positive. People experience ambivalence and disappointment with themselves when they feel they don't measure up as well as with their fellow community members when they make different choices, and even with the community as a whole. This happens when the ideal seems too big and too good to be true, and when the group is more inward looking, less hospitable and open or even more internally conflicted than was hoped for or expected.

9.4. Embodying as Intentional Commitment

The experience of ambivalence and disappointment can lead to disengagement. For engagement to continue, regardless of the disappointing experience, commitment is needed. And this commitment to the community and its values and purpose is understood to be based on a relational reality and a conscious choice.

The value framework of the CMS community, which is based on both the theological and historical tradition, is seen as one of the motivating factors for that choice.[67] For example, being part of a community that has its roots in and was started by the Clapham Sect carries expectations. A certain community pride in belonging to this community with these "ancestors" also generates a sense of call. It shapes the expectations, and as such facilitates the development

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[67] See chapter 7.

of commitment. The 'believing' and 'belonging' lead to identifying with the people of the community and with their values, and to a commitment to the value shaped life that makes the CMS community what it seeks to be. Yet, since this value shaped life has such high expectations, commitment can only begin and continue by a conscious choice of the community members.

Living with a commitment based on high value expectations can become tiring. Within the CMS community people seem to deal with this by emphasising the importance of mutual support within the community. They also point out that the community is not only a calling, and a vocation, it also is a gift. The community may not be perfect, but it is a community. People may not be particularly good at community living, yet the community does exist. It is in one sense a gift from history – from the Clapham Sect and all those people whose stories are told. And, the community is a gift from God, inviting people to participate in the mission of God, in which relationships with God, with fellow human beings and with the wider world are offered. A former director in CMS reflects on his own longstanding commitment to the CMS community and its values and purpose, relating it to the meaningful relationships and the personal investment of people in his life, and bringing it back to the Christ example.

> *I mean... when I go back to my early days, it was people who actually invested in me that brought the difference. And I think in many ways that is what Jesus was doing. You know, he was investing in the 12... building relationships, setting an example, sending them out on mission experience and then having some reflection. (Interview 4-30:51)*

Later in the interview he connects this community life with "the promise of the new creation into the present moment." (Interview 4-20:59) God's promise of the Kingdom already creates the present reality of community.

In sum, commitment to the value shaped life of the community, exists in the CMS discourse as a conscious choice. This choice is based on the value people place on the gift of the community as a home, but also for the world. This is a gift of relationships, ultimately received from God, while realised in the life of Jesus, through history, in the worldwide church, and particularly in the CMS community. This is what people want to belong to, where they want to find their

identity and purpose, their support and encouragement. And this is also why people invest in the life of the community – in its tangible relationships and partnership, in hospitality and service, in mutual learning across boundaries of difference and distance – even when the currently lived experience does not live up to their expectations.

9.5. Community as Intentional Project?

This chapter started with a description of the facilitation and organisation of community worldwide as it relates to distance in geographical terms and in societal status, as well as to the resulting diversity at the centre of such a community. Relationships and a structured community life are central. Another issue that should be raised now is the fragility of community as it is confronted with a complex reality. Both the organisational structures and the personal and local relationships are the result of the personal choice to belong. This choice leads to a commitment to both the value shaped life of the community and the personal relationships and partnerships. And this commitment is maintained even in the face of an ambivalent reality because the relationships, the values and the purpose carry so much importance and weight. In this section, these findings are brought into conversation with Zygmunt Bauman's doubt about the possibility of community commitment, and also with research in management studies. These lead to the observation that choice does not abolish community but changes its dynamics.

The choice to commit, to belong to and to invest in community is also a theme in Bauman's sociological approach to this subject. He describes how people long for community in a context where the importance given to individual choice creates a world of individual responsibility and therefore individual insecurity and constant competition.[68] Since relationships and community are no longer a given; they now require a conscious choice and an ongoing conscious investment. Relationships and community become a project, and they only exist

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[68] Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, 170.

to the extent that its members choose to participate. And for Bauman this means that they are no longer true communities.

> In so far as they need to be defended to survive and they need to appeal to their own members to secure that survival by their individual choices and take for that survival individual responsibility – all communities are postulated; projects rather than realities, something that comes after, not before the individual choice. [69]

The ability to make such a choice requires hope, and belief that this choice is or will be worthwhile. And this is where in modern society, according to Bauman, lies the problem. People have lost hope and faith in the durability of community, because people no longer experience, or even value, endurance in daily life. All choices are made for a particular circumstance and for a limited time.

> A crucial part of any faith is the investment of value in something more durable than the evanescent and endemically mortal individual life; something lasting, resistant to the eroding impact of time, perhaps even immortal and eternal. [70]

> If dedication to lasting values is today in crisis, it is because the very idea of duration, of immortality, is in crisis too. But immortality is in crisis because the basic, daily trust in the durability of things towards which and by which human life may be oriented is undermined by daily experience. [71]

According to Bauman, the necessity of the individual's choice to commit to community life abolishes the reality of that community; it makes the community idea a fairy tale. People may long for this "communitarian gospel," but will never truly experience it, because it will always be partial and without the security of a home in which belonging and total commitment cannot be questioned.

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[69] Ibid., 169.
[70] Bauman, *The Individualized Society*, 158.
[71] Ibid., 159.

The community of the communitarian gospel is a home writ large (the family home, not a found home or a made home, but a home in which one is born, so that one could not trace one's origin, one's 'reason to exist', in any other place): and a kind of home, to be sure, which for most people these days is more a beautiful fairy-tale than a matter of personal experience.[72]

They will not only never experience it, but the reality of such a community would bring with it a lack of freedom and a set of expectations to which one must respond. The home, which brings security of existence and meaning, also lays a claim. The reality of such a home brings "enforced belonging," and "non-negotiable obligations." Still, people continue to seek such a community, since it creates "a total world, supplying everything one may need to lead a meaningful and rewarding life." And this total world stands against the world full of insecurities. To maintain the idea of the community as the home, the place that provides for all needs and gives security, the outside world needs to be seen as other or even hostile. For Bauman therefore: "An 'inclusive community' would be a contradiction in terms." [73]

As we have seen, in the CMS discourse the community as home plays an important role, as does the individual's choice to be in the community. But for Bauman the fact that community follows a choice means that the community itself becomes a project and is therefore an impossible reality. In the CMS discourse the personal choice is seen as a requirement for belonging, and together with tangible relationships, is the foundation for a person's commitment to the community, to its members and to its purpose. Worry that the CMS community project may be temporary is not mentioned in the interviews. [74] In a focus group discussion with mission partners, worry was voiced about people who might identify as belonging to CMS in their home countries in Africa or Asia, but in coming to the UK might lose that identity. The

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[72] Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, 171.
[73] Ibid., 172.
[74] Would this be different if I had asked about the relationship between the community discourse, commitment to the community, and the financial well-being of the organization? The ongoing discussions around the fundraising strategy might well be related to a change in attitude of donors of the community.

expressed worry was not that those arriving would lose the CMS connection but instead the fact that CMS might exclude them.

> *I don't think necessarily they need to be CMS, but I think the question has to be why… if they have had some kind of connection, what is the something that is turning them off or turning them away from CMS? (PiM FG – 55:12)*

> *I don't mind if those people get involved in other, in other mission agencies and so on. I think that is still a good thing. […] I just love mission, and I think it is an important thing. But I, I would… I would be worried that CMS is in some way … turning people off. (PiM FG – 56:04)*

The ongoing existence of the CMS community and its mission purpose is not in question, but instead the lived reality of the community with its character as welcoming and inclusive. Even the fact that people might choose another community or commitment is not described as a threat to the CMS community itself. The missional purpose of the community is seen as central and more important. This missional purpose is so important that if people find a way of realising it in another context, that would be acceptable. Commitment to the values and purpose of the community here supersede commitment to the community as such.

This does not mean that there is never an expression of boundaries, an 'us' and 'them' identification in the CMS community. People speak of the world outside the community as a place of need and trouble, in which the CMS community and its members are called to live, work, and make a difference as followers of Jesus.

> *…Jesus constantly crossed boundaries and trained his disciples to cross boundaries. But uhm… we live in a world where… rather than actively seeking to cross boundaries, we sort of uhm… in our, in uh… individualistic world, we are… creating boundaries. Rather than actually crossing them. (Interview 10 – 06:49)*

Comparing this statement with Bauman's understanding of community, it is interesting to note that this person indeed speaks of the world as outside and different, as individualistic and as boundary creating; there is a sense of 'us and them'. But, when he speaks of the CMS community, which is called to "follow Jesus," he believes they exist for that world *to cross boundaries*. This is the very thing Bauman deems impossible when he says that "inclusive communities" are a "contradiction in terms." A bit earlier in the interview this leader in the CMS Mission Network said:

> *… that is where I want to be, that is where I want to see, where Jesus is at work as the Gospel crosses cultures, and where communities are formed across cultural barriers. (Interview 10 – 06:49)*

Interestingly, research in organisation management uses the concept of collectivism, describing it not just as a given characteristic of a community, but also as a value that is ideological and strategic. Is it possible that shifting the focus from the possibility of community as communal entity, to the coming together of individuals who share the same value of collectivism, and therefore commit to that value, resolves the contradiction of inclusive communities, as described by Bauman? In that case collectivism could be a value that is shared, like values as hospitality and inclusion. It is a value to which the members of the community are committed, even while it includes the diversity within that community.

Cohen and Keren, researching the relationship between the values of individuals and their commitment to the organisation for which they work, show how collectivism can be explained as a value that creates, at a personal level, both an affective and a normative commitment to the organisation, especially when quality relationships and organisational justice were experienced. People were committed to what Cohen and Keren call "Organizational Citizenship Behavior," on the basis of their personal commitment and their experience of relationships within the organisation, rather than on the basis of the organisational values

and expectations as they were expressed in the organisation and by its hierarchical structure. [75]

Applying this to the idea of community, with the emphasis on personal commitment, relationships, and community experience, suggests that collectivism as value can lead to community as a reality, even in the face of diversity and temporality. It is a reality in which the choice of the individual does not necessarily negate it but can, on the contrary, lead to a personal and shared commitment to that reality.

Ybema, Vroemisse and van Marrewijk, did their research on the discursive collective identity of staff members of an international non-governmental organisation in the area of human rights and development aid (with its office in the Netherlands). They found that people especially focussed on what connected them with their international partners and on mutual understanding in the face of cultural differences. The researchers indicate that most studies conclude that a collective identity is created by narratives of difference and distinction in which the self is painted as normal and normative and the other as strange and inferior.[76] The question then is raised how people who have to work across boundaries of culture and organisations understand and identify themselves. The research found that staff members of this organisation in their office in the Netherlands tell quite a different story in which they themselves are not normative or superior; it is a narrative that downplays difference.

> *…downplayed, reframed or denied differences and emphasised humanness, respect and equality as important foundations for partnerships. […] (i) adopting a 'thin' notion of cultural identity in boundary-effacing talk; (ii) depicting one's self as 'strange' and adjusting to 'normal' others; (iii) levelling out hierarchical differences by downplaying one's own dominant position in the*

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[75] Aaron Cohen and Danny Keren, "Individual Values and Social Exchange Variables," *Group & Organization Management* 33, no. 4 (2008): 446–449. This research is done with Israeli teachers employed in secular schools.

[76] Sierk Ybema, Marlous Vroemisse, and Alfons van Marrewijk, "Constructing Identity by Deconstructing Differences: Building Partnerships across Cultural and Hierarchical Divides," *Scandinavian Journal of Management* 28, no. 1 (201203): 49.

partnership; and (iv) constructing an inclusive 'we' which incorporates partners in strong and personal relationships. [77]

A collective identity is built through a narrative of an inclusive 'we.' It includes differences by either downplaying them or normalising them. And this is done for both ideological as well as for strategic reasons; to be egalitarian and to build strong partnerships towards a shared purpose.

For ideological (egalitarian) and strategic (partnership-building) reasons, they bridged potential divides by authoring the particular version of 'self' and 'other' as equal partners jointly aiming for human rights.[78]

This brings us back to Haslam, Reicher and Platow who, as we have seen in chapter eight, argue that the individual chooses to belong to a group by self-identifying with the values and purpose of that group, with "attraction, similarity, and trust [as an] outcome, not a cause of group formation."[79]

Building a collective identity, includes difference (Ybema, Vroemisse and van Marrewijk), and is based on the choice and commitment of the individual. The individual values collectivism (Cohen and Keren) and the purpose of the community, and is capable of building strong relationships and partnerships. This choice and effort may result in attraction, similarity, and trust (Haslam, Reicher and Platow). In the CMS discourse, people would say that the collective identity based on the value of relationality creates the experience of community, which sustains people's commitment to its purpose.[80]

It is important to note that while this commitment to the value of collectivism or relationality allows for diversity, hospitality and inclusion in the community, it does not completely abolish the narratives of difference and distinction, of the 'us' – in all its diversity – and 'them'. In CMS, a certain inside and outside reality continues to exist, as we saw expressed by the leader of the CMS Mission

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[77] Ibid., 52.
[78] Ibid., 57.
[79] Haslam, Reicher, and Platow, *The New Psychology of Leadership*, 49.
[80] People use the language of commonality, a shared vision, shared values, and a shared purpose. See chapter 5.

Network, who described 'the world' as individualistic, where people create rather than cross boundaries. Even though the community identifies itself as distinct from the wider, outside world, it remains a "project" (Bauman) that incorporates difference and values inclusion as part of its identity.

The project is based on the choice of individuals to belong and to commit, and therefore it has a certain fragility and uncertainty. What if people start choosing differently, commit to other groups, causes or values? Consequently, community as project needs a conscious effort and a sustained strategy leading to community development and the facilitation of its experience. The community needs to be shaped in such a way that its members find meaning, bonding, and purpose for themselves as individuals, and in the community as a whole. And in CMS this project is formed by the community's rhythm, with its narrative that consciously develops and maintains relationships and partnerships both on a personal level, and at the structural and communal level.

In the first part of this chapter we saw the specific approach to community development in CMS, as expressed in the interviews. It is an approach that places the building of relationships at its centre, both direct face-to-face relationships and those that are mediated. Visits and meetings are set up. At the organisational level of the CMS community, the membership process can be understood as a structure that facilitates and reinforces the community's meaning and belonging. It also defines the place of the community in the wider church and society, facilitating the identification with community for its members in the world outside. Another important element of the community structure is the information that is shared through stories for inspiration and mutual learning. Information is also shared to encourage mutual support, solidarity, and prayer. These stories, the shared information, and the meeting of others can be understood as 'vehicles' for the experience of meaning and the reality of belonging.

It is helpful to borrow Catherine Bell's concept of "ritualization" in this context; she describes it as follows:

> *Ritualization, the production of ritualized acts, can be described, in part, as that way of acting that sets itself off from other ways of acting by virtue of the way in which it does what it does. […]*

> *Ritualizing schemes invoke a series of privileged oppositions that, when acted in space and time through a series of movements, gestures, and sounds, effectively structure and nuance an environment.*[81]

Ritual acts, according to Bell, need to be seen and understood as strategic ways of acting within the social context that are related to both meaning and the need for the structuring of that social environment, including its power relationships.[82] As such, the ritualised acts can be mundane acts experienced as distinct, both as expression and as creation of a meaningful lived reality.

Bell opposes the idea that rituals are actions which follow and express meaning. She calls the opposition between thought and act a false dichotomy.

> *…the assumed existence of […] a 'something,' the latent meaning of the act, […] devalues the action itself, making it a second-stage representation of prior values.*[83]

The organisation of conferences, the setting up of face-to-face meetings and visits, the creation of opportunities for the building of relationships across geographical, organisational or social boundaries, and the conscious sharing of stories and information can be seen as practices within the CMS community that have the aim of building community and a shared purpose. The resources, for example, that are developed for the community members, guiding them in their reflections and in their prayers, help them to become active, participating in the community relationships and purpose. Using Bell's terminology, this can be explained as a process in which "social agents" develop "ritual mastery."

> *The goal of ritualization as a strategic way of acting is the ritualization of social agents. Ritualization endows these agents with some degree of ritual mastery. This mastery is an internalization of schemes with which they are capable of*

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[81] Catherine M. Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2009), 140.
[82] Ibid., 7,8.
[83] Ibid., 45.

reinterpreting reality in such a way as to afford perceptions and experiences of a redemptive hegemonic order."[84]

The participant in the ritualized actions is placed squarely within the boundaries of the community, internalising its values and purpose. Yet, since "ritual mastery" is always intimately connected to the specific context in which it is played out, it does contain the possibility of diversity as well as resistance, both in form as in content of meaning. And this is especially true when participation in the ritualized actions is intentional and by personal commitment. The actions and the stories are open to multiple interpretations and can be given different importance.

> *Ritualization is not a matter of transmitting shared beliefs, instilling a dominant ideology as an internal subjectivity, or even providing participants with the concepts to think with. [...] Ritualized practices, of necessity require the external consent of participants while simultaneously tolerating a fair degree of internal resistance. [...] Ritual symbols and meanings are too indeterminate and their schemes too flexible to lend themselves to any simple process of instilling ideas. Indeed, in terms of its scope, dependence, and legitimation, the type of authority formulated by ritualization tends to make ritual activities effective in grounding and displaying a sense of community without overriding the autonomy of individuals or subgroups.*[85]

The inherent flexibility and resulting diversity is so much a part of the reality of ritualization that it is incorporated in the experience of a shared reality. It grounds the community with its meaning, values and purpose, while at the same time leaving space for the particularity of the context and the freedom of the individual.

Mastering, which is the coming together of meaning and act, requires that a story be told. The stories told link the past, present and future, express the self-experience in interaction with the context and relationships, both at the

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[84] Ibid., 141.
[85] Ibid., 221, 222.

individual level and for the community. These stories therefore always evolve, mediating a sense of personal and social identity in relation to the context.[86] Narrative and practices are tools as well as results of this identity work. They shape the identity, and they are shaped by the life that coheres to that identity. They are interrelated and reciprocally effective.

Translating this to the CMS context, it is important to realise that this narrative process not only expresses the self-experience in interaction with the other and the context, but also with the beliefs and value framework, which in the CMS community is experienced as a gift received and a call to be lived out and promoted.[87] It is the person's choice to accept this gift, to adhere to this call, and to translate this gift and call into a lived reality within the community in its particular context.

So far, we have seen that the embodied community is shaped consciously and structurally, both at the organisational level and through the choice and commitment of the individual members in their local context. Where for Bauman from a sociological perspective this raises questions about the reality of this community, since in this case community comes after choice and therefore becomes a project, research in organisational management points to the possibility of taking collectivism as a value to which the people commit by personal choice. Yet, such a community project, in which people commit to the community by personal choice, needs an ongoing effort of community building and the formation of personal and social identities, through shared stories and actions that express and reinforce these identities and the sense of meaning and belonging to the community. In the following section the formal theological reflections regarding community building within CMS will be explored.

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[86] See also: Oliver Mallett and Robert Wapshott, "Mediating Ambiguity: Narrative Identity and Knowledge Workers," *Scandinavian Journal of Management* 28, no. 1 (March 2012): 23, 24.
[87] See chapter 7.1.6.

9.6. Community as Practice that Takes Practice

Can the embodied value-based life of the CMS community indeed be described as a project of community building that is realised in organised structures and an active participation in these structures by personal choice and at a personal level? How is this reflected in the theological publications of the CMS community? In chapters seven and eight we saw how in the CMS community people speak of mission spirituality as bringing together the understanding of community as both a gift to be received and a call to commit to; it is an active commitment to the community and its relationships. The theological understanding of self in relation to God, to the other and to the world leads to the choice to belong to the community and to commit to it. In committing to the community, one also commits to its purpose. We have seen that this also means that people commit (more or less) to an active participation in the structures of the community. This facilitates relationships and mutual support within the community and moves people to an active participation in the world outside of it. This is its purpose, and is understood as participation in mission. It means that the active embodiment of the community is strongly related to the 'believing' and the 'belonging' in the community, providing the value framework and the relational bonding to the community and its members. At the time of the formation of CMS as an acknowledged community within the Church of England, Dakin wrote in the introduction to the new constitution:

> *The Community is defined by its mission spirituality: our purpose, vision and mission. CMS is an association of those bound together by a mission spirituality expressed in mission practice. […] We organise ourselves, based on our spirituality, for practical and programmatic mission outcomes.*[88]

For Dakin, the community structures are an expression of the mission spirituality of the community and its members. Adams, the Mission Spirituality Advisor,

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[88] Dakin, "Sharing Jesus Changing Lives," 6.

therefore, describes mission spirituality as "practice," which reveals that the community exists for mission and has its foundation in the love of God.

> *…mission spirituality does not just happen, but needs to be engaged as a life of practice that enables us in some way to become what we seek. […] This kind of practice takes practice. But it is important to remember that the practice is not the thing! The thing is always what the practice reveals. Practice will be demanding. It will also increasingly feel natural. Think of this as a falling as much as an ascent. A falling into the love of God. A kind of home-coming. A gift to us, and a gift to the world around us.[89]*

In the following sections two elements from this description of community as a practice of mission spirituality will be described as they are found in the CMS literature. First, if community is "a practice that takes practice," what is the place of ritualization and narrative in this practice? Second, how is this practice experienced as a "home-coming" and "a gift to the world"?

9.6.1. What Practice?

When CMS became an acknowledged community by the Church of England, membership of the CMS community changed from a rather informal category, based on a diversity of ways of participation in and support of the CMS purpose, to an officially stated membership. This required adhering to a constitution and to promising a commitment to the life of the community,

> *The Promises also offer an overarching rationale for mission, express the vision of the Community, and invite members to enter into that vision and mission through practical action, daily disciplines and the regular renewal of their mission lifestyle. […]*

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[89] Ian Adams, "Epilogue: A Mission Spirituality for Turbulent Times," in *Missional Conversations: A Dialogue between Theory and Praxis in World Mission* (London: SCM Press, 2018), 210.

> *The outcome to which we aspire is that we might all grow as a community in our mission service.[90]*

Commitment to these community promises is described as a daily practice and discipline, but it is now within the framework of an officially organised leadership and accountability structure.

> *The Community is held accountable for its mission spirituality (its vision, mission and purpose) by its Episcopal Visitor who is appointed by the Trustees with the agreement of the Patron (the Archbishop of Canterbury).[91]*

Such a structure is set up as a support for the missional life of "all God's people," encouraging them into, and resourcing them for, a life that responds to the mission calling.

> *CMS is a lay mission community, seeking to release and commission all God's people for mission service in a calling that is diaconal: the service of others by which the love of Jesus is shared.[92]*

And this emphasis on resourcing people for their personal lives in "mission service" is an ongoing theme within CMS. Hence the current slogan: "We always had a dream … of people set free. Free to put their call into action."[93]

Yet, in the interviews, the official membership and community structure were not mentioned as a resource for the missional life of the interviewees.[94] When Mounstephen took over the role of Executive Leader of CMS,[95] he regularly stressed that the most important foundation of the CMS community is not its

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[90] Dakin, "Sharing Jesus Changing Lives," 10.
[91] Ibid., 9.
[92] Ibid.
[93] https://churchmissionsociety.org/ Accessed 14/03/2019.
[94] The membership structure has been mentioned several times as a hindrance to the community structure, because the interviewees experienced it as an exclusionary structure, a barrier rather than an invitation. See chapter 8.1.4 and 8.1.7.
[95] Canon Tim Dakin, General Secretary from 2000-2011. Canon Philip Mounstephen, Executive Leader from 2012-2018.

structure, but in God's choice to create humanity in God's image. In the brochure on community as the Forgotten Factor, Berry and Mounstephen write:

> *Community is not best practice; it is not a solution or a strategy; it is who we were made to be—in the image of a God who is community. […] Faithful community, then, as we will go on to explore, can be said to be both the method of God's mission (see, for instance Deut 28.9–10; John 13.34) and the purpose of it (Rom 8.14–17) as God restores his shalom (Col 1.19–20).[96]*

A rather direct link between God as Trinity and the lived reality of community is made here; this leads, for Berry and Mounstephen, in a natural and organic way to a missional life. This is what they believe happened in the early Christian communities.

> *These first Christians did not set about intentionally to engage in mission: it just happened, effectively as a by-product of the intimacy they experienced: 'and day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved' (Acts 2.47). That should not surprise us. There is something powerfully attractive and missional about genuine Christian community.[97]*

This does not exclude the necessity of structure and organisation. In a following chapter, Berry and Mounstephen describe how CMS as a community with a specifically missional character finds its place in the wider church structure, and how it, by virtue of that structure and place, it is both resourced by the church in its mission and able to contribute to the missional calling of the church locally and worldwide.[98]

In addition to this formal and church-wide structure, Mounstephen invested in the internal structure of CMS, both as an organisation and as a community, as we have seen in the beginning of this chapter. This was realised through the emphasis on communication and participation in the SMT Conversations within

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[96] Berry and Mounstephen, *The Forgotten Factor*, 5.
[97] Ibid., 8.
[98] Ibid., 10–12.

the CMS office, through the personal relationships within the office and outside, and through the different resources that have been developed to encourage communication, prayer, and support throughout the wider community around the world.

Community structures and a conscious building of community are recognised as vital. And for both Dakin and Mounstephen, these structures find their meaning and foundation in the story of God and in the story of the CMS tradition. Dakin points to the experience of the early church, as it is described in Acts, in which the community of believers is a community of "mission service," modelled on the mission of Jesus.

> *The key issue in Acts chapter six is the mission service of the community. […] The aim of mission service within and outside the community is to make real the possibility of a redeemed and renewed humanity which enacts the mission of Jesus, which he first proclaimed in Nazareth (Luke 4) when he announced good news to the poor and the oppressed.[99]*

The early church had to appoint leaders and create structures to respond to the internal needs of the community and its vocation to serve the wider community. Berry and Mounstephen also go back to the early church. They emphasise that the community of the early church proclaimed the good news naturally; "it just happened,"[100] because God is at work in the creation of the community, and its service in the world.

> *That in a nutshell is the ministry of the Holy Spirit: the creation of missional community, as a reflection and an extension of the community of love at the heart of God.[101]*

Both Dakin and Mounstephen use the story of the early church, emphasising different elements of that story to support their specific approach to the community.

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[99] Dakin, "Sharing Jesus Changing Lives," 2.
[100] Berry and Mounstephen, *The Forgotten Factor*, 8.
[101] Ibid., 9.

The biblical narrative of the early church and the historic tradition of the CMS community are used as foundational story to form the identity of the community. They are also the stories that provide the values and shape of the current community, both in a legitimising and a normative way. And interestingly, the same foundational story, used in this way by both Dakin and Mounstephen, includes the possibility of diversity in the understanding and prioritising of values and the resulting structure and practice of the community. Dakin puts particular emphasis on the organisational structures that build community and Mounstephen emphasises the relationality that facilitates it.

Another example of a foundational story for the community is one in which a teapot becomes an object that reminds of a practice and is also used as a call to practice. This can be found in the current version of the Community Handbook, but goes back to the founding of CMS:

> In the turbulent late 18th century, a group of Christians known as the Eclectic Society began meeting together over tea to answer the question: "How can we effectively share Jesus today?" [...] Some people, including other Christians, thought they were a bit mad. But these passionate people of faith, including William Wilberforce and John Newton, worked together to abolish the slave trade; they fought for the rights of oppressed people at home and they launched out on dangerous seas to share Jesus with the world. Starting with a good cup of tea, a mission movement was poured out across the globe. Today, in the pioneering spirit of our founders, CMS is calling Christians to "return to the teapot."[102]

CMS as a mission movement started around a teapot with a local community that became a worldwide influence. And this tradition is described as continuing in the current CMS community, while using it at the same time as a critical voice, calling for a "return" to the "teapot, which can be interpreted as a return to the local and relational roots of the mission movement. The teapot symbolises the locally rooted community and the quest for a just society, both "at home" and "across the globe." This narrative is part of the framework of meaning and the

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[102] https://churchmissionsociety.org/welcome-community Accessed 15/03/2019.

rationale of the community structure, comparable to the concept of "ritualization" as described by Bell; it is a mutual reinforcement of both action and meaning, in which the teapot stands for meaning and values that are believed to be inseparable from attitudes and actions.[103]

The ritualised community is not only realised in meaning and action, but also in people, in the daily lives of individual members of the community. Karlie Allaway, in her article about pioneering mission community, speaks about embodied practice:

> *[…] people and relationships are the second book of God. Before I ever opened and read the Bible but was hanging around Christians, I was reading people and their relationships to see what Christianity was about. Our faith needs to be embodied. We need to be a visible sign of the invisible realities of grace.[104]*

People are described as the "book of God," as a revelation of God's grace. And when Warren speaks about the mission partner as the mediator of relationships within the community worldwide, "as a link" between different communities, he even uses the language of "sacrament."

> *He (sic), in a very special sense, is a sacrament of the universal Church. His presence is a visible assurance to the local Christian community that they are members of a world-wide fellowship.[105]*

The foundational story and structure of a community are understood to be a ritualised reality in which meaning and action are intertwined and mutually affect each other, mediating the grace of God in the world. Yet, it is the individual members of the community, who live out of that story and within that structure, who are the practitioners of community. They are described as the

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[103] Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, 140.
[104] Karlie Allaway, "Pioneer Mission in Community," in *The Pioneer Gift: Explorations in Mission*, ed. Jonny Baker and Cathy Ross (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2014), 77.
[105] Warren, *I Believe in the Great Commission*, 179.

"sacrament;" they are 'embodying' the reality of the community. And as community they 'embody' the reality of God in the world. [106]

9.6.2. Practice of Home and Gift

According to Cathy Ross, the practice of community as the embodiment of the reality of God exists in showing hospitality. She highlights the metaphor of "household of God," as used by Paul in the letter to the Ephesians, when she describes the church as such a community in the world. The "household of God" practices hospitality because hospitality is at the heart of who God is as Trinity, and how God works in the world.

First, the "household of God" is the place where all are welcome.

> *At its best, a household or dwelling place evokes stability, warmth, safety, relationships with people who care about us, home. The Church as the household of God is where God is, where we can find God, where we can live with God.*[107]

It is the home where people can encounter God and learn to live with this God.

Second, this "household of God" is organised and realised through hospitality.

> *Hospitality cannot be practiced as a monologue. It requires relationship, receiving, community and change. Our God embodies hospitality in the Trinity. Hospitality is at the heart of God's reign and is essential for the practice and meaning of the kerygma. Hospitality is an ongoing practice that will be modified and negotiated as we interact and engage with one another.*[108]

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[106] As both Bell and Henriksen write, ritual and practices also deal with power, both the power of the establishment and the power of the participant, both the power of permanence and the power towards change. Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, 169; Henriksen, *Christianity as Distinct Practices*, 80, 81. This will be looked at further in chapter 10.

[107] Ross, "Hospitality: The Church as 'A Mother with an Open Heart,'" 67.

[108] Ibid., 68.

Hospitality is the practice that embodies God's being, presence, and reign, in particular ways as it is interacting with specific contexts.

Thirdly, Ross describes hospitality as an important theme both in the Old and in the New Testaments, where, in the encounter with God, and, in the New Testament, with Jesus, hospitality is both given and received. Abraham and Sarah entertained angel guests. Israel is called to be a people of hospitality because they have needed it themselves. Jesus is the host who welcomes children, sinners, and strangers. But Jesus was also in need of hospitality, as he came into the world as a guest, even a guest who was not welcomed. (John 1:11). This is how God continues to be present in the world, both as guest and as host, and this is how God's people too should embody God's presence in it. God's reality calls for a practice that is shaped accordingly.

> So we see the importance of not only the ambiguity but also the fluidity of the host/guest conundrum. We offer and receive as both guest or stranger and host. This intermingling and fluidity is vital for us to understand and appropriate.[109]

The practice of hospitality, therefore, needs to be one in which the other is truly seen and listened to, nourished, welcomed, and extended reciprocally. It is a practice of openness to learn and receive from the stranger and a willingness to be truly vulnerable and needy. And as a consequence, it is a practice that is risky, because this hospitality can be abused or taken for granted.[110] But, to go back to the foundational story of God and God's people, and of Jesus in the incarnation, that is how God is present in the world. The human living out of this reality may not be perfect, but it is nonetheless an embodiment as a response to the call of God.

Ross opens her article on the church as a community of hospitality by placing the high calling of being "the household of God," and its origins as "divinely instituted," next to the human organisation with "frailties and failings."[111] And

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[109] Ibid., 69.
[110] Ibid., 80, 81.
[111] Ibid., 67.

later she indicates that this recognition is at the heart of the mission of the community.

> *Poverty of heart and mind reminds us that we are the needy ones, that our hands were empty before God filled them, that we are in need of grace, forgiveness, healing and newness of life. Then genuine hospitality as well as genuine engagement in mission can begin as we realize our own emptiness and our own need for God. As we experience the divine welcome born out of divine compassion, so then we can share this grace and hospitality with others.[112]*

The church as a community is understood to be an ambivalent reality. It is a community with a high calling as the "household of God," embodying the reality of God and participating in the mission of God. It is organised in practices and structures that seek to reflect and participate in this reality, yet as a human institution, performed in human frailty. And that very frailty turns out to be the risky approach of God who became a vulnerable guest. It is in that human weakness that the community members themselves discover their own need for God's mercy and welcome. And on receiving God's grace, the community will long to, and be made capable of sharing this in the world. But again, this is an ability and longing in frailty, brokenness, and sometimes unwillingness. Living in the world as the "household of God," as an attentive host and as a needy guest, is a practice that needs to be learned, a practice that needs ongoing practice.

9.7. Community as a "Distinct Practice"[113]

When Bell speaks of "ritualization," and CMS uses the idea of "a practice that takes practice," are they speaking about the same idea? Can community, as it is lived in the CMS, be understood as a ritualised practice in which act and meaning come together (Bell), and as a differentiated practice that needs to be learned

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[112] Ibid., 79.
[113] See for the use of the term "Distinct Practices," Henriksen, *Christianity as Distinct Practices*.

and therefore practiced, in order to reach "ritual mastery"? Is this where actions may even be rebellious as they are related to the context in which they function? In the following section, the wider theological conversation around ritual and practices will be explored, where act and meaning cannot be separated and carry the possibility of diversity. For CMS this means that believing and the structure of organisation, plus belonging and action are all related and mutually affect each other.

Bell describes practices as "situational," "strategic," "embedded in a misrecognition of what it is in fact doing," and "able to reproduce or reconfigure a vision of the order of power in the world;" this she also calls a "redemptive hegemony."[114] She writes:

> In sum, a redemptive hegemony is not an explicit ideology or a single and bounded doxa that defines a culture's sense of reality. It is a strategic and practical orientation for acting, a framework possible only insofar as it is embedded in the act itself. As such, of course, the redemptive hegemony of practice does not reflect reality more or less effectively; it creates it more or less effectively. To analyse practice in terms of its vision of redemptive hegemony is, therefore, to formulate the unexpressed assumptions that constitute the actor's strategic understanding of the place, purpose, and trajectory of the act.[115]

Practices are strategically created in a specific way and are related to context, vision, and purpose; thereby they themselves shape that context.

This would mean that we cannot understand the CMS community without looking at the practices in their context *and* the meaning and underlying assumptions that these practices have within the community and the daily lives of the members of the community. Furthermore, we need to look at the community as an intentional and strategic project of practice and purpose.

Jan-Olav Henriksen describes ritual as part of Christianity, while Christianity can also be described as a cluster of distinct religious practices. An important

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114 Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, 81.
115 Ibid., 85.

argument of his book is that practices are not based on, or follow from, belief or dogma or tradition.[116] Dogma and tradition are not primary, and practices are more than the expression of them. He argues that practices are related to the everyday context in which they are lived.[117]

> *I will try to show how rituals are at once both an integral part of everyday life and everyday religion, and how they enable us to see more of the relation between the everyday and the specifically Christian.[118]*

> *[…] it is necessary to see this embodied dimension of rituals in relation to features of orientation and transformation, and hence, to connect rituals to semiotic processes.[119]*

Henriksen describes practices as "semiotic activity," as "signs." This is comparable to Bells description of distinct practices that are embedded in misrecognition. These practices make it possible to understand and experience the world and our daily reality as meaningful.[120] They shape our choices and actions. Signs exist in "Otherness." They point to and mediate a reality beyond the factual practice of the sign, and as such have transformative power. And this "Otherness" is related to the human recognition of God and the way they speak of God. This is the transcendental reality that exists "along with other facts of the world."[121] This is also where faith comes in. Henriksen writes:

> *My main claim is that Christians not only shape their everyday lives on the basis of faith, hope, and love, but that God's presence in the world is manifested and actualized when Christians engage in processes of orientation and transformation that are based on faith, hope, and love. Moreover, again, it is important to underscore that all humans can live on the basis of faith, hope, and love, since these are features that belong to human life in general.*

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[116] Henriksen, *Christianity as Distinct Practices*, 1.
[117] Ibid., 4, 5.
[118] Ibid., 73.
[119] Ibid., 73, 74.
[120] Ibid., 63.
[121] Ibid., 69, 70.

However, it is the specific shape that they are given by their relation to the content of the Jesus story that makes it possible to identify the practices of faith, hope, and love as practices that in a distinctly Christian way actualize God's presence. […] The even stronger claim is, second, that it is by this means that it is possible to see God's agency as revealed and present in the world, since God in Jesus Christ is the source of the content of these three elements.[122]

The Other, God, is revealed, "manifested" and "actualized" through the distinct practices of human beings, practices that are more than what they factually do, as they are recognised to be originating in God. For Henriksen, the "Jesus story," "God in Jesus Christ," is the source and also the content of this revelation, discovered through the distinct practises lived out in the reality of daily life. Through participating in these practices, human beings participate in something of the self-revelation of God.[123] And as such, the practices also shape the participant's manner of viewing and understanding the world, the other, and oneself in relation to that world and the other.[124] The practices bring orientation and transformation, as in a "sign," both to the participant and to the world in which the practices are performed.

From this perspective, looking at how in CMS the story of God and the story of its own history has an important place, we can now say that this story and tradition are not only foundational to the community and to the way that the values discovered in that story are embodied in the community, they also are discovered within the community and through participation in the practices of the community. This further means that the shape that the telling of the story and the tradition takes is also shaped by the embodied and contextual character of the community, by its understanding of and interaction with the world in which it lives.

Such interaction can be recognised in the CMS theologian Max Warren, when he calls for a "theology of attention."[125] It consists in a true and careful listening

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[122] Ibid., 176, 177.
[123] Ibid., 178.
[124] Ibid., 74.
[125] Warren, *A Theology of Attention*.

to the story of God, to the story of the community, *and* to the story of the world in which the community exists. On the basis of the understanding that God is the Creator who has an ongoing love for all of creation,[126] and that in Christ all things are held together,[127] we need to be truly attentive, in order to discover him wherever we are and in whomever we meet, in and outside of the community. Warren writes that we can be

> *[…] assured of the presence of Christ wherever we go, and to whomsoever we go. We do not take him with us. We meet him there.[128]*

The task of paying attention in the face of the reality of sin and brokenness is to reveal Christ who is already present.[129] This leads to an attitude of deep listening and an expectancy to discover Christ, but also to an uncovering of idols and anything that does not "sanctify."[130] But, according to Warren, this is a great mystery.

> *We do well to take off our shoes for the place of our standing is holy ground, wherever it is we stand before the mystery of God at work in creation, redemption and sanctification.[131]*

An attitude of attention, therefore, is an attitude of empathy, of seeking to discover rather than judge, because "Jesus, now as always, is very full of surprises."[132] For Warren this leads to an attitude of humility, and to the importance of dialogue, and to an ethical life of community that is based on relationality; it involves a mutual sharing and receiving, but always within the framework of the reality of God who is the source and content of the life of the community.[133]

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126 Ibid., 8.
127 Ibid., 12.
128 Ibid.
129 Ibid., 15.
130 Ibid., 14.
131 Ibid.
132 Ibid., 6.
133 Ibid., 22.

When Stanley Hauerwas reflects on Christian social ethics, he develops his argument in the framework of community. He speaks of a community of virtuous people who are shaped to live a virtuous life in their world. Rather than being formed by rules and laws, the members of the community live by a "truthful narrative." And in a Christian community people live by the conviction that "the story of Christ is a truthful account of our existence." It is the story through which the Christians understand "what is going on." And through this understanding they will know "what to do." [134] Using the story of *Watership Down*, written by Richard Adams, Hauerwas shows the importance of narrative for community. *Watership Down* is a story about a group of rabbits who leave their warren, following one of the rabbits who is believed to be a seer and who warns that the warren is in grave danger. They embark on a dangerous journey, looking for a new home. And, according to Hauerwas, it is the narrative told within the group that changes the group of individuals into a community.

> *They become a people only as they acquire a history through the adventures they share as interpreted through the traditions of El-ahrairah.* [135]

> *Their stories serve to define who they are and to give them skills to survive the dangers of their world in a manner appropriate to being a rabbit.* [136]

The narrative, which consists of both the tradition of El-ahrairah and the experiences shared by the members of the group, binds them together as a community. It provides a lens for understanding what is going on and, following this understanding, for what they should do. But this narrative is not static; it is shaped through their shared experiences in the places through which they travel, and by the other rabbits they meet. Still, it is also a story that sets them apart, creating a distinction between them and the other groups of rabbits. Only as a distinct group, shaped through the narrative of El-ahrairah and the growing narrative of their shared adventures, can they "survive the dangers of their

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[134] Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 10.
[135] Ibid., 13.
[136] Ibid., 15.

world in a manner appropriate to being a rabbit."[137] A distinct identity and a contextually shaped life are not necessarily opposing dimensions of community.

When Hauerwas then reflects on the church as a community in this world, which is living by the story of Christ, he describes the calling of the church as:

> *[…] to be the kind of community that tells and tells rightly the story of Jesus. But it can never forget that Jesus' story is a many-sided tale. We do not have just one story of Jesus, but four. To learn to tell and live the story truthfully does not mean that we must be able to reconstruct 'what really happened' from the four. Rather it means that we, like the early Christians, must learn that understanding Jesus' life is inseparable from learning how to live our own. And that there are various ways to do this is clear by the diversity of the Gospels.[138]*

The community lives by receiving and learning the story of Christ and becomes that story, by being shaped by it and sharing it. And this is not as a single story, but one with much complexity and diversity.

Understanding the CMS community as one of distinct practices helps to understand how the different elements of that community – the believing, belonging, and embodying – relate to each other. They relate not in a linear way, but each of these elements is always connected with each of the others, and they mutually direct and shape each other. The attentively relational, embodied, and contextual character of that community allows for open-endedness and diversity, including the ambivalence, of its lived reality, even though it continues to have a distinct identity as a community with strong values and high expectations. The ongoing story of Christ, and the encounter with each other and with the world, all within the framework and invitation of God, who's being and mission are one, mutually shape each other in the life of the community, and its active presence in the world.[139]

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[137] Ibid.
[138] Ibid., 52.
[139] See chapter 7 about 'Believing,' following Flett's argument about the unity in the Triune God.

In this chapter we have first seen how in the CMS discourse the community is understood to be a relational entity with high value expectations, and that it is intentionally built by structures of membership and practices that mediate relationships around the world. These are realised through the sharing of information, the organisation of encounters, and through the mutual engagement in prayer. Secondly, it also highlighted the ambivalent reality, that members are disappointed in themselves or in each other, as they see that the community's values are not lived out as hoped for. This raised two questions: first the question about the possibility of community as an intentional project. If community depends on human choice and intentionality, will it survive in a world of endless choice? And second, the question of the possibility of community in the face of diversity. If community is contextually defined, and therefore encounters diversity, can it still be a distinct community to which people will want to belong, and a project in which they will want to invest?

Looking at the more formal theological approach to community within CMS, it becomes clear that the intentional structure of community is deeply connected with a community narrative that is based on both the Bible and on the history and tradition of CMS. Yet, it also becomes clear that that shared narrative does not mean that the life of the community is based on a single story and practice. There is diversity in interpreting the narrative, and in the resulting practices based on that narrative.

Using Henriksen's concept of Christianity as Distinct Practices, it can be concluded that CMS can be understood to be a community of distinct practices. In these practices, meaning and act come together and shape each other, and they are always related to the contextually lived reality within the framework of God in Christ. Following CMS theologians such as Warren and Ross, CMS is described as an intentional community of distinct practices, formed on the basis of attentively listening to each other, to the context, and to God who is present in Christ, in the other, and in that specific context. The narrative of Christ, who was incarnate in a specific place and time, who is all in all, and who welcomes, and acts in the world, is a narrative that invites the community to see itself as one in conversation with the world, contextually specific, a transformative presence in the world and shaped by the world, as a sign beyond itself of the

reality of God. The community as the "household of God" is a place of welcome including otherness and brokenness.

9.8. CMS as Shared Existence and "Household of God"

Based on my understanding of the CMS discourse, I have come to describe that community as a circle of shared existence, a relational event in which people, God and creation relate, and in which each element of the community is related to, influenced by and has influence on each of the other elements. Operating in a world where individualisation and globalisation influence the experience of community, and question its very possibility, the CMS community sees its relational character as foundational; this is based on their understanding of God, of humanity and of creation in relation to this God. This has led to a community in which I have distinguished four elements, each of them actively lived out by the members of the community: the central element of purposive being, and the elements of believing, belonging, and embodying.

Purposive being is central to the CMS community life and experience. Where God is encountered as a God who exists in relationship, a God who welcomes and meets people and brings them home, the purpose of the community is to be one that represents God's character and welcome to all, a community where people experience acceptance and grace, but also one where they can grow in grace and learn to share that grace, finding strength and wisdom to act and represent that grace in a world of need and trouble. The purpose of the community is to be both a home of welcome and a place of outward focus, for the good of the world.

The understanding of God's being and welcome and action in the world is discovered in the Scriptures. It is found in the story of God with God's people, in the incarnation of Christ, and in the ongoing story of God's being and action in the world. It is found too in the living tradition that can be discovered in the history of the CMS community and its current lived reality. People in CMS believe that this God invites them to enter into that story and to become a part of and a participant in that story together with all God's people of all times and all places. Through attentive living and listening to God, the other and creation,

people discover ever new ways of understanding God, the world and each other, and therefore also God's call to community. Believing, therefore, is an active response to encountering God and to the renewed understanding of self and the world. This is a mission spirituality that shapes the purpose of the community.

It also shapes the membership of the community, answering the question of who can belong to it. If the community finds its origin in God's being and action, then all can belong who want to accept God's invitation of the gift of a home. Here they will find acceptance, growth, and God's calling to share this love and grace with and in the world; they share God's welcome to all. People in CMS also place Christ at the centre of the community, and rather than focus on the boundaries they emphasise its inclusive character, based on relationships with each other and with Christ at the centre. Belonging and membership depend on this relationship and on a willingness to commit to the people, values, and purpose of the community. Such Christ centred committed relationships can include a rich diversity of people, those with differing priorities and a diversity of understanding. The diversity will have a formative influence on both the believing and the purpose of the community, as well as on its organisation and structure.

In as much as the CMS community understands itself as participating in, and an embodiment of, God's being and acting in the world, it needs an organisation and structure to facilitate the belonging, believing and purposive being of the community and to shape these elements in the encounter with each particular context, situation and people.

To return to Cathy Ross, this organised community can by typified "the household of God."

> This is not a closed society but rather an open circle, an open community where there is always space. There is space for each divine person; there is space for the other and so there is space for us, created in the divine image to be who we were created to be. […] the household of God is where we can live with God. God is a God of hospitality who welcomes all and invites everyone in. […] where the stranger (and migrant) is graciously welcomed, where

we are lovingly seen and recognized, where we are generously nourished, where marginality and risk-taking are regular postures and space abound.[140]

And yet, this vision and purpose, these values and beliefs also encounter the harsh reality of brokenness and sin, of exclusion and competition, of self-seeking and lack of faith in the lives of the members of the community and in the community's structures and organisation. The lived reality and experience of community in CMS regularly fails these high expectations.

In the following chapter, this ambivalent reality will be further explored, in order to describe a lived theology of community, based on the CMS experience, that takes both the complex and contradictory lived reality and the community as a gift and call of God into account

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[140] Ross, "Hospitality: The Church as 'A Mother with an Open Heart,'" 82, 83.

PART III

RECOGNISING AMBIVALENCE AS A CHRISTIAN VIRTUE IN COMMUNITY

Based on my fieldwork, I have come to describe the CMS community experience as a 'Circle of Shared Existence.' The circle represents the experienced commonality of values, vision and action, and the commitment of the community members to allow their lives to be shaped by each other and by that commonality.

But this fieldwork has also made clear that the lived reality of this community is a complex reality, where vision and daily life do not always come together. Even though the description of the CMS community as a circle may indicate a harmonious and possibly closed reality, this is not the lived experience. It turns out to be an ambivalent reality, in which dissenting voices and experiences of disappointment are heard, and where boundaries are questioned and shifted.

After first clarifying the concept of ambivalence through stories of the lived experience, and based on insights from organisational science, the idea of ambivalence as creative spirituality will be explored using insights gained from

feminist theology. And finally, it will become clear how these insights resonate with current missiological thinking in the CMS community.

10.1. Stories of Ambivalence

In this section, four stories of ambivalent experience are told, giving insight into the lived reality of community when inequality, conflict and exclusion are part of that reality. The first story describes the development of relationships within the CMS community worldwide in times of colonialism, and in times of reconfiguration in a neo-colonial context. The following three stories were told by people who are currently connected to CMS or are part of the community. They recount their struggle with the high expectations of the community and its vision, with the tension between the community and the organisational structure, and with the pain of exclusion when diversity is experienced as a threat.

10.1.1. Ambivalent Experience in an Unequal Reality

As mentioned earlier, CMS started at the time of the abolition of slavery and the beginning of the colonial era.[1] One of the important people in shaping the CMS agenda and approach to mission was Henry Venn, who propagated the idea of the "three-self-churches," as "self-supporting," "self-propagating," and "self-governing."[2] Yet, through the thirty two years of his serving as CMS honorary secretary, the development of his strategy and his decision making show the difficulty of realising this idea. This was related to the ambivalent reality of his time, his society, and the people he was working with.

Peter Williams shows that Venn, regardless of his belief that no people group was to be seen or treated as inferior to another, and his recognition of the abilities and capacities of all people, had to face the racial tensions and the

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[1] See chapter 3.
[2] An idea that was also developed by Rufus Anderson (Foreign Secretary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, 1832-1866).

feelings of superiority of his own missionaries. This led him to adapt his strategy for mission, while seeking to stay faithful to his fundamental belief and vision for a native church under native leadership. Yet, Bishop Ajayi Crowther, the first African bishop, became one of the most visible victims of these tensions. Where Venn sought to work with the existing structures of the Anglican Church to bring about the creation of native churches in Africa and Asia, Crowther had to contend with European colleagues, who felt themselves to be superior, and who also had greater resources at their disposal. This not only created a difference in resources but a difference in authority as well.[3] Even though Crowther had a comparable or even superior education and position in the church to many of his European colleagues, it turned out that he was further removed from the centre of power within the church. Following a conflict between him, the local leadership of the church, and the missionaries, towards the end of his life in 1891, bishop Crowther was dismissed as bishop by the European missionaries. The church in Sierra Leone again became a missionary church, led by foreign missionaries and their authority structures.

Max Warren, General Secretary of CMS from 1942 to 1963, who led CMS from the height of the Second World War through the time of decolonisation, reflected much on the relationships within the Christian church worldwide. In 1955, he delivered three lectures, the Reinecker Lectures at the Virginia Theological Seminary in Alexandria, Virginia, which were published in a book *Caesar the Beloved Enemy.* In it he reflects on the relationship between the church and the state. [4] In the first lecture he develops a "theology of imperialism." Based on his belief that God's purpose is worked out in history, a purpose of love, power and justice, Warren discovers the providence of God in imperialism.[5] He states that in general, though much hurt has been brought

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[3] Hanciles highlights the fact that local pastors were regularly seen by both the European missionaries as the local population as undereducated and poorly paid, by which their authority became automatically curtailed. The Church Mission Society had decided that local teachers and pastors should not be paid a higher salary, in order to prevent negative influences in the progress of the native church based on material desires. Hanciles, "The Anatomy of an Experiment: The Sierra Leone Native Pastorate," 68.

[4] Max Warren, *Caesar the Beloved Enemy,* First Edition. (Chicago, IL: Alec R. Allenson, Inc., 1955).

[5] Ibid., 26.

through the "alien domination" of peoples, good is realised too in the form of law, development, emancipation of the oppressed, and the proclamation of the Gospel.

> *Again let me be clear that I am not arguing the case for British imperialism, but simply indicating that imperialism 'the rule or control .. of one state, nation or people over other similar groups' can be a means to a greater end. It is far too early yet to say whether this greater end will be achieved.[6]*

Yet, he acknowledges that this exercise of power is realised by sinful people and can result in a domination that brings about injustice, abuse, and evil.[7]

In the third lecture he reflects on the place of the Western missionary in Asia and Africa in a time of empire and decolonisation, and a "revolt against the West." He recognises the resentment and hurt of the receiving community because of their experience of dominating power.[8] Rather than holding on to power and superiority, he advocates for an imaginative approach in missionary life across boundaries. This approach would honour both the foreign missionary as a gift, and the local culture and the way it shapes the Christian life. This would probably be different from what the missionaries would have been used to in their home context.

R.S. Sugirtharajah, in his book *Postcolonial Reconfigurations,* gives a scathing review of this effort.

> *[…] imperialism is now reconstructed as a likeable rogue. He (Warren, BvdTL) seeks to make the whole sordid enterprise native-friendly. His aim is to make imperialism 'command respect' (1955:31). He prettifies and sanitizes colonialism...[9]*

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[6] Ibid., 38.
[7] Ibid., 41.
[8] Ibid., 69–94.
[9] Rasiah S. Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Reconfigurations: An Alternative Way of Reading the Bible and Doing Theology* (London: SCM Press, 2003), 145.

Sugirtharajah recognises that Warren is one of the few at that time who was interested in developing a theology for the relationships within the church worldwide. Sugirtharajah shows that, even though Warren realised that political power structures such as empires and colonial authority could be easily misused and indeed were abused, the idea of empire in itself was presented as a neutral reality. He failed to see or describe the inherently problematic foundation of empire, as the inequality between peoples because of the presumed superiority of the colonising peoples. He also failed to see or to describe the exploitation of the colonised by the colonisers, as well as the exploitation of the resources of the colonised nation for the good of the colonising nation.[10]

At the same time, Warren developed his understanding of Partnership in the 1955 Merrick Lectures at the Ohio Wesleyan University in Delaware, USA, and in his book *Partnership: The Study of an Idea*.[11] He opened the first chapter of the book with the sentence:

> *Partnership is an idea whose time has not yet fully come.[12]*

In a time when colonialism was increasingly experienced as a problematic reality, Warren reflected on relationships within the church worldwide. He described and advocated for partnership as a theologically conditioned necessity, since God who is fully love, calls people to live as committed partners in God's redemptive purpose. If the relationship of God and the human person is a relationship of partnership, then, according to Warren, partnership must also define inter-human relationships.[13] He described partnership in terms of unity and mutuality in a relationship between people who encounter each other as they truly are. Unity is defined by and based on love, which includes freedom, diversity, and local particularity.[14] Partnership in mutuality is described as a genuine committal of each party to the other in trust, accepting responsibility

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[10] Ibid., 147.
[11] Warren, *Partnership*.
[12] Ibid., 11.
[13] Ibid., 98.
[14] Ibid., 72–75.

and all liabilities, including the limitations that arise within or outside of such a relationship.[15]

> *Indeed, it might be claimed that half the difficulty of partnership, as it is experienced between Christians of different races, lies in the readiness with which we are all prone to deal not with living men and women but with their caricatures. Partnership means involvement between real people in real situations. It means committal of oneself in trust to the genuine integrity of the other person. It calls for a responsible attitude to the other by each. It means the acceptance of a host of liabilities. And all this is completely mutual or it is not partnership.[16]*

Yet, since this true unity and mutuality in partnership is not yet a lived reality, Warren linked this with prayer for each other, through which the other can be truly encountered "in the creative imagination of prayer," rather than in the caricatures that we harbour of the other.[17] And at the end of this description, in which he highlighted some of the caricatures people from the West, from Africa and from Asia are carrying of each other, he again stated that even though the idea of partnership is "overdue," its time "has not yet fully come." As a response to and consequence of partnering with God, true partnership may be initiated, but is surely not yet fully realised, since many still "pay allegiance," to "the false god [...] of *dominating power.*" [18]

The question can be asked how this understanding of partnership related to his theology of empire in his earlier book. In the last chapter of the book on partnership, Warren described the necessity of partnership in a multiracial society as the need for a "joint endeavour, " in which there would be no discrimination on the basis of race or colour, nor any restriction of capacity toward responsible leadership.[19] Though legislation will be needed towards the realisation of this vision, that will not be enough. A change of mind would be

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[15] Ibid., 12, 13.
[16] Ibid., 92, 93.
[17] Ibid., 93, 94.
[18] Ibid., 98.
[19] Ibid., 114.

needed, and this is where Warren saw the responsibility of the church. This is also where the church stands judged. Warren gives three reasons. First, she has neglected Christian discipleship in the field of politics. Second, the church has not only been silent towards the State but been a beneficiary of the State. And thirdly, the church itself is divided, and therefore has no authority in her call to unity across racial boundaries.[20] Yet, Warren hinted that, if the church were able to overcome these problems, if political structures of true partnership were established, the colonial history might be redeemed.

Does Warren indeed evaluate empire as a neutral entity, as suggested by Sugirtharajah, or as an ambivalent reality? Warren recognised the evil in the "dominating power" and described it as sinful. The church too will be judged for her role in this. Yet, he also recognised that, regardless of the evil, some good has come out of it, something Sugirtharajah does not contest, when he pointed to the emancipation of subaltern classes as a result of the welfare work of Christian missions.[21] Yet, where Sugirtharajah maintains that colonisation is evil to its foundation, Warren focussed on the good that might still come out of colonisation by the grace of God, and through the humble and imaginative lives of those who are willing to live in true partnership in mission, and become agents of such good. He used the concept of redemption. I think that it is not clear if Warren used the concept of redemption for colonialism as sin, yet by God's grace used for some good, without denying the evil at its base.

> *[…] where, in other words, we have the greatest opportunity to apply the values in which we believe, and to bring our "colonialism" to a conclusion which would finally justify it, if not in heated contemporary opinion, at least in the cool judgment of history.[22]*

The search for appropriate relationships continued for CMS as a community and organisation that exists and functions in different parts of the world. Officially, de-colonisation has happened. Churches established through missionary involvement in former British colonies have become independent. Yet, the

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[20] Ibid., 121, 122.
[21] Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Reconfigurations*, 148.
[22] Warren, *Partnership*, 104.

relationships between the different partners, churches, and individuals that were part of and connected to CMS also needed to be redefined. Simon Barrington-Ward, CMS General Secretary from 1975 to 1985, coined the term "interchange," a relationship in which both giving and receiving are mutually exercised and experienced. In this way he recognised that in the CMS community all partners around the world had particular gifts to share and to receive. [23] A practical outworking of this vision for interchange was a programme which aimed to "bring notable Christians from one country to another to share their insights into the Gospel with those in another."[24] This was a new approach in which people from other countries did not just visit Britain for the raising of support or interest for the work of CMS; they came to contribute. Still, the visits made for this programme were especially from and to Britain. It was a CMS Britain led programme, inviting and sending the people who were recognised as "notable" by the British leadership.[25]

Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali, the CMS General Secretary from 1989 to 1994, who has dual nationality from Pakistan and the United Kingdom, highlighted, both in his person and in his publications, the change of understanding of the mission movement, from originating in the church in the West to a movement "from everywhere to everywhere." He indicated that even though the mission movement was Western, the reality of the mission effort from early on was that it was carried mainly by local Christians, rather than by the Western missionaries. The change he observed in his time was not only that the true mission effort was local, but that the international mission movement was not necessarily Western directed anymore.

> *Now, however, perhaps for the first time in centuries, Christian Mission is not going along in the same direction as economic, technological, cultural and political influence. Certainly, a great deal of cross-cultural mission is sent from the South to other parts of the South. This in itself is a challenge to the usual North-South*

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[23] Clark, "CMS and Mission in Britain: The Evolution of a Policy," 335.
[24] Ibid., 336.
[25] For example, the evangelistic visit to the UK by the exiled bishop Festo Kivengere, and Reverend John Wilson, also Ugandan, and Matt Nyagwaswa from Tanzania in 1977. *Yes, the CMS Magazine,* April-June 1978, 21.

flow of information, skills and money. There is, however, evidence that Christians in the South are increasingly interested in mission to the North."[26]

For Nazir-Ali, this also shaped the idea of partnership in new ways, in which partner churches from the South and the West are both equally involved in the development of a mission strategy and in the mission practice.

Partnership in mission must mean partnership in the whole of mission.[27]

From everywhere to everywhere, people in mission would be involved in mission across boundaries of cultures and nations, supporting each other, contributing to each other's mission vision and mission practice, both locally and worldwide.

And this is what Diana Witts, Bishop Nazir-Ali's successor, and General Secretary from 1995 to 2000, sought to realise in the consultations she held with partners from around the world (WorldReach), during her first year as a General Secretary, in order to develop a CMS strategy.[28] Shortly afterwards, during a meeting of the Anglican Communion, she realised that even though growing and lively churches were to be found especially in South America, the Caribbean, Africa and Asia, at this meeting of the Anglican Communion worldwide, these churches were not well represented. At this meeting, reports were given of the decline of the churches in North America, Western Europe, and Oceania, rather than reports on the growth of churches on the other continents. She writes:

The anomaly of this situation was striking and it was clear that the rich spiritual gifts of those from the dynamic and growing churches of the world were not being made available for the World Church. The pattern of movement of people in mission had been shaped by the availability of financial rather than spiritual resources.[29]

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[26] Nazir-Ali, *From Everywhere to Everywhere: A World View of Christian Mission*, 209.
[27] Ibid., 211.
[28] Diana Witts, *Springs of Hope* (Weardale: The Memoir Club, 2005), 180.
[29] Ibid., 181.

Economic resources continued to be power brokers and voice amplifiers, and the true exchange of gifts in the communion around the world still did not happen.

As a response to this "anomaly," Tim Dakin, General Secretary from 2000 to 2011, sought to shape CMS as a community by building on the heritage of the Clapham Sect, which he understood to be a transformational community in itself, and on the thoughts of his predecessors such as John V. Taylor. He described CMS as a community in mission service, which impacts all involved – self and other, locally and worldwide, at home and across cultural boundaries.

> We aim to 'be the change' ourselves – to be the sort of community that changes and is changed by mission, a transforming community. [30]

Dakin believed that such a vision for a transforming community needed a new mission spirituality and vision, a new strategy, a new organisational, financial and relational structure, and a new approach to training.[31] One of the important changes that were realised as a consequence of this vision was that CMS Africa and AsiaCMS were established as independent sister organisations of CMS Britain, with their own organisation and decision structures, yet still receiving significant financial support from CMS Britain.

However, when speaking to different partners and members of the CMS community in the year 2015, it became clear that this process, important and necessary it was felt to be, was a painful one. One interviewee from Africa indicated that in this process the agenda was still set by CMS Britain.

> So I think this was one of my first experiences, that you can be part, part of an organisation, a dominant organisation, where the agenda is set by the dominant group and the minority does not necessarily uhhh… get a voice. (Interview 13 – 02:55)

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[30] Dakin, "Sharing Jesus Changing Lives," 4.
[31] Dakin, "Background Notes on Outcomes and Impact of the Ten Year Strategy."

According to the interviewee, CMS Britain was the "dominant partner," and CMS Africa the "minority" partner. This person also indicated that part of the power inequality continues to be related to money.

> *CMS Africa does not have resources of its own, does not have financial resources. Ours is a content discipleship. And people. And so... there is a sense in which we are not, we are technically not equal. [...] I feel a bit of uh... I would call it vulnerability, because the agenda is still set outside. I still have to report. I still have to define. I still have to... you know... (Interview 13 – 39:18)*

And a bit later in the interview:

> *The resources... it is a power issue. Because they don't... when it is not exactly how the Trustees want it, the resources are... are not given automatically. (Interview 13 – 40:05)*

The idea that there is an exchange of gifts within the community does not seem to be recognised by this interviewee. He indicates that although CMS Africa may be rich in resources for mission and discipleship, and rich in people, the fact that they are not rich in financial resources results in an unequal power relationship in which CMS Africa has to report to CMS Britain. He explains that the availability of financial resources is an important factor in the decisions regarding goals and policy. And the availability of these resources depends on the agreement of the people in CMS Britain.

It is telling that in a conversation with a member of AsiaCMS[32] the same issue was brought up. This person also spoke of the unequal power relationship between AsiaCMS and CMS Britain, and the role of money in this inequality. One of the examples he gave is that CMS Britain requested a seat for a British person on the AsiaCMS board. Yet, there is no person from either CMS Africa or AsiaCMS on the board of CMS Britain. He described this as a desire to control on the part of CMS Britain, and he believes that CMS Africa faces the same situation.

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[32] Kuala Lumpur, 12-05-2017.

It is not only at the structural level that partnership, or interchange, across boundaries worldwide is not easy to realise in a true openness to the other and in an equal exchange of gifts and resources. In the encounter with the other, and in the perception of the other, differences can lead to misunderstanding and prejudice; this obstructs the possibility of an open relationship, and even the understanding of what a true relationship looks like. What, for example, is the place of financial support in a relationship? Does financial support create a culture of dependency in those who receive it, as is indicated by several (British) interviewees? One of them expressed it as follows:

> *So, that is how I see community. […] We do belong to a worldwide mission community, a worldwide network of people who are committed to giving and receiving in mission. Or… that is what I want us, or want us and them to see ourselves in. And of course, you know, there are still significant vestures of dependency culture around the place. And we are as much to blame for those attitudes remaining as the people who hold them. (Interview 1 – 40:01)*

Does money create a barrier to the possibility of a true relationship, as indicated by a CMS Pioneer student in the UK? She told the story of a Bishop from a partnering diocese of the Church of South India visiting their parish in the UK. This Bishop thought that, because there was an established partnership, he could ask for money for the different projects in his diocese. The Pioneer student then decided to explain to the Bishop that people in the UK want a relationship first, before they might consider, of their own volition, if they would want to support the projects financially. She said about this conversation:

> *It was a difficult conversation to have, but I thought it was quite important to have it. […] But again, you know, my view of partnership is different from his view of partnership. And I think my view is better than his. (laughing out loudly). So… so you know, how arrogant is that. (Interview 6 – 31:49)*

Even though she is somewhat able to relativize her own view on money and partnership, she also must work with the people around her who might not have the capacity to see things from another perspective. She may realise that from the perspective of the Bishop from South India, the relationship already was

established, built on a long history, and more specifically by the visits of his predecessor, the former Bishop, but that from the British perspective this was not the case. The members of the parish met this Bishop for the first time, and from their perspective, for a true relationship with this particular person more time would be needed.

Another interviewee, from Africa, stressed that relationships within CMS are strong because they are longstanding relationships, built on history. And this historic relationship needs to be maintained, honouring the past, for an exchange of ideas and experiences, for prayer support, and also for financial support.

> *Maintenant, on ne peut pas travailler seul. On doit être ensemble. Parce que CMS est celui qui a commencé avec l'évangélisation ici, chez nous, il ne faut pas que lui il soit loin. Il faut qu'il soit toujours proche. Même s'ils n'occupent pas les postes clés pour diriger, mais leurs expériences, leurs idées. C'est très important d'être ensemble. Même le support financier, les prières, et tout ça. (Interview 16 – 18:57)*

> *Now, we cannot work alone. We need to be together. Since CMS is the one that has started evangelism here, with us, they should not be far away. They always have to be close. Even when they don't have the key posts to direct, but for their experience, their ideas. It is important to be together. Also financially, in prayer, and all that. (Translation BvdTL)*

It may be true that the relationships within CMS have changed, especially since, according to this person, CMS Britain is not the leading partner of the relationship anymore, but the relationship itself remains essential. And for him, financial support is an integral part of the ongoing relationship.

The complexities of meaning and the lived reality of concepts such as partnership and interchange, community and what constitutes a relationship in the CMS community worldwide, will lead to a diversity of expectations, and therefore also to misunderstanding, disappointment, and ambivalent experiences. Is asking for money a sign of ongoing dependency in the relationship, or of an affirmation of an existing relationship that embraces all

areas of life in community? Is ongoing involvement from CMS Britain through their choices in funding certain projects of the sister organisations, and the accountability they ask related to this funding, an outworking of true support and ongoing commitment to a longstanding relationship? Or is it a sign of superiority, the seeking of ongoing control and an abuse of power? Within a post-colonial context, these are sensitive questions related to the relationships and leadership, to resources and power in the community worldwide. They are questions that may not have one single answer but need to be asked again and again.

10.1.2. Ambivalent Experience of Community Life

Another set of questions can be asked around the lived reality of the community worldwide; these relate to the exchange of wisdom and learning in the community across boundaries of difference, locally and worldwide. Secondly, daily living between an organised society and a community that seeks to have an organic character also raises questions. And thirdly, embracing diversity may be evaluated as a virtue, while facing diversity in the daily life of a community and organisation is an uncertain and difficult reality. The following section explores the lived reality of each of these questions, through the interviews and two stories.

10.1.2.1. Learning from Difference

As described in Part II, within the CMS community there is a desire for mutual learning, based on the belief that the diversity within the community is a gift leading to a greater understanding and deeper knowing of God and of our place in God's world. This desire for mutual learning is also related to the conviction that God gives to each person gifts to share, regardless of geography, status, or place in the society. [33] However, this mutual learning is found to be rather difficult, as John V. Taylor already indicated:

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[33] See chapter 9.2.3.

> *The Christian understanding of Man [sic.] has far more in common with the solidarities of Africa than with the individualism of the Western World. But it is one thing for him to know this as a piece of biblical doctrine, and quite another to be compelled to struggle out of the thought patterns of his culture and learn from Africa how to see Man as the bible does.[34]*

Learning requires the changing of thought patterns, and questions can be asked if all are truly able or open to learn from the other, and further, what the added value would be from such learning.

During the interviews, several interviewees indicated that one of the important elements of the CMS community worldwide is that it provides a wider view on the world; that members learn from each other's perspectives on God and the world, especially from the perspectives of others who come from other cultures and contexts. But when they were then asked to give an example of such learning, the interviewees fell silent for a long time.[35] One interviewee in particular reflected on this theme of mutual learning. To the question about his understanding of community he responded:

> *Community is about what it means to be human, for me. […] I think community is being in kind of relationships, as a community. Not just an intimate relationship, but partnership, bigger than that. Uhm… allows me to kind of discover more about… who I am, what I am passionate about. You know, becomes a place where you, a cauldron or, if you like a crucible of personality and ideas, where you kind of learn from each other about yourself and about, you know… (Interview 8-10:04)*

He described community as a place where relationships lead to learning from the other, about self and the other. He later describes how he experiences this practically in the small local community of which he is a member.

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[34] Taylor, *The Primal Vision*, 109.
[35] The length of silence following this particular question was the longest in time compared to reflective silences after other questions. And each time that this particular question was asked, it was followed by this relatively longer silence.

> *I sometimes think, with our own community, my actual community, that I can view the world through a dozen different sets of eyes, instead of just looking at it through my own. Uhm… and understand the world 12 times better than I do on my own. (Interview 8-10-06)*

Other people's perspectives deepen and widen one's own perspective. And he describes this learning as taking place through the whole life experience, where each person's experiences add up to a whole.

> *[…] that learning thing is actually all our experiences. So it is not that their sense of a, an academic, kind of college where one person is the expert and, well actually, we all share experiences and therefore we learn, because we have all… we begin to build up a jigsaw of understanding. (Interview 8-12:13)*

The interviewee experienced such learning and expanded understanding in his own, local community, but also in the CMS community worldwide. But when the question was asked what people in CMS Britain should learn from the other in another culture, a long silence followed.

> *….. pfff…. That is a big question….. hmmmm….. I need to think about that for a minute. I, I, in a sense I wish I knew…. Uh…. There is part of me…. You know there is lots that we have to learn. And part of me is like I don't know, because…. I am not necessarily learning, and therefore I don't know. (laughing uneasily) (Interview 8-41:23)*

In what followed, he spoke about the necessity that young people be taken seriously, in contrast to hierarchical structures where respect for the wisdom of older people is required. From the interview it is difficult to understand where he learned this, perhaps from British (youth) culture, or possibly because of what he encountered in the community worldwide and evaluated negatively. It is only after this that he started to speak of CMS Africa, and the programme 'Samaritan's Strategy' which they developed as a tool for asset-based community development, based on a Christian worldview.

… it is interesting that how they will work and say, you know, part of the world is financially … uhm … poor, in the way that we would understand that, and say, it doesn't matter actually. What treasure have you got and how do you facilitate that treasure. […] and I don't think we are operating the same understanding of wealth and resources. (Interview 8-41:23)

Through his experience of the CMS Africa programme, the interviewee learned to re-evaluate his own understanding of wealth and resources. Following this reflection, he also indicated that people in CMS Britain can learn from the wider world what "struggle" is.

[…] having sort of travelled a little bit, and having visited some places, uhm… one of the things we could learn, you know, is what struggle is really like. Uhm… because we haven't really a clue. […] This is not trying to romanticise that struggle in anyway. Uhm… but actually how, how relationships work in that context. (Interview 8-41:23)

Yet, his description of the learning that he gained from this insight as to what struggle is, is somewhat ambivalent. On the one hand it has taught him a new way of understanding faith, which he experienced as "closer to the essence."

You know, in those places where so much of that is stripped away, the comfort things that we rely on, that we think define our faith – doctrine, the creedal stuff, churchmanship, the participation – […] and one has nothing else left to rely on other than relationships and faith. (Interview 8-47:54)

Yet, on the other hand, it brought uncomfortable questions, unrest, and feelings such as guilt. He described how he visited a specific place in Africa and realised that life was "shit" there, for everyone, but especially for the women. And he was aware that he had the possibility to escape the situation, "to jump on a plane," while the people there could not.

It feels unfair, and it feels… wrong for me to feel that. (Interview 8-1:02:09)

And these uncomfortable feelings and questions reflect back on his own life and his faith.

> *I have all sorts of conflicting feelings about well, how, how does it, how can they have faith in that situation. And then, how can I have faith in my situation, because what does faith mean to me? (Interview 8-1:03:53)*

Yet, in the last paragraph of the interview, the interviewee suddenly linked this experience with the church in Britain. He realised that his experience questions the validity of the search for "solidifying, growing and becoming more stable and secure" in the church.

> *You know, we don't need to move towards that. Solidity, security, stability are false gods, if you look at the global church. (Interview 8-1:05:31)*

This long thread of reflections on learning in community from the interview gives insight into the ambivalent dynamic of learning, experienced by the interviewee as member of the CMS community. First, learning from difference, even though it may be the professed ideal of a community, is not easy. And the greater or more pronounced the difference, the more difficult it becomes. Learning from difference requires an openness to questioning one's own way of reflecting, understanding, or doing – one's own framework of reference. It involves questioning what was always held for true or obvious, what was done without thinking; the personal experience and history become contested. Secondly, learning from difference is not easy, since it is harder to recognise what can be learned, precisely because of the difference. For example, what can be learned in a society where life is "shit"? What can be learned from a society where hierarchy stifles the energy and creativity of the young people? In such a case, learning can take the shape of learning how not to do things, or what not to believe; it is a sort of 'negative' learning. But how does one recognise the more 'positive' learning in such a situation? This interviewee learned about struggle and faith, and the essence of faith. But this was a difficult and vulnerable learning. Thirdly, learning from difference is not easy since it requires a creative process of integration of the newly discovered into one's own life

context and reality. Learning is not copying or wholesale acceptation, but rather a reconciliation and integration of what is new with what already is. And this too is more difficult to the extent that the difference is greater. The interviewee has learned to re-evaluate his understanding of wealth and resources, but at the same time he wonders what that would look like in his context and in the church in the UK, as well as in his personal life and relationships. And fourthly, learning from difference can be deeply unsettling. Through the experience of visiting a society in crisis, the interviewee learned, on the one hand, about faith at its essence, but, on the other hand also the seeming uselessness of faith amid that crisis.

At the beginning of the interview, learning was described as a whole life learning, through experiences and relationships rather than a limited academic or intellectual learning, and the examples used in the interview exemplify this. His learning can be described as an existential learning, getting to the core of his being, happening through crisis, and during crisis. And therefore, his learning has been an experience of vulnerability as well as ambivalence. And the question can be raised if this is one of the reasons why the interviewee needed such a long time to come to a formulation of that learning.

10.1.2.2. Living Between Community and Organisation

Questions are also raised around the lived reality of community for its individual members where this community is also an organised society. Can employment and organisational strategy have a place in community relationships? A community also needs to be organised, but what happens when such an organised community needs to be re-organised? The following two stories highlight some important issues related to the dynamic between organisation and community within CMS.

The first is Ken,[36] a British man, interviewed during a conference for people connected to one of the regions where CMS has longstanding relationships. Ken, who was one of the organisers of the conference, explained that he has had a relationship with CMS for more than 30 years. It started through friends who

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[36] Not his real name. Interview with Ken was on 15 November 2014.

went to live in that region with CMS, evolved in a period of practical work in the project where his friends were working, later into voluntary work for CMS in the UK, and finally into a part-time employment with CMS in the UK. For financial reasons, CMS had to restructure, and he was made redundant. This was a bitter experience. Yet, he still is an active member of the community, one of the reasons being that, at that difficult time, other members of CMS took a personal interest in him: they called him, prayed, and cared for him.

> *The other thing, some of the other people, who are here, actually bothered to phone me up and ask, how are you doing, and just took an interest in me personally. [...] ... but they bothered to take the personal and pastoral interest in me at the time, and just sort of said, well we are very sorry about what has happened. We cannot change it, but you know we do care. (Interview 14-08:04)*

And soon afterwards, they also invited him to do voluntary work within the CMS community. This voluntary role evolved into an important role within CMS that brings people with a special focus for the region together. He says about his role:

> *It is support without any formal mandate in the sense that it is advisory at best. You know, it does not have any... it has no power. [...] It does not make any financial decisions or anything. [...] Uhm... and indeed they get an enormous income from it, because of the collection. (Interview 14-10:22)*

The role may not have any formal power or authority, but it is experienced as significant to the community. Now, years later, he describes his experience of the CMS community using the word "family."

> *So, the word just means something natural to people, it is about people you love, you care about, you are in relationship with... (Interview 14 – 23:03)*

He even indicates that he prefers the world "family" over "community" in order to describe CMS and how he relates to people in CMS.

10.1.2.3. Living in a World where Diversity is Experienced as Threat

Secondly, Yamiko,[37] a theologian from Africa, who after having worked as a pastor in both Switzerland and the US connected to CMS when living in the UK. His time in the US was an especially painful one, because of racist structures which existed also in the church. Of his first encounter with CMS Britain he says:

> I am on record for saying, that when I came here, I met people of my tribe, people who speak my language. (Interview 5 – 04:46)

"Speaking the same language" for him meant sharing the same values and approach to mission:

> …trying to figure out how to do mission at the margins, and how to work, work with people who are, who are away from the centres of power (Interview 5 – 05:54)

More critically, he notes that he experienced CMS Britain as a community, though he has questions about the CMS community worldwide, because the people with the resources tend to lead. Yamiko wonders what community would look like if money would not be the determining factor in leadership and in having a voice that is heard. If we genuinely believe that the Spirit gives gifts to all, it will change the way the community is organised. It would change the authority structure.

> God's Spirit, I think, deals with power in a way that really flattens the hierarchy, so that the needy and the rich, the educated and the uneducated, male or female, Jewish or Greek, they can all belong together. And God's power God's Spirit is accessible to, to each of us. (Interview 5-41:02)

Yamiko asks what a community that respects the work of the Spirit, and in which the powerless and the needy take their rightful place with their gifts to share,

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[37] Not his real name, Interview 18 November 2015.

would look like. And he believes that it would be a community rich in diversity, since "the Spirit of God works with diversity," a diversity that "helps us understand God better." (22:08 – 23:34)

He therefore critically asks what CMS Britain would look like if it would become more diverse in its membership and leadership. He also indicates that his personal experience of racism has been a breaking point in the past. Because of racist discrimination, he left a local church community.

> *And so, having one door closed at one side and having doors opened at another. And that is part of the worldwide mission community story. You have to deal with that sometimes. (Interview 5-29:34)*

Though racial discrimination is something he has to deal with, this experience did not end his commitment to the worldwide mission community. He rather describes it as a painful learning experience that can enlighten his continuing involvement in the wider mission community.

> *So… you learn from it, you… you pick up the pieces and try again. (Interview 5-32:29)*

In this story too, I did not sense bitterness, but rather a looking forward in perseverance, with a focus on the goal of mission.

10.1.3. Questions Raised by the Stories of Ambivalence

Even though these stories are not exhaustive in describing the critical voices and realities that are problematic and contradictory to the values of the CMS community, [38] they highlight some of the elements of the ambivalent experience.

Henry Venn did not see any other option but to adapt the CMS strategy and policy in the face of a growing colonial reality and the attitudes of superiority of British missionaries towards their equals in Sierra Leone. And Bishop Ajayi

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[38] See also chapters 5.2, 6.2, 8.1.6, 9.3.

Crowther became the victim of this situation. Max Warren's evaluation of colonialism may have been ambivalent at best. Is it possible for colonialism to be redeemed? Several General Secretaries of CMS have worked to develop programmes and policies that sought to create more equal relationships within the CMS community worldwide, from "Partnership," "Interchange," the "WorldReach" consultation, to regionalisation and "community." But even so, the lived reality is complex, and attitudes are hard to change, especially across boundaries of culture. Is it possible to create a community where money is only one of the many gifts to be shared, and where structures are created and decisions are made that give equal dignity and recognition to all? Is this possible in a world where competition for scarce resources shapes the dominant discourse? What does it take to create a community of equals in a world of inequality?

This ambivalent experience is not only related to questions around leadership, policy, and strategy, it also finds its place in the personal experience of the members of the CMS community, as they encounter difference and participate in a community that is also an organisation.

Describing mission as a learning experience is one thing, but how can one learn from the other, especially when the other is so different, and so far away? Does learning from the other truly widen one's perspective and deepen one's understanding? What happens, when the other is so different that it becomes hard to see what one can positively learn from that person? And what happens if people in a local community have learned from the other outside of that community, and therefore are changed in such a way that it has consequences for the whole local community? What happens then to the community as a home, the place where one should feel safe and at ease, where half a word is sufficient for understanding? What is the added value of such transformative learning?

For Ken community exists in relationships as people care for each other and is facilitated by face-to-face contact. Yet, the CMS community is also the organisation in the UK that made him redundant, raising the question how community and organisation relate. Secondly, a question Ken did not voice but that is also raised by this story: who has access to the community worldwide, when community exists in relationships and face-to-face meetings which are

possible and accessible locally but are a much more difficult reality on a global level? The people who have the resources to travel? And therefore, who shapes the community worldwide? These questions resonate with the story of Yamiko. For him too, the CMS community exists in its relationships, in sharing "the same language." He felt a sense of recognition, commonality, belonging, while at the same time he is critical, because of a perceived lack of diversity within the community, and an ongoing inequality in relationships. He felt at home, because of the emphasis in CMS on the voices from the margins, while at the same time the dominant culture and money continue to be power brokers. Does this mean that Yamiko is welcomed but will remain a marginal person?

Yet somehow, these ambivalent experiences do not generally seem to negate the reality of the community, nor the commitment to that community, in its leadership in the UK, its leadership in Asia and Africa, and in the personal lives of these different members. Ken did indicate that several of his former colleagues who also were made redundant, did walk away from CMS with rather bitter feelings. He describes the difference between them and himself as "being able to reach for God's redemption in understanding the situation."[39]

10.2. Definition of Ambivalence

To get a better understanding of this complex reality and the place and role of ambivalence in it, in the context of CMS as community-organisation, and in a postcolonial context, it is helpful to turn to organisation science and psychology. Eda Ulus, writing about workplace emotions in postcolonial spaces in the context of racial tensions and white privilege, describes ambivalence as:

> *…the experience of both positive and negative emotions (such as admiration and resentment) about the same person/object/other,*

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[39] Written communication for the purpose of checking my description of the research data with some (knowledgeable and a certain representative place in the organisation) people within CMS. 21/11/2019.

and the emotional experience of ambivalence may occur unconsciously.[40]

Ulus locates ambivalence in the emotions, which can be both conscious and unconscious. Ashforth et al. use the description of "opposing forces," emphasising the power of the experience of ambivalence. According to them, ambivalence is both an emotional and a cognitive construct, of which "behavioural tendencies" and behaviour itself can be seen as "probabilistic *outcomes*" of ambivalence.[41]

In our stories we see, for example, that through history questions have been raised about the relationships within the community worldwide related to colonialism, and about relationships in which inequality of some sort plays an important role. Strategies have been developed to shape the CMS mission and community in such a way that, it was hoped, they would reflect the way that people in CMS understood Christian values, and the calling of God. But, these strategies and the lived reality of the community are found to have another side as well – one of exposing inequality, marginalisation, or even exclusion. On the level of interpersonal relationships within the community, members express a desire to value diversity and mutual learning in the community worldwide, but they discover that such learning is difficult and that difference is not only a gift but also an obstacle. And in the context of the CMS community as an organisation with an organisational structure, both Ken and Yamiko, for very different reasons, have experienced community as a deeply positive, but also as a deeply painful reality, an experience of both belonging and of exclusion/marginalisation. All these ambivalent experiences touch not only on the cognitive and the emotional, but also on the ideational. The vision, beliefs,

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[40] Eda Ulus, "Workplace Emotions in Postcolonial Spaces: Enduring Legacies, Ambivalence, and Subversion," *Organization* 22, no. 6 (2015): 892.

[41] Blake E. Ashforth et al., "Ambivalence in Organizations: A Multilevel Approach," *Organization Science* 25, no. 5 (2014): 1454. Ashforth et al. also indicate that ambivalence is different from ambiguity, in that ambiguity consists of uncertainty, a lack of clarity, whereas ambivalence consists of clear opposing thoughts or emotions. Neither can ambivalence be seen as hypocrisy, since this can be understood to be an inconsistency between word an action. It is located in behaviour and behavioural tendencies, which are the outcomes of ambivalence.

and values play an important role. Based on the definition of Ulus, and within the context of this research, therefore, ambivalence can be described as the experience of both positive and negative emotions about the same person/object/other, related to a duality (or plurality) of understanding of, and meaning given to this person/object/other. The emotional experience of ambivalence may occur unconsciously and is related to the lived reality.

The important question then is how people live with this ambivalent reality. Is it a dysfunctional experience, or can it be a functional one? Ashforth et al. describe four possible reactions, defence, or coping mechanisms to the experience of ambivalence. First, "avoidance," in which people deny, or seek to give as little attention as possible to each of the opposing experiences. Second, "domination" in which the person chooses one experience over the other. This does not mean that the conflicting emotions no longer exist. A consequence of this reaction is that information related to the other experience may be processed through the lens of the prioritised experience. Third, a "compromise" may be sought through searching for the middle ground. Yet, this can be experienced as inconsistency or indecisiveness. And finally, "holism" that actively recognises and honours both experiences to shape positively the reaction and the whole experienced reality.

> [Holism] involves the complete, simultaneous and typically conscious acceptance of both opposing orientations. […] represents less of a win-lose trade-off between the orientations and more of a win-win embracing of both orientations. Accordingly, holism tends to be proactive and generally more proactive than compromise.[42]

Ashforth et al. speak in this context of "wisdom." I contend that in the CMS community experience, as discovered in my research, each of these four reactions can be observed. For example, even though the CMS community treasures its history and the people who have shaped this history, the first African bishop Ajayi Crowther has for many years been written out of the historic narrative. In 2007, John Martin wrote in the CMS journal *Yes* about the

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[42] Ibid., 1465.

"cover up" of the fact that CMS missionaries, out of racist motives, dismissed Bishop Ajayi Crowther. His life may have been celebrated but acknowledging this part of his history was painful and shameful. Only after close to 100 years later CMS acknowledged this.

> Today CMS willingly accepts its part in the Crowther debacle and acknowledgment of this opens up the chance of healing hurt still keenly felt, over a century later, in West Africa. [43]

And reading through Warren's books on empire and on partnership, the question can be raised whether he allows his experience of the good that has come out of empire to "dominate" over his acknowledgment of the evil perpetrated by that same reality, because of his belief in God's providence – in the God who redeems the sinful lived reality of human beings. And it may be possible to observe compromise as a reaction to the ambivalent experience around the development of CMS Africa and Asia CMS. From the perspective of CMS Britain, letting go of authority and power was a deep-seated conviction, yet a painful lived reality, especially related to the distribution of financial resources. The request made by CMS Britain for a British member on the boards of CMS Africa and Asia CMS can be explained as a compromise, resulting in a letting go of control, but not completely.

As these examples already indicate, for our understanding of the experience of ambivalence in the CMS community it is important to locate this understanding in the postcolonial context, which continues to affect relationships, through "privilege" and through changing authority structures and power relations.[44]

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[43] John Martin, "Crowther's World: The Cover Up," *Yes* (August 2007).
[44] Ulus, "Workplace Emotions in Postcolonial Spaces: Enduring Legacies, Ambivalence, and Subversion," 894.

10.3. Ambivalent Experience in the Context of a Post- and Neo-Colonial Reality

From the perspective of the colonised, colonialism was never experienced as a neutral reality, nor are ongoing neo-colonial tendencies and realities. Reactions to this reality, which is ambivalent at best, need to be understood in a context of unequal power. For this reason, "subversion" and "resistance" may need to be added as possible reactions to the ambivalent experience. It might be tempting to classify these reactions under "dominance," the word choice for one of the orientations in facing ambivalence as described by Ashforth et al., while negating or diminishing the other. Yet, this is only part of what subversion and resistance do.

Using Homi Bhabha's analysis of the stereotype, and the violent (post)colonial activity of stereotyping, Kris Sealey describes ambivalence in the context of power and (post)colonial relationships as a "complex discursive relation which places them both simultaneously as not just adversaries but also supports."[45] Where Bhabha develops the idea of "mimicry" as a subversive parody of the other, Sealy uses the idea of "bad faith." She believes that mimicry results in a loss of belonging and a possible loss of self. She describes bad faith as a conscious and context-specific choice, a recognition of the "will to belong, and as a free (and creative) pursuit of that desire"[46] to participate in a subversive way and so "making home out of no-home."[47] Such a "bad faith" reaction in a context of unequal power relations might carry elements of "dominance," "compromise," or "holism," but, at the same time, is a specific reaction in itself, with the aim of subversion and transformation.

Within the framework of the CMS experience, I would like to describe this as a process in which the person, living a reality that is experienced as ambivalent, consciously chooses to participate in that reality and the relationships shaped by that reality in a subversive way. This participation happens in the discovery

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[45] Kris Sealey, "Resisting the Logic of Ambivalence: Bad Faith as Subversive, Anticolonial Practice," *Hypatia* 33, no. 2 (2018): 165.
[46] Ibid., 171.
[47] Ibid., 175.

and naming of the stereotyping of self and the other, and then moving beyond such stereotyping. The resulting re-discovery of both self and the other[48] is the foundation for the possibility of creatively transformed relationships and lived reality, without an avoidance or negation of what is experienced as oppressive, unjust, or disempowering. Rather, the complexity of the good and the bad are embraced and used creatively. [49] This is where Sealy's "bad faith" meets Ashforth's "wisdom."

Such subversive participation can be recognised in Henry Venn's commitment to and embracing of mission, including the lived reality of mission by people with racist and growing colonial attitudes, to bring about the goal of the "euthanasia of mission." This resulted in Venn's decision to appoint Crowther as a Missionary Bishop. Where the British missionaries had asked for a British Missionary Bishop, from racist motives, and in order to avoid African leadership over British citizens, Venn realised that it was impossible to change the racist attitudes in the wider culture of growing colonialism. He decided creatively to give priority to the mission of the church by appointing Crowther, the first African bishop, as Missionary Bishop, giving him the authority over the Niger missions and the leadership of all the native churches growing out of that mission. The British church members kept their own British leaders and authority structure. [50] Williams writes, quoting Venn himself, that the fundamental question for Venn was not how to sustain and extend the episcopate, but "how to find the best system 'to prepare the Native Converts, in their transition from heathenism to

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[48] Marotta, focussing on identity formation and boundaries, argues that in the recognition of difference, in the safety of recognised boundaries, also commonality can be discovered. Yet in truly meeting the other across the boundaries, understanding of self and other develops and boundaries will be redrawn. Vince P. Marotta, "The Hybrid Self and the Ambivalence of Boundaries," *Social Identities, Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture* 14, no. 3 (May 2008): 298.

[49] Eda Ulus uses the story of Rakesh, a CEO in Chenai, India, who recognises the ascribed power and preferential treatment given by his clients to one of his employees, who originates from the USA and is 'white.' Rakesh decides to use this power for the benefit of the organisation. Ulus, "Workplace Emotions in Postcolonial Spaces: Enduring Legacies, Ambivalence, and Subversion," 896.

[50] See chapter 3.3.

Christianity, for the euthanasia of the Mission in the establishment of a Native Church under Native Pastors and a Native Episcopate.'"[51]

A form of subversive participation also has its place in the current CMS experience. Ken, after having been made redundant, experienced the community relationships, vision, and purpose as so important to his life that, following the ongoing friendship and encouragement of other members, he decided to "not allow"[52] the organisation to exclude him. After some time, he was able to embrace the redundancy experience as the discovery of his "family" in times of pain, and therefore he continued as a community member working as a volunteer and so continuing to contribute toward the goal, and consequently influence the community. Yamiko enjoyed the "home-coming" in the CMS community, the recognition of the "common language." Yet, fairly soon, he also realised that CMS Britain itself lacked diversity, and he has been an important and critical voice seeking a more inclusive and diverse leadership and membership of the community. Both Ken and Yamiko have creatively redrawn the boundaries of the community, and in some ways transformed the community and its self-understanding. Even though this attitude did not resolve the painful experience of ambivalence, it made them agents of transformation in the community they valued.

Recognising this subversive and transformative power does not necessarily mean that the transformation was always successful or understood by the community. Bishop Crowther was later dismissed by the British church leadership. Yamiko felt, after some time, that he had to move on. Still, at the time of their participation, and by their insight and choices, they changed from victim into agent, and their participation did bring change, albeit for some time, and recognised only later. How they were able to choose this approach to their experience of ambivalence, rather than to leave the community, or to lose themselves by staying in the community while denying or ignoring their ambivalent experience, is the next question. To find an answer to this question, the following sections will look at the feminist experience of ambivalence.

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[51] Williams, "'Not Transplanting': Henry Venn's Strategic Vision," 155.
[52] These are my words, and is my interpretation of Ken's ongoing involvement in the CMS community.

10.4. Ambivalent Experience Lived as Religious Virtue – A Feminist Experience

The experience of ambivalence is recognised in feminist theology which describes women's experience as "different," "other," as being an "outsider," while at the same time being an "insider." An important element of this approach is the emphasis on relationality, on the communal. Mary Farrell Bednarowski describes ambivalence as related to religious commitment and "women's persistent efforts to offer both devotion and challenge to their communities."[53] She describes the choice to live and embrace such ambivalence as a new religious virtue, in which the contradictory experience is not downplayed but becomes a creative and vitalising power. [54]

> It is an ambivalence that demands weariness that does not lapse into cynicism, loyalty that does not succumb to docility or resignation, creativity that flourishes on the margins without losing sight of the center. It is an ambivalence that expands the circumference of the center and points out that it is a dynamic rather than a static configuration.[55]

One example described by Bednarowski is the experience of the Jewish theologian Judith Plaskow, who describes Judaism as the central part of her identity, even though she acknowledges that this community ignores and silences the experience of half of its members – the female experience – in its teaching and religious thought. Judaism remains a central part of life for Plaskow, since it allows her to be part of a community with a history, convictions, culture and a meaning of life.[56] Yet, the silencing and exclusion of the female experience means that for women there is no Jewish way of religious thinking, and of living and participating in the community, since it is precisely this community that continues to marginalise these women. The only available

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[53] Mary F. Bednarowski, *The Religious Imagination of American Women* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), 7.
[54] Ibid., 17, 20.
[55] Ibid., 20.
[56] Ibid., 19.

participation is through adhering to the male perspective and experience. Therefore, she advocates for an equal place and a participation of women in the Jewish community, *as Jewish women*, in such a way that the community will be changed by this participation. In that way the female voice will be included in the religious thought, the values, and the shaping of the community relationships, and the Jewish identity becomes both male and female.[57] Rather than negating or ignoring the patriarchal culture and its discrimination, she chooses to participate in that community in such a way that she does not have to give up her Jewish identity; instead the Jewish identity itself will be shaped so that it will include her, that – using Bednarowski's definition – the circumference of the centre will be expanded. By taking the place she desires and needs in order to be true to herself, her beliefs and vision, as well as her character and purpose in life, the community will have to accept her participation, whether or not they want it.

Such creative living with ambivalence as a religious virtue, according to Bednarowski, is a demanding way of living.

> *It requires extensive knowledge of a tradition, a desire to take it seriously, and a willingness to endure conflict with the hope that it will ultimately be more productive than destructive for religious communities.*[58]

Living with ambivalence happens where relationships go beyond stereotyping, where conflict is embraced, and where there is a willingness to truly engage with and listen to each other in the hope that the lived reality will make space for transformative inclusion and a true participation for all. Yet, such participation may include critique that is experienced as negative by other members of that community and break down what is treasured. Boundaries will be redrawn. However, such critique should be understood in relational terms, as based on a respect for, a desire to belong to, and a commitment to participate in the community and its tradition.

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[57] Ibid., 129.
[58] Ibid., 14.

The redrawing of boundaries leading to a more equal and inclusive community is, according to Letty Russell, only possible where the voice of the non-privileged person is given priority and made to be the hermeneutical lens. If not, the privileged person will not be able to truly perceive the full and complex reality. In order to discover true partnership and interdependence across boundaries of difference, a difficult process of conversion is needed, in which privilege (related to class, race, geography, etc.) and responsibility for actions of domination has to be recognised and given up. [59] And secondly, Russell emphasises the importance of face-to-face contact. Diversity and difference cannot be worked out in purely theoretical and generic ways or at a distance. Diversity needs to have a face and a place to be recognised, known, understood, and respected. Community relationships must be lived in many groups and many places to account for diversity, and for a true conversion from the trappings of privilege and dominating power.[60]

Conversion starts with what Maaike de Haardt describes as a complex knowing, which unveils the complex lived reality of daily life, with all the tensions and contradictions and exclusions in self, other and the lived reality, as much as it discovers the presence of God in the other and in this lived reality. [61] She describes the example of the life of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1648-1695), a Mexican nun, poet, scholar and trained philosopher. Since her (male) superiors could not deal with her creativity, wisdom, and intelligence, they forbid her to read books and made her work instead in the kitchen of the convent. Rather than balking at the injustice and loss, Sor Juana developed in her new place fresh philosophical insights and experiential knowledge, "studying all the things that God created."

> *A woman, who was considered a threat or a nuisance by influential men in her surroundings, valued the insights and knowledge gained*

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[59] Letty M. Russell, "Partnership in Models of Renewed Community," *The Ecumenical Review* 40, no. 1 (January 1988): 20, 21.
[60] Ibid., 20.
[61] Maaike de Haardt, "Transformation and the Virtue of Ambivalence," *Journal of the European Society of Women in Theological Research* 25 (2017): 20, 24.

> *from such everyday activities as cooking and gardening, the gaining of knowledge in so-called 'women's places.'[62]*

Sor Juana must have lived with the painful ambivalent experience of being marginalised while remaining committed to the life of the community, and in the process she developed new and transformative understanding and knowledge which is still influential today.

Knowledge that is developed in the ordinary places of those who are the non-privileged is a challenge to the status-quo and to the structures of power. The non-privileged do not just repeat the knowledge and wisdom of those in power, but they question, enlarge, and expand it, and so transform the knowledge, wisdom, and tradition with their own voices, experiences and insights.[63] The discovery of God in the kitchen exposes the untenable dichotomy between that which is of God and that which is of the world. God is present and found not only in Scriptures and theology, but also in the world, while remaining fully distinct from the world.[64] Knowledge of God is to be found in the particular and in the relational – in the everyday life and everyday people, and maybe particularly in the crucible of the ambivalent experience.

Following De Haardt, I contend that enlarged and expanded knowledge is a knowledge of complexity. It discovers God in the world, the other, and the life of the community, while it also discovers the experience of difference and boundaries, and the experience of the absence of God in the community when facing injustice and marginalisation. Such complex knowing needs the courage to face and embrace the complex reality with all the ambivalent experiences it contains, and this in the light of both the presence and otherness of God. Complex knowing leads to new and complex discoveries, and to conversion and subversive participation, in the hope that boundaries will be redrawn and exclusion broken down. It leads towards transformation. But this also occurs with the hope that, as Bednarowski writes, even when it leads to conflict, "it will ultimately be more productive than destructive" for the community.

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[62] Ibid., 18.
[63] Ibid., 21.
[64] Ibid., 24.

10.5. Ambivalent Experience Lived as Christian Virtue in CMS Theology

The relational belonging and the true and complex knowing, along with the will to name and repent, are necessary building blocks for the ambivalent experience to be lived as a religious virtue, as a source for creative and transformative action. Within CMS, this is recognised by Cathy Ross. Her book *Women with a Mission* is introduced with a chapter titled "Refocusing the Camera," and is an example of the quest for complex knowing and the expansion of the CMS knowledge regarding its history by including the lives of the so-called "invisible women," the wives of early CMS missionaries to New Zealand. Even though these women were not recorded in the *CMS Register,* since at the time they were not recognised as missionaries, the letters of these women show that they surely had a ministry in their own right, in the creation of Christian homes and in being models of "pious domesticity," as well as in teaching, travelling, writing, charity, and social work.[65] One of the women studied in this book is Elizabeth Colenso (née Fairburn), who was born a missionary daughter, and who already taught her own curriculum at the age of 19, though without any recognition for this work from the CMS organisation.[66] She married a missionary and served as a missionary wife. When this marriage broke down, she continued her own ministry in teaching, translation, and mission work.[67] Ross writes about her:

> *Like so many missionary wives before her, Elizabeth may have regarded her marriage as a means of fulfilling a missionary vocation – a common route for women in the nineteenth century. Elizabeth was well qualified in her own right, having already managed and taught in Maori schools and being fluent in the Maori language. As her only 'career route' was through marriage,*

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[65] Cathy Ross, *Women with a Mission: Rediscovering Missionary Wives in Early New Zealand* (London: Penguin Books, 2006), 24.
[66] Ibid., 102.
[67] Ibid., 97.

the romantic side of marriage and the question of their compatibility as partners may have played a minor role.[68]

Elizabeth saw herself as being called by God into mission. Marriage as a path to a mission career can be understood as being willing to live with ambivalence as she faced the complex reality and acted in creative and subversive ways. Even though the divorce of her husband shattered the ideal of mission through the creation of a model household, Ross indicates that it is possible that much later CMS did recognise Elizabeth as a missionary, regardless of her status as a formerly married woman. There are no records of this within CMS, yet the story is told that Elizabeth was appointed by CMS to teach in the Rev. B Y Ashwell's school in Taupiri.[69] Possibly, Elizabeth's life and ministry may have been one of the contributing factors towards a change in attitude regarding women's involvement in mission, comparable to Judith Plaskow's role within the Jewish community, as described by Bednarowski. And this may have been the lived reality of many missionary wives in their domestic roles; since it was not only deeply conservative and limiting to women but also gave them a certain religious power.

> *At one level, this ideology of domesticity was deeply conservative, and yet at another, it held within it the seed of subversion of the prevailing worldview.[70]*

Writing on pioneering missiologies in our contemporary world, Ross also describes the ambivalent experience of people who realise that the theology with which they grew up, or which they encountered later in life, does not reflect nor engage their lived reality. She speaks in this context of a "theological homelessness" and the necessity of dissent in order to "help create change by reclaiming the heart of the tradition." Here she uses a dictum regularly used in CMS of "the gift of not fitting in." [71] These are notions that can be related and compared to Sealy's idea of "bad faith', and Bednarowski's definition of living

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[68] Ibid., 104.
[69] Ibid., 122.
[70] Ibid., 17.
[71] Ross, "Pioneering Missiologies: Seeing Afresh," 31, 32.

with ambivalence as a religious virtue of creative subversion leading to transformation.[72]

Ross describes three "pioneering missiologies," that grow out of this theological homelessness. The first is a "missiology of sight." This missiology is apt at reading culture and context and seeing and recognising people. According to Ross, the parable of Matthew 25 turns on the fact that the righteous *see*. They see the hungry and feed them. They see the stranger and invite them. They see the needy and clothe them.[73] The second is a "missiology of emptiness and hiddenness," rather than a missiology of growth. She writes about the students in her course:

> *Much of the pioneering mission of our students is small, fragile and sometimes unseen or even hidden. It involves listening, learning, being alongside, building relationships and being present.[74]*

Ross advocates for a language that expresses "mission engagement in terms of weakness, vulnerability, relationships, service, compassion, meekness, caring."[75] And the third missiology is a "missiology of hospitality or a missiology of the kitchen table." This is one that incorporates the fundamental characteristics of mission which are "reciprocity, mutuality, surprise, welcome, eating together and receiving from the other." Ross indicates that hospitality carries the experience of ambivalence in its etymology. The Latin word for host, *hospes,* is related to *hostis,* the Latin word for enemy. And the Greek word, *philoxenia,* as it is used in the New Testament for hospitality, is not just speaking about love for strangers, but about "a delight in the whole guest-host relationship and in the surprises that may occur."[76] She describes these three missiologies as a theology of homelessness and reciprocity. It is a theology in which relationships are central, where the other is seen, where self and personal views and status are put second, or even last, and where the other is received,

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[72] Bednarowski, *The Religious Imagination of American Women*, 20.
[73] Ross, "Pioneering Missiologies: Seeing Afresh," 22.
[74] Ibid., 24.
[75] Ibid., 25.
[76] Ibid., 27.

fully welcomed, and served, and in which *all* parties involved may ask: "What's in it for me?" [77]

This does not necessarily lead to a harmonious reality, because reciprocity is not an easily lived reality within the CMS community. The story of ambivalence, as described earlier in this chapter as the challenge of learning from difference, clearly shows this. The vision is acknowledged as good, but the lived reality is experienced as ambivalent, both at the level of individual people and of the community. The shared question "What's in it for me?" could well bring a response that is either painful, unrecognisably different, or unacceptable. Also, the CMS community functions in a globalised world with powerful economic structures fostering inequality and domination. And within the community, ideas of Western superiority can still be perpetuated through the language used to describe mission partners as helping the poor, teaching the marginalised, and these both at a perceived great personal cost. Language of sacrifice may even be used.[78] Mutual learning across such strong boundaries remains difficult.

Secondly, the newly discovered complex and true knowing will lead to a call for change that is a creative and transformative action leading to a new reality. And change is not easy for many, especially within structures. Jonny Baker, another missiologist in the CMS community today, reflecting on resistance to change, refers to the experience of the prophets in the Old Testament. Following God's word, their understanding of the lived reality leads to a sense of loss and grieving, and to a speaking out of the uncomfortable truth. The same was true for Jesus; this led to his death, because the establishment was not open to change.

> *It turns out the empires and systems have plenty of people who have vested interests in the way things are, in the status quo and they do quite nicely out of a world of business as usual.*[79]

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[77] Ibid., 31, 34.

[78] Berdine van den Toren-Lekkerkerker and Benno van den Toren, "From Missionary Incarnate to Incarnational Guest: A Critical Reflection on Incarnation as a Model for Missionary Presence," *Transformation* 32, no. 2 (April 1, 2015): 87.

[79] Jonny Baker, "Future Present," in *Future Present: Embodying a Better World Now*, ed. Jonny Baker and Cathy Ross (Proost Publication, 2018), 8.

The question then remains, how does this ambivalent experience become a source of creative action and lead to transformation? Baker indicates that it starts with God's generous self-giving as God challenges and heals the world. It is a movement in which people are called to receive and participate.[80] And God declares this to be God's Kingdom, which in Jesus has become the "future present."[81] Yet, this Kingdom is present in a world and in a church that is resistant to change. Barrington-Ward connects this with the need for conversion, in which people and the community are "broken and remade," and where living by grace and forgiveness is a "failing towards God's goal for us of a just, loving and sustainable society."[82] Michael Moynagh connects transformation and the eschatology of the Kingdom of God, using the term "innovation."

> *Innovation is what happens when God's future comes head to head with the present. The promised Kingdom transforms the world through innovation. […] Innovation is the Spirit's vehicle for pulling the present toward God's future.[83]*

Moynagh describes innovation in six processes: dissatisfaction, exploration, sense making, amplification, edge of chaos, and transformation. Holy or prophetic discontent with the status quo leads to the exploration of what could or should be different. Going back to the treasured tradition, connecting to its stories and the lived reality in the context, the different and new possibilities are explored and incorporated, leading to the beginnings of innovation. This innovation needs amplification, a taking root, growing, and spreading. It is a process that happens through networks and relationships. Yet, this process of amplification needs to happen on the edge of chaos. If not, it will be realised too much in one direction, it will become fixed too early, stifling further

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[80] Jonny Baker, "The Pioneer Gift," in *The Pioneer Gift: Explorations in Mission*, ed. Jonny Baker and Cathy Ross (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2014), 17.
[81] Baker, "Future Present," 8.
[82] Barrington-Ward, "My Pilgrimage in Mission," 64.
[83] Michael Moynagh, "Innovating the Future," in *Future Present: Embodying a Better World Now*, ed. Jonny Baker and Cathy Ross (London: Proost Publication, 2018), 13.

development and innovation. The edge of chaos is the place of "fluidity and change." And innovators need to find a balance between order and change.

> *Edge of Chaos is about sitting on the boundary between being faithful to the emerging tradition of your innovation, and being open to more change.*[84]

The edge of chaos is not necessarily a comfortable place, since it means that one is not fully in control; it brings uncertainty, "leaving the future open and being prepared for change to come from an unexpected direction."[85] But it will lead to transformation, a transformation shaped by the Kingdom of God, a Kingdom that is always on the edge of chaos.[86]

If Ross speaks of a "theology of homelessness," and Baker and Moynagh of the necessity of conversion, change, and the "edge of chaos," what will be left of the community as a home, in which the relationships and tradition create a space of acceptance, rest and safety? Is this approach not coming close to the strategy of "domination"[87] where the ambivalent experience of diversity, change and human failure, and the priority for the marginalised and the desire for change take precedence over the peace and wellbeing of the members of the community and the established tradition?

While the CMS community will always have to live with the tension between "home" and "for the world," it also seeks to live in the world as a community of relationships with a living tradition, a tradition that is always lived, as it responds to and is shaped by the specific relationships, context and situation in which it finds itself. The community is a home with a vision and tradition that is not static. And since people choose to belong to this community because of its vision and purpose, the change that comes as a consequence of lived relationships and contextual living is seen as an integral part of the community. The community as a home, while having a "theology of homelessness," creates a place of

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[84] Ibid., 18.
[85] Ibid., 19.
[86] Ibid., 20.
[87] Ashforth et al., "Ambivalence in Organizations: A Multilevel Approach," 1465. See also chapter 10.3.

welcome and acceptance to all, based on and living towards a world that is shaped according to Kingdom values, or as Moynagh phrases it: "pulling the present towards God's future."[88] Uncomfortable as this may be at times, this is also what the people in CMS see as the 'raison d'être' of the CMS community, and what I would call living the ambivalent experience as a Christian virtue.

Bennett et al. speak about the concept of "revisioning."

> *There are two fundamental tools for finding a critical space in relation to that handed from on past: one is the act of criticism itself, the unmasking of ideology, that is to say a questioning of the present and what lies beneath and behind it; the second is the exploration of alternative imaginative spaces, visions and possibilities lying beyond and in contrast to present reality, a horizon of hope.[89]*

The lived reality is looked at with a hermeneutic of suspicion, questioning and unmasking to come to new imaginative realities. According to Ross, it is looked at through the framework of a "theology of sight." It seeks to discover the complexity of the lived reality, of "vulnerability" through listening, learning, and building true relationships, and through "hospitality" as the welcome to all including the different. In doing this people reclaim the heart of the CMS tradition.

Joseph Small's book *Flawed Church, Faithful God* is helpful in this context in clarifying this complex knowing which leads to subversion and transformation, to a "revisioning" from the perspective of the Kingdom of God. He speaks of a flawed church living in hope in a faithful God, whose reality is coming in.[90] This is a hope that is not a simple optimism, but one in which the future is "seen." The Kingdom of God, as it is explained, already made real by Jesus, and spoken of in the Scriptures, paints for us a picture of God's reality, now and into the future. At the same time, it makes us see the current reality of our world and

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[88] Moynagh, "Innovating the Future," 13.
[89] Bennett et al., *Invitation to Research in Practical Theology*, 121.
[90] Joseph D. Small, *Flawed Church, Faithful God: A Reformed Ecclesiology for the Real World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2018), 210.

our community in its brokenness, still far removed from God's Kingdom. Yet, the memory of God's faithfulness in the past, and the hope in God's ever continuing faithfulness into the future, calls the church to "hope backwards into memory and remember forward into hope."[91]

> Hope in God and God's way in the world exposes present reality as the weary way of the world. [...] Hope in the righteous, loving, faithful God not only opens our eyes to reality as it is but prompts the church to determinate action in and for the world.[92]

Like Baker, Small believes that in transformation, in the realisation of the "future present," God is the actor who calls human beings to participate in that action, and who makes subversive and transformative human action possible. The complex knowing of living with ambivalence is finding God in the daily lived reality, [93] discovering in that light also the brokenness, wrongness, and stubbornness of that reality. This knowing calls to subversive and transformative action, which is possible since it is a knowing in hope, in the context of hoping backwards and remembering forwards, in the context of God's reality, which is the "future present."

10.6. Conclusion

Having explored the meaning of ambivalence in the context of community as the emotional, cognitive, and ideational experience of contradiction, the importance of a complex and true knowing is emphasised. In this knowing, both the painful, unjust, and problematic, and the good, just and hopeful are named and recognised, inviting to repentance and conversion and to hope and action. Such true and complex knowing is only possible in the context of true relationships, and in the particularity of context and locality. It leads to creative and transformative action, based on the hope of the Kingdom that is "future

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[91] Ibid., 213.
[92] Ibid., 215.
[93] This complex knowing also includes the mysteriousness of God, and the experience of absence of God, as highlighted by Chapman. Chapman, "The Social Doctrine of the Trinity."

present" in Christ. Since this is founded on a hope beyond human imagination, it is out of human control and may be experienced as painful chaos, upsetting loved and powerful structures. This is especially true since in this hope the poor, weak and marginalised will have the priority and be the key to full and true understanding of the lived reality in our context.

Drawing together Bednarowski's definition of living with ambivalence as a virtue, with Russell's emphasis on hospitality and the hermeneutical lens of the under-privileged, adding De Haardt's complex knowing, and Ross' pioneering missiologies of seeing, emptiness, hiddenness, and hospitality, one can see that living the ambivalent experience can be seen as a *Christian* virtue, and that it is of great importance for the Christian community. In this way, it holds and honours both the experience of the good and the not-good. This is because, first, God embodies ambivalence; it is at the centre of the reality of God and the mission of God. God chose to bring life through death, Jesus taught that life can only be found in the emptying of self, and strength is discovered in brokenness and weakness. This is the God for whom the first will be last and the last will be first, the God whose Kingdom is already and not yet. Secondly, diversity is part of God's being and of creation, and God also expects people to embrace diversity through deep listening to the other, seeking understanding with a willingness to find wisdom in what seems very different, discovering God's presence in unexpected places and in everyday life. Thirdly, God's priority is with the broken, the poor, the marginalised, the non-privileged, and wisdom is to be found from the bottom up and at the margins. And fourthly, living with this God is living the ambivalent experience that leads to complex, enlarged, and expanded knowing. It leads to creatively subversive action that brings transformation, in the hope that it is more productive than destructive.

Living the ambivalent experience as a Christian virtue needs the relationships of community, since expanded and enlarged knowing only happens in the true encounter with the other. And the exposure to and engagement in conflict, subversive action, repentance, and conversion can only truly find their place and contribute creativity to transformation in the safety of a community that is a home, and also in a community with a history and heritage, an identity and vision, and a desire to welcome, grow, learn and be transformed according to the values of the Kingdom of God.

Yet, any Christian community that is unable or unwilling to live on the edge of chaos with the painful reality of ambivalence, or with the uncontrollable reality of hope, will not be able to face its past in truth and repentance, nor find the necessary inspiration and strength within its lived reality for its participation in God's future. Living the ambivalent experience as a Christian virtue is an ongoing necessity.

The circle of shared existence may not, therefore, be a harmonious reality, but instead a reality with ragged edges and a smudged centre. An outstanding question remains as to how living the ambivalent experience as a Christian virtue does not domesticate the ambivalent experience itself, rendering it powerless by making it look beautiful. As much as living the ambivalent experience as a Christian virtue is an ongoing necessity, so is the ongoing question as to where the pain, the injustice, the broken, and the silenced are.

The question to the CMS community is if they will allow this to be a process of change in which *all* are transformed into a community of life in abundance for all as a sign of the Kingdom.

THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD TOWARDS THE FUTURE PRESENT

CMS as a mission organisation reorganised itself as a community within the Church of England, one that has both a local and a worldwide character. The mission vision and purpose are presented in relational terms as a response to the growing church around the world, the need for a reshaping of the relationships with these churches in a post-colonial context, and in the context of CMS' relationship to its tradition.

In this study, I have described the lived experience of this CMS community, based on the interviews and focus groups with members of the CMS community and people connected to it, and on literature published by CMS. The community experience within CMS Britain is explored in the context of an individualised society in a globalised world; it is a context that questions the feasibility of community when the individual is central, and community becomes a project depending on the personal choice of the individual.

> *Community is these days the last relic of the old-time utopias of the good society; it stands for whatever has been left of the dreams of*

> *a better life shared with better neighbours all following better rules of co-habitation* [1]

Is the community idea a sign that CMS is living in its past, harkening back to the former days? Another question is if the community idea will be able to take the relationships that move over geographical distance and the diversity encountered in a globalised world of endless information and communication seriously enough.

> *…the networks are global, but the narratives, values, and interests are diverse, and globally produced and distributed, albeit asymmetrically, around the world […] We are not sharing a global culture. Rather, we are learning the culture of sharing our global diversity.*[2]

The CMS is a mission organisation established in the time just before the official colonisation of Africa took place, by a community of people in the UK who were engaged in political action and social welfare and who were deeply disturbed by the slave trade and the perceived lack of hope and dignity for the people who had never heard the Gospel of Christ. They were convinced of the sinfulness and the need for conversion for all human beings, and the need to know Christ, leading to a life of hope, justice, and service of the other, towards "the amelioration of the injustices inherent in systems of world power as a prelude to the inauguration of God's Kingdom."[3]

Today, the CMS describes itself as "a community of people who have been set free to follow God's call in mission," leading to "challenge, change, hope and freedom to the world." And in this mission calling the relationality and people focus of the community plays an important role.[4] "Thousands of people from all

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[1] Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, 92.
[2] Castells, *The Power of Identity*, 2:xxxvi.
[3] Ward, "'Taking Stock': The Church Missionary Society and Its Historians," 22.
[4] See chapter 3.1.

walks of life are part of Church Mission Society – praying, learning and acting together in pursuit of that call."[5]

To describe this community experience, I have used the concept of a 'relational event.' I have found that relationality is placed centre stage in the community; this connects with the way the community members understand God, humanity, and creation, and is a response to the call to mission and the challenges of a post-colonial world. And I have used the concept of event, first in the sense that it is not a static reality, but a happening in which people invest, participate actively, and by which they are also shaped and transformed; this in turn shapes the community in new ways. Secondly, I have used the concept of event to indicate that the community is experienced in defined localities, in specific times, and in particular contexts. The community may have a worldwide character; it is played out in the particular in different places around the world.

I have presented this 'relational event' as a 'circle of shared existence,' representing the experience of a shared life locally and with people around the world, the experience of a shared vision, a shared purpose, and a shared way of life. Elements that shape this shared existence are the purpose of the community which I describe as 'purposive being,' the central element that informs and is being informed by the three elements of 'believing,' 'belonging,' and 'embodying' of the community. These three elements not only shape the 'purposive being' but also influence and shape each other and cannot be separated. In the following paragraphs my description of each of these elements will be summarised.

Through this research I discovered that in CMS the community's purpose is its central element; it is central to why people choose to belong to the community, why they are committed to the community and why they actively participate in it, even when this participation is an ambivalent experience of both joy and passion, disappointment and failure. And since, according to the CMS vision, this purpose of the community should combine being a home – with its relational reality of welcome and acceptance regardless of difference and otherness – with

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[5] https://churchmissionsociety.org/about/church-mission-society-the-big-picture/ Accessed 01/07/2020.

being a community of purpose for the world – oriented outwardly and active – I describe this element as 'purposive being.' Where Zygmunt Bauman critically questions the possibility of a common cause in an individualised society, following the CMS discourse, as members express their experience of the CMS community, I describe this purposive being as indeed a common cause. With all the ambivalences and criticisms, it still is experienced as a community that represents God, as witness to God's character and God's presence in the world as it participates in God's mission. And since God is recognised as the central person in the community and its purpose, I found that the 'purposive being' is experienced not only as a call to mission, but also as a gift of the God of mission. People choose to commit based on their personal choice to accept the gift of welcome, identity, and formation offered by God, and lived out in the community.

Cathy Ross uses the metaphor "household of God" when she speaks about the church in mission. It is a hospitable household where the stranger is welcome, where people are noticed, seen, and nourished, where risks are taken, and space is created for all. The "household of God" is a place to be, a place to learn and grow, and a place from which to go out towards the other to share in all humility and vulnerability the hospitality of God. [6]

I have shown that as a community in mission, and following Ross' concept of the "household of God," the CMS vision and purpose can be described as being a home of welcome, where people seek to live together in mutual acceptance, are forgiven, healed, formed and resourced. From here they also step out, offering hospitality to others and working together towards the regeneration of a broken world, as a response to the experience of God as love, compassion, and generous hospitality.[7]

In describing the element of 'believing,' I have shown that the community's vision and values are strongly related to how people understand God. The experience and understanding of God's being and action in the world are discovered in the Scriptures, in the story of God with God's people through the

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[6] Ross, "Hospitality: The Church as 'A Mother with an Open Heart,'" 67.
[7] See chapter 6.

biblical story, but also in the history of the community itself. In CMS, the stories are told again and again of God and God's people, from the beginning of creation, about the people who have gone before, and even about people still living and who are an inspiration and guide to action for the community now. I found that these stories form a living tradition that provides an identity to the members of the community and an inspiration to fulfil the community's vision and purpose in the world. And people experience these stories as an invitation to become part of the story, and to participate in it, as in the ongoing story of God and the mission of God.

While these stories are believed to be part of the story of God, I found that CMS members recognise that they also remain human stories, lived by people who have made wrong choices and failed to live up to the calling of God, placing instead self over the other. The CMS tradition therefore also has stories of racism, abuse of power, exclusion, and exploitation. And it is recognised that these stories also need to be told, reminding people of their own limited understanding and truthfulness, their own need to repent, their own need for grace and compassion from God and the other. These stories remind them of their own need for a renewed understanding of themselves, of God, and of the context in which they are living.

Again, following Ross, in describing CMS as the "household of God" I found that as in any household, stories are told again and again – stories of God and of God's mission in this world, of people living with this God, in all weakness and fallibility. I have come to understand that this leads CMS to emphasise the need for a mission spirituality to promote, what I describe as, 'attentive living'[8] and 'passionate believing,'[9] involving the whole person. This means that members of the community are invited to a life of listening to the other, to truly see the other with an open heart and mind, and so to be listening to God. This is even more needed where difference is encountered across the boundaries of culture both within one's own context and in other countries or continents. Also, in the wider community people indicate that through such attentive living and in encountering the other, a new and different understanding will be born. This, in

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[8] Following Cathy Ross.
[9] Following Coackley and Flett, see chapter 7.4.

turn, will shape the self and open it up to the call of God in that particular encounter or situation. The conclusion is drawn that in CMS the story of God is not experienced as static and fixed, but that it is relational and is encountered in the broken specificity of the contextual. Further, people believe that the "household of God" lives in response to that. What is more, the "household of God" should learn to rejoice in that.[10]

The element of 'belonging' gives insight into the relationships within the CMS community. I have used it to describe who belongs to the community and in what ways this belonging is experienced, facilitated, and shaped. From the formal membership, to relationships of employment, more informal relationships. and church connections, both within the United Kingdom and in many places around the world, people speak of a sense of belonging and commonality, of connection and of sharing their faith, vision, values and purpose. People speak of being "family." For these relationships to be facilitated and nurtured, I have discerned two essential points: first is the necessity of 'tangible relationships,' which can take shape through face-to-face encounters and regular contact or exchange of information with a view to mutual care and support. Second, these 'tangible relationships' need structures that facilitate them, such as communication channels, the organisation of events, and reciprocal visits where people can meet and engage. Where face-to-face engagement is not possible because of physical, geographical distance or for socio-economic reasons, the relationships can be mediated by 'bridge people,' people who can put connections in place and represent groups of people to each other.

Since these relationships are played out across boundaries of place, culture, status, faith, age, and many more, I have raised the question of boundaries to belonging. It became apparent to me that people in CMS do not like to speak about boundaries and instead see inclusion as a central value of the community. They place the focus on God's gift and call. The gift of community provides a welcome, relationships, identity, and purpose, and a calling to realise that purpose by extending these welcoming relationships to others both in and

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[10] See chapter 7.

outside of the community. Membership, both formal and informal, becomes self-defined, based on a personal choice.

During the research it also became apparent that the experience of belonging can be one of ambivalence, since different members have different expectations and various levels of commitment to the community. And regardless of the high expectations of inclusion and hospitality, people told stories of exclusion and conflict, both in the relational and in the organisational spheres of the community. But I have also found that for the people who told of these ambivalent experiences, often the experienced reality of community was not negated. Reasons for this are that people realise that, as in a family, one is given to the other; people cannot choose their siblings, nor their fellow community members. Also, using the family metaphor, the "household of God," people speak of the community as a place where God shares grace, love and welcome with each person, gifts that lead to humility and to the desire to share this grace through loving and hospitable relationships. The metaphor of the table is used as the place of hospitality where people truly meet each other and share food and fellowship, while respecting the individuality of each other, and accepting the other as truly other. And again, membership, accepting to be present at this table, is by personal choice. I contend that this does not necessarily make the community fragile or impossible (Bauman), since it is a choice to accept both collectivity and diversity as a community value. This is based on the belief that God's Self is revealed in this community and through this diversity.[11]

How to live as a community of purpose, with its identity and values, tradition, and relationships, is described in the idea of 'embodying.' I describe this element using the concept of 'practices.' The 'tangible relationships,' the 'mediated relationships,' the telling of the stories, the structures of mutual sharing and support, but also the organisational structures, such as the CMS Mission Network, the formalised membership and the official organisational entity of CMS as an acknowledged community in the Church of England, are all actions, events and structures that contribute to the realisation of the community. They are practices of 'intentional relationships.' Yet, following Ian Adams, I state that

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[11] See chapter 8.

this is a "practice that takes practice."[12] Describing CMS as a 'high value entity' with strong expectations, I also speak of CMS as regularly failing these expectations. Reciprocal relationships are not equally reciprocal, difference also leads to exclusion, in organisational structures painful and exclusionary decisions are made, and power is distributed unequally. Reflexivity, an openness to conversation, the discovery of blind spots and the unconscious contradicting of the values, are elements of the community practice. I have found that in CMS this takes the shape of telling stories – the living tradition – which reinforce identity, values, and value-consistent behaviour. On the relational level and in the context of diversity, narratives of connection and joined purpose are told, rather than narratives of 'us' and 'them.' Though this carries the risk of diminishing or negating the ambivalent experience of existing inequality and exclusion, since people choose to value diversity, these narratives also have the potential to lead to a renewed commitment to true connection and faithful practice.[13] Returning to the metaphor of the "household of God," I state that the community is a place of formation, where practice can be practiced in the context of grace and the security of belonging.

And finally, I highlight the fact that the experience of ambivalence, as a contradictory reality of both positive and negative experiences, is part of a complex lived reality. Recognising these ambivalent experiences, without minimising any element of them, leads to a 'complex knowing' of a complex reality. I then argue, on the basis of some lived experiences told by people in the CMS community, that consciously holding both the positive and the negative experiences may result in subversive action leading to change and the transformation of that complex reality, while recognising that this is, and remains, a truly difficult challenge.

Within CMS, understood as the "household of God," the relationships and values by which people live and act are recognised as given by God and shaping people's participation in the mission of God. They are recognised as values of God's Kingdom, and of the promise of God, that of "the future present." This "future present," also exposes where the lived reality falls short of the promise

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[12] Adams, "Epilogue: A Mission Spirituality for Turbulent Times," 210.
[13] See chapter 9.

of the Kingdom. I therefore argue that living with ambivalence in the mission community of CMS can be explained as a Christian virtue, and that it is essential. It recognises that ambivalent experience can lead to transformation of the present in the light of the future and to the recognition of the need of ongoing transformation based on the vision and promise of the future.

Living the ambivalent experience does not necessarily create a comfortable place of tranquillity, but rather leads to the "edge of chaos," with strained relationships, lack of control, and uncertainty. But again, I argue that this is the very place where transformation can happen, where the complex knowing and the desire for the "future present" grows; it is where eyes and hearts are opened up to each other and where transformation, sustained by a "theology of sight, emptiness, and hospitality," gives priority to those who are not heard, seen, or recognised.

My desire, as the person who has had the privilege of researching her 'family,' is that CMS will truly be, and continue to be, the "household of God," a home lived and shaped by the committed relationships of people who recognise their fragility, and by a theology of homelessness which leads to the "future present" – that CMS be a community that participates in the mission of God, called to be a 'gift' in the world.

NEDERLANDSE SAMENTVATTING

Zending en gemeenschap staan centraal in dit boek, twee termen die in de huidige tijd en wereld grote vragen oproepen. Zending in deze tijd, kan dat nog wel? Hoe verhoudt zich dat tot de ongelijkheid en machtsverhoudingen die voortvloeien uit het koloniale verleden van kerk en zending? Is gemeenschap nog wel mogelijk in een geïndividualiseerde maatschappij en een globaliserende wereld?

In plaats van een nostalgisch verlangen naar wat was, en een wederopbouw van het verleden, vraagt dit onderzoek wat de betekenis en mogelijkheden zijn voor gemeenschap als gezondene in de wereld zoals we die nu kennen en ervaren. De Church Mission Society (CMS), een Engelse zendingsgemeenschap opgericht in 1799 net voor het begin van het koloniale tijdperk, heeft ervoor gekozen om zichzelf te definiëren als zendingsgemeenschap binnen de Church of England en daarmee binnen de Anglicaanse gemeenschap wereldwijd, om met het oog op haar zendingsroeping zo een kader te scheppen voor vernieuwde en gelijkwaardige relaties met partners in de wereldkerk. De Church of England erkende deze gemeenschap in 2008.

Op basis van een case studie naar de geleefde realiteit van gemeenschap binnen CMS wordt in dit boek de vraag gesteld hoe een georganiseerde gemeenschap, met zowel een lokaal als een wereldwijd karakter, kan worden ervaren en begrepen in de context van een geïndividualiseerde en geglobaliseerde wereld. Hoe wordt deze gemeenschap gevormd en gerealiseerd? Hoe vormt deze ervaring de zendingspraktijk van de gemeenschap? Deze vragen leiden tot een theologische reflectie vanuit missiologisch perspectief op het concept van gemeenschap en de bronnen en identiteit van deze gemeenschap. Is het mogelijk dat een keuze voor gemeenschap nieuwe perspectieven opent voor relaties binnen de wereldkerk in een context van ongelijke toegang tot middelen en mogelijkheden? Kan de gemeenschap wereldwijd nieuwe inspiratie en relevantie brengen in de lokale gemeenschap? Wat zijn de praktijken die

daaraan bijdragen? De centrale vraag is hoe een zendingsgemeenschap deel kan zijn van de 'missio Dei' in de wereld zoals we haar nu kennen en in elke specifieke context. Daaruit voorvloeiend wordt de vraag gesteld hoe door het gemeenschapsleven, menselijk, gebroken en fragiel van karakter, iets van God in deze wereld ontdekt kan worden.

Deel I van het boek beschrijft het bredere kader van het onderzoek, beginnend, in hoofdstuk 2, met een beschrijving van sociologische inzichten in de geleefde realiteit van gemeenschap, met een speciale focus op het gedachtengoed van Zygmunt Bauman, Manuel Castells en Claude Dubar. Zowel Bauman als Dubar beschrijven de huidige maatschappij als een samenleving in crisis, waarin het individu op zoek is naar een nieuw verstaan van de eigen identiteit, van de ander, en van de samenleving. In die samenleving leeft ieder mens als individu in een context van oneindige keuzemogelijkheden, waarin zij een persoonlijke identiteit moet creëren, en moet kiezen waar zij bij wil horen. Voor sommige mensen is dit een groot avontuur met eindeloze mogelijkheden, terwijl dit voor anderen een wereld vol gevaar is die zij niet bij kunnen houden, en waarin relaties tijdelijk en kwetsbaar worden. Castells spreekt van een 'Network Society:' een samenleving waarin communicatie en informatie de drijvende krachten worden en toegang geven tot macht en mogelijkheden, en waarin connecties en relaties het gekozen doel dienen. Identiteit wordt gevormd door de keuze voor een doel en kan ertoe leiden dat een persoon zich aansluit bij een beweging. Een persoon kan ook meerdere doelen tegelijk kiezen, en die keuze kan ook altijd veranderen en dus tijdelijk zijn. Volgens Bauman resulteert dit in een onveilige wereld waarin gemeenschap en gemeenschappelijke verantwoordelijkheid, het algemeen belang, onmogelijk worden. Dubar en Castells zien nog wel mogelijkheden voor het algemeen belang, omdat een mens, ingebed in zijn familie en maatschappij, daarvoor kan kiezen. Maar ook voor hen zijn de elementen van plaats, identiteitsvorming, de ervaring van het thuishoren in, en van toewijding aan de gemeenschap 'vloeibaar' geworden. Ze zijn niet meer vanzelfsprekend en kunnen betwist worden. Daarbij komt dat deze elementen aan oneindige verandering onderhevig zijn, net zoals de wereld eromheen.

Vanuit deze beschrijving van de samenleving kunnen we concluderen dat individualiteit, diversiteit en tijdelijkheid fundamentele ervaringen zijn in een

gemeenschap, en dus ook in de zendingsgemeenschap. Dit roept vragen op over wat leden van die gemeenschap samenbindt, over de identiteit, het doel en de praktijk van de gemeenschap.

In hoofdstuk 3 ligt de focus op CMS zelf, en wordt een beschrijving gegeven van de organisatie, zoals ze zich presenteert via de CMS website. Thema's die hierin oplichten zijn de centrale plaats die mensen hebben in de gemeenschap en de nadruk op relaties en gemeenschap. Men spreekt van de 'CMS familie.' Zending wordt verstaan als een roeping voor iedere gelovige, in zowel de lokale context als in relatie met de wijdere wereld, en krijgt vorm in samen leren, samen bidden, en samen doen. Vanuit het wereldwijde karakter van de zendingsgemeenschap komt ook weer het thema van diversiteit ter sprake, zoals die wordt ervaren binnen de gemeenschap en in de ontmoeting met de ander buiten de gemeenschap.

De geschiedenis van CMS begint met de Clapham Sect, een groep mensen die vanuit hun Christelijk geloof diep geraakt waren door het onrecht van de slavenhandel en zich gedreven wisten tot politieke actie en tot inzet voor rechtvaardige sociale structuren. Daarnaast stichtten zij een zendingsorganisatie, om het goede nieuws van Christus te verkondigen aan mensen die in hun ogen veroordeeld waren tot een leven zonder hoop en waardigheid. Het vervolg van de geschiedenis wordt beschreven vanuit het perspectief van drie belangrijke leiders en de invloed die zij op de organisatie hebben gehad: Henry Venn, Max Warren en John V. Taylor. Deze beschrijving laat de ontwikkeling van relaties binnen CMS zien, zoals die vorm kregen aan het begin van de koloniale tijd, en de voortgaande zoektocht naar een verandering van deze relaties in de postkoloniale tijd. In deze geschiedenis ontmoeten we begrippen als 'drie-zelf-kerken,' 'euthanasie van zending' (Henry Venn), 'partnerschap' (Max Warren), gastvrijheid en wederkerigheid (John V. Taylor, Michael Nazir Ali). Dit mondt uiteindelijk uit op drie belangrijke veranderingsprocessen binnen CMS, namelijk de acceptatie van CMS als een erkende gemeenschap binnen de Anglicaanse Kerk in de UK, de stichting van CMS Africa en AsiaCMS als zusterorganisaties van CMS Britain en het instellen van officieel lidmaatschap bij het samengaan met de South American Mission Society. Uit deze geschiedenis blijkt echter ook dat de theorie en het verlangen regelmatig opbotsten tegen een weerbarstige werkelijkheid.

Hoofdstuk 4 beschrijft de context en de methode van het onderzoek zelf als het onderzoeken van mijn familie. Omdat ik een actief lid ben van de CMS gemeenschap en als Mission Partner voor de gemeenschap werk ben ik een 'insider.' Omdat ik in Nederland ben geboren en opgevoed en er nu ook woon, en omdat mijn werk vooral is gesitueerd in Afrika en Azië, ben ik tegelijkertijd een 'outsider.' Vanuit deze context beschrijf ik mijzelf als een 'instrument' in het onderzoek (Deborah Court, John Swinton). Gebruik makend van een methodologisch raamwerk dat gebaseerd is op de 'pastoral cycle' (ervaring, analyse, reflectie, antwoord) en wordt gecombineerd met het theologisch verstaan van de werkelijkheid vanuit de vier theologische stemmen – 'operant, espoused, normative, and formal' (Helen Cameron, Clare Watkins, et al.) – worden de uitkomsten van de interviews, focus groepen en de observaties gemaakt tijdens de case studie geanalyseerd en beschreven. Het doel van deze methode is om tot een theologische beschrijving te komen van hoe de CMS leden de gemeenschap en de gemeenschapspraktijken ervaren; een 'geleefde theologie' van het dagelijkse gemeenschapsleven in de sociale en maatschappelijke realiteit, en in relatie met de waarden en visie van de CMS leden. Dit, in gesprek met de meer formele en normatieve theologie zoals die binnen de CMS gemeenschap en daarbuiten wordt verwoord, resulteert in een theoretisch verstaan van de CMS gemeenschap. Het reflectieve gesprek leidt tot de beschrijving van de idee 'gemeenschap als zending' en hoe dat gerealiseerd kan worden in een wereld vol diversiteit en ongelijkheid.

Het tweede deel van het boek beschrijft de uitkomsten en analyse van de case studie en het theologische gesprek gerelateerd aan de uitkomsten. Een eerste overzicht hiervan wordt gegeven in hoofdstuk 5. Dit hoofdstuk beschrijft de CMS gemeenschap als een 'relational event,' een relationeel gebeuren. Mensen en relaties staan centraal vanuit het verstaan van de Bijbel en van God, maar ook op grond van de geschiedenis en traditie van de gemeenschap. Het wordt beschreven als een ervaring van gemeenschappelijkheid, van gedeelde waarden, van visie en actie, vanuit een gedeeld doel. Deze ervaring vormt de relaties en praktijken van de gemeenschap in iedere specifieke context op eigen wijze. CMS blijkt een gemeenschap te zijn met hoge waarden en grote verwachtingen van haar leden, waarden en verwachtingen die in de realiteit van het dagelijkse leven niet altijd gerealiseerd worden. De gemeenschapservaring

blijkt dan ook een ambivalente ervaring te zijn, en dit hoofdstuk geeft hiervan een eerste introductie. De verschillende aspecten van gemeenschap als relationeel gebeuren binnen CMS worden uiteindelijk samen gebracht in een schema dat ik de 'circle of shared existence' noem, de cirkel van gedeeld bestaan.

Het centrale element in dit schema is 'purposive being,' doelgericht zijn, en wordt beschreven in hoofdstuk 6. Mensen kiezen om lid te worden van de CMS gemeenschap vanwege het doel. Dat is waar men zich actief voor wil inzetten. Dit doel kan worden omschreven als tweeledig: het zijn van gemeenschap als een thuis en een plaats van welkom, en het naar buiten gericht zijn vanuit een actieve inzet voor het welzijn van de ander. In de geleefde werkelijkheid van de gemeenschap blijkt dit niet altijd makkelijk, zeker vanuit het perspectief van de wereldwijde gemeenschap die een thuis wil bieden in een context van diversiteit, terwijl diversiteit ook samen kan gaan met oordeel of vooroordeel in plaats van acceptatie. En daarbij, hoe kan er in één thuis zoveel ongelijkheid zijn?

De geïndividualiseerde sociale context (met name in Europa en Noord-Amerika) waarin de gemeenschap bestaat leidt tot vragen naar de mogelijkheid van een gedeeld doel. Bauman beschrijft de centraliteit van het individu en van de individuele keuze voor een eigen identiteit in de samenleving; het doel is het vinden en construeren van het 'zelf.' Ook Castells en Dubar zien de centraliteit van het proces van identiteitsontwikkeling. Castells verbindt dit met de keuze voor een doel in het leven en een keuze voor aansluiting bij een beweging die dit doel probeert te realiseren. Dubar beschrijft hoe die keuze wordt beïnvloed door de biografie, de relaties en de context van het individu, en die plaatsvindt in het zoeken van het 'zelf' en het gericht zijn op de 'ander.'

Binnen CMS wordt het doelgericht zijn ervaren als een theologische realiteit, waarin mensen binnen en buiten de gemeenschap aan elkaar gegeven zijn door God, als schepselen van God en geliefd in Christus. Dit is niet alleen een geschenk, maar ook een roeping. Elk mens wordt als individu uitgenodigd dit geschenk en deze roeping te accepteren en eruit te leven in navolging van Christus en in relatie met de ander. Het welkom van God wordt een welkom voor de ander. Het thuis met en voor elkaar en het goede leven in Christus wordt een zoeken naar het goede leven met en voor de ander.

Het doel van de gemeenschap wordt gevormd door de waarden en visie van de gemeenschap, die voortkomen uit hoe men God ontmoet en verstaat. Dit aspect van de gemeenschap wordt beschreven in hoofdstuk 7. Opvallend is hoe vaak deze theologische onderbouwing verwoord wordt in de interviews en focus groepen. De grote thema's hierin zijn de 'missio Dei,' de Triniteit en de 'imago Dei.' Dit verstaan van God wordt gerelateerd aan de Bijbel, aan het verhaal van God met de mensen vanaf de schepping, door de geschiedenis, inclusief de CMS geschiedenis, en tot nu toe. Dit verhaal fungeert als een levende traditie die de gemeenschap haar identiteit geeft en de inspiratie is voor haar roeping in de wereld. Hierin ligt de nadruk op Gods zijn en missie. Hierin wordt ook de roep gehoord tot een leven in overeenstemming met Gods karakter in nederigheid en openheid. Een missionair leven komt voort uit een missionaire spiritualiteit van aandachtig zijn. Vanuit deze aandacht voor de wereld en de ander wordt meer van God ontdekt, een ontdekking die in alle nederigheid ook weer gedeeld kan worden.

CMS leden erkennen dat er een groot verschil is tussen het verhaal van God en het menselijke verhaal, waarin gebrek aan aandacht, nederigheid, openheid, en dienst ook een plek hebben in de vorm van racisme, misbruik van macht, uitsluiting en uitbuiting. Ook deze verhalen worden verteld, maar dan als herinnering aan eigen falen en de noodzaak van nederigheid, genade en transformatie. Ook wordt aangegeven dat Gods verhaal groter is dan het menselijke verhaal, de 'missio Dei' gaat door, en de oproep daarin mee te gaan ook.

De theologische discussie rond het verstaan van de 'missio Dei' (John G. Flett) en rond de 'sociale Triniteit' (Mark D. Chapman) blijkt geen grote rol te spelen in het geloven van de gemeenschap. De theologische onderbouwing is niet zozeer systematisch en analytisch geformuleerd, maar veel meer vanuit de spiritualiteit van de gemeenschap. Gods zijn en doen worden ontdekt door een houding van aandacht, in gebed en actie, in aanbidding en dienen, en leiden tot het verlangen om vanuit deze ontdekking en in navolging van deze God het leven als gemeenschap in de wereld vorm te geven. Deze spiritualiteit omvat de hele mens in haar geloven en doen. Het wordt ook beschreven als aandachtig leven en gepassioneerd geloven.

CMS leden beschrijven hun deel zijn van de gemeenschap in termen van erbij horen en bij elkaar horen. Dit aspect van de gemeenschapsbeleving wordt in hoofdstuk 8 beschreven. Wie horen bij de gemeenschap, en hoe wordt dat lidmaatschap beleefd, gefaciliteerd en vormgegeven? Er blijkt een diversiteit te bestaan van manieren waarop men bij de gemeenschap hoort, van formeel lidmaatschap, werk relaties, informele relaties, tot kerkelijke relaties op zowel lokaal als wereldwijd niveau. Mensen spreken van een ervaring van gemeenschappelijkheid en erbij horen en gebruiken ook de term 'familie.' Om deze relaties te onderhouden en faciliteren, worden twee elementen genoemd: tastbare relaties en structuren die deze bevorderen. Regelmatig contact en uitwisseling in fysieke ontmoetingen en het uitwisselen van informatie en levensverhalen met het oog op wederzijdse betrokkenheid en ondersteuning zijn essentieel. Deze tastbare relaties en uitwisseling kunnen niet bestaan zonder dat er structuren zijn die dit mogelijk maken, zeker als fysieke ontmoetingen niet mogelijk zijn vanwege geografische afstanden of sociaaleconomische factoren. In dat geval kunnen relaties bemiddeld worden via zogenaamde 'brug personen,' die verbindingen kunnen maken tussen groepen mensen.

Het erbij horen wordt in CMS niet gedefinieerd vanuit de grenzen. Uitsluiting wordt beschreven als tegenovergesteld aan het karakter van God en de missionaire roeping. Lidmaatschap is gebaseerd op de persoonlijke keuze van het individu voor de waarden, de visie en het doel van de gemeenschap. Deze keuze is een keuze van de hele persoon, gemaakt op zowel cognitief, emotioneel en sociaal niveau. Het is een keuze van het individu voor het collectieve en gemeenschappelijke.

Ook hier is een zekere ervaring van ambivalentie, omdat de visie en de waarden niet altijd overeenkomen met de realiteit van het leven. De hoge verwachtingen van gastvrijheid en open relaties komen in botsing met de angst voor wat anders is en met het verlangen naar een samen zijn met gelijken, een verlangen naar veiligheid binnen de gemeenschap in een context van diversiteit en onvoorspelbaarheid.

Echter, omdat deze gemeenschap tegelijkertijd ervaren wordt als een geschenk, een thuis en familie in verwelkomende relaties die een identiteit en doel geven aan de persoon, ervaart men ook de roeping om anderen daarin uit te nodigen

en te verwelkomen. De vrijheid van het individu ligt niet in het solitaire individuele zelf maar in het zelf-in-relatie van het individu met de ander. Hierin verwijst men weer naar de geschapenheid van de mens naar het beeld van God. Een veel gebruikte metafoor is de tafel als een plaats van gastvrijheid waar mensen elkaar ontmoeten, samen eten en delen, terwijl men tegelijkertijd elkaars individualiteit respecteert, accepteert en zelfs omarmt als verrijking en inspiratie (Cathy Ross, Anne-Claire Mulder). Ook al komen mensen aan deze tafel vanuit een persoonlijke keuze, dat maakt de ervaring van gemeenschap is niet noodzakelijkerwijs fragiel of onmogelijk, zoals Bauman suggereert. In het aanschuiven kiest men namelijk vóór gemeenschap en gezamenlijkheid. Men kiest vóór een gezamenlijkheid die bestaat in diversiteit, wat ook wordt erkend als een waarde die bijdraagt aan het welzijn van die gemeenschap. Deze diversiteit verwijst naar de grootheid en diversiteit die men ervaart in God zelf, vanuit de spiritualiteit van aandacht voor de ander en de Ander.

Hoofdstuk 9 gaat dan in op de vraag hoe deze doelgerichte gemeenschap leeft vanuit haar identiteit en relationaliteit, haar waarden en traditie. Dit is de beschrijving van de belichaming van gemeenschap. De tastbare en bemiddelde relaties, de verhalen die verteld worden en de structuren voor wederzijds delen en ondersteunen dragen bij aan de gemeenschap als een geleefde realiteit. Hieraan dragen ook de organisatorische structuren bij, zoals het CMS Mission Network, het officiële lidmaatschap en de officiële erkenning van CMS binnen de Anglicaanse Kerk. Het zijn weloverwogen en doelbewuste praktijken. Het zijn ook praktijken die niet vanzelf ontstaan, maar oefening en aandacht behoeven (Ian Adams). Deze praktijken worden in dit onderzoek vergeleken met Catherine Bell's beschrijving van rituelen: strategische praktijken die betekenis en doen samenbrengen en realiseren in een sociale structuur. Rituele praktijken bemiddelen een ervaren en geloofde realiteit en hebben daarin ook een vormend en realiserend karakter in die realiteit, zij openbaren en realiseren Gods aanwezigheid ('Distinct Practices,' Jan-Olav Henriksen).

In de eerdere hoofdstukken heb ik CMS beschreven als een entiteit met hoge waarden en verwachtingen, wat ook regelmatig leidt tot teleurstelling en de ervaring van falen. Wederzijdse relaties blijken niet gelijkwaardig, diversiteit leidt tot uitsluiting, in de organisatie moeten pijnlijke en buitensluitende besluiten genomen worden, macht is ongelijk verdeeld. Reflexiviteit en open

gesprekken, de ontdekking van blinde vlekken en onbewuste vooroordelen zijn daarom noodzakelijk in de gemeenschap. In CMS krijgt dit de vorm van het vertellen van verhalen – de levende traditie – die de identiteit en de waarden versterken en die gedrag dat daarmee in overeenstemming is bevorderen. Met het oog op de diversiteit waarin de gemeenschap vorm krijgt worden verhalen verteld die verbinding en het gedeelde doel onderstrepen, in plaats van verhalen die grenzen en het verschil tussen 'ons' en de 'ander' versterken. Hierin bestaat het risico dat de ervaring van ambivalentie, van ongelijkheid en uitsluiting, over het hoofd wordt gezien of zelfs wordt weggedrukt. Echter, omdat de CMS leden in hun lidmaatschap kiezen voor de waarde van collectiviteit en diversiteit (Aaron Cohen en Danny Keren, Sierk Ybema, Marlous Vroemisse, en Alfons van Marrewijk), creëren deze verhalen ook de mogelijkheid van een hernieuwde toewijding aan waarde-consistent leven. Hierin speelt ook een rol dat de levende traditie, die zowel verhalen bevat die het goede verwoorden als verhalen die het falen laten zien, begrepen wordt vanuit het kader van de eschatologische verwachting van het Koninkrijk van God. Jonny Baker spreekt van de 'future present,' de toekomst aanwezig. Deze verwachting van Gods werkelijkheid roept dan op tot menselijke nederigheid, verandering en verzoening. De gemeenschap wordt daardoor een vormende plek, waar praktijken geoefend kunnen worden in de veiligheid van het geaccepteerd zijn en het erbij horen.

Na deze beschrijving en analyse van de verschillende aspecten van gemeenschap, zoals die gevonden kunnen worden in CMS, gaat deel III dieper in op hoe deze gemeenschap kan functioneren en haar roeping verwezenlijken in een wereld van individualisme, diversiteit en ongelijkheid, in een wereld met gebroken en feilbare mensen.

In het gesprek dat gevoerd wordt binnen CMS met betrekking tot gemeenschap en zending staan het doel, de waarden, het erbij horen, en de belichaming van dit alles centraal. Hieraan zijn hoge verwachtingen gekoppeld. Aan de andere kant blijkt er ook een andere ervaring te zijn, een ervaring van ambivalentie. In hoofdstuk 10 worden een aantal verhalen beschreven die deze ervaring weergeven. Ambivalentie in de context van gemeenschap wordt beschreven als een emotionele, cognitieve, en ideële ervaring, waarin zowel het pijnlijke,

onrechtvaardige en problematische, als het goede, rechtvaardige en hoopvolle in de geleefde realiteit een plaats hebben (Eda Ulus, Blake E. Ashforth et al.).

Vanuit de feministische theologie beschrijft Mary F. Bednarowski de ambivalente ervaring als een 'religieuze deugd.' Het herkennen en benoemen van deze complexe realiteit nodigt uit tot inkeer en bekering, en uiteindelijk tot subversieve daden (Kris Sealy) die kunnen leiden tot hoop en verandering. Dit vind plaats in de dagelijkse realiteit van een specifieke context en is een 'complex weten' in een complexe realiteit (Maaike de Haardt).

Door dit begrip van de ambivalente ervaring als subversieve kracht te plaatsen binnen de CMS gemeenschap en haar discourse rond pionieren en een theologie van onvoorwaardelijke gastvrijheid (Cathy Ross), blijkt dat er ook gesproken kan worden van de ambivalente ervaring als bron van een christelijke deugd. Deze deugd honoreert zowel de ervaring van het goede als het niet-goede. De theologische onderbouwing wordt ten eerste gevonden in de ambivalentie die wordt gevonden in God zelf. God kiest ervoor leven te brengen door het leven te verliezen. Jezus sprak van het ontkennen en ontlediging van het zelf, en van kracht die gevonden wordt in zwakheid. De bijbel spreekt van eersten die de laatsten zullen zijn en de laatsten de eersten. Gods Koninkrijk is en is nog niet. Ten tweede wordt God herkend als drie-enig en als de schepper die diversiteit in het hart van de schepping gelegd heeft. Men spreekt van het belang dat mensen deze diversiteit zullen erkennen en waarderen, en daarvan uit zullen zoeken naar een verstaan van de ander. Dit leidt tot het vinden van een diepe en brede wijsheid en een herkennen van Gods aanwezigheid in het dagelijkse leven en op die plaatsen waar men dat het minst verwacht. Ten derde wordt erkend dat Gods aandacht en prioriteit uitgaat naar hen die arm, gebroken, en gemarginaliseerd zijn, en dat wijsheid gevonden wordt in de marge, van onder op.

Leven met de ambivalente ervaring als een Christelijke deugd vraagt een ervaring van gemeenschap, omdat 'complex weten' alleen kan groeien in de werkelijke ontmoeting met de ander. Ook vraagt het de erkenning dat een gemeenschap gevormd wordt door mensen die falen, maar die al falend leven vanuit de hoop van Gods toekomst (Joseph D. Small). Tenslotte vraagt het ook dat het luisteren naar de ander begint bij de mensen die het minst gehoord en gemarginaliseerd worden (Letty Russell). Daarbij komt dat het creëren van

ruimte voor conflict en subversieve actie, voor verootmoediging en bekering, alleen mogelijk is in een veilige relatie en context. Juist in een gemeenschap die gedragen wordt door een geschiedenis en traditie, die een identiteit en visie heeft en geeft, en die een verlangen heeft te leren, te groeien, en gastvrij te zijn, kan een gemeenschap zijn die ervaren wordt als een thuis waarin deze christelijke deugd een plaats kan vinden.

Aan de andere kant, de gemeenschap die niet bereid is om te leven met de pijnlijke ervaring van ambivalentie en chaos (Michael Moynagh), of met het oncontroleerbare dat samengaat met hoop voor verandering, zal ook niet de kracht hebben om haar geschiedenis en haar huidige ambivalente praktijk te onderkennen. Deze gemeenschap zal de waarheid niet onder ogen kunnen zien, noch kunnen zoeken naar nieuwe wegen van waarheid en recht, van Gods 'future present.'

De gemeenschap wereldwijd, in dit onderzoek beschreven als de 'cirkel van gedeeld bestaan,' is dus niet noodzakelijkerwijs een harmonieuze realiteit, maar juist een ervaring met rafelranden en een morsig centrum. Het is in deze ervaring dat een missionaire spiritualiteit kan groeien in verbondenheid met de wereldkerk en als geschenk aan de wereld waarin ze is geplaatst. En juist in deze ervaring kan een dieper verstaan van God gevonden worden, evenals een verbondenheid met broeders en zusters dichtbij en ver weg.

APPENDIX:
COLLECTING THE DATA

The Case study Questions

Question 1: How is the concept of community understood in the socio-cultural context in which CMS Britain functions?

Sub questions:

    a.   How have dynamics of individualisation and globalisation impacted the lived experience of community (focussing on the European context)?

    b.   What are the main discussion areas that contribute to an understanding of community in a post-modern globalised world?

Question 2: What is the lived experience of the CMS community and its members, as part of and committed to the mission community worldwide?

Sub questions:

    a.   How does CMS, and how do its members, describe what community is?

    b.   How does this description relate to the socio-cultural context of the community?

    c.   How do the local and global relate in the CMS community?

    d.   What are the theological themes used in this description?

    e.   How do vision and lived reality relate, according to CMS community members?

    f.   How is the community vision and community life organised, and how is it a participation in and resource for mission?

Question 3: How can we understand the worldwide Christian mission community in a time of globalisation and individualisation?

Sub question:

Bringing the CMS experience into conversation with the sociological considerations about community, the missiological reflections within the CMS community, and the wider theological literature, what can we say about:

   a. community and identity formation?
   b. belonging and inclusivity, boundaries and exclusivity?
   c. commitment and participation?
   d. locality and the relationship between the global and the local?

Question 4: How can community be a resource for Christian mission everywhere?

Sub questions:

   a. How can it be a resource in a world of individualism and fluid modernity, where inequality and injustice create divisions and tensions?
   b. What can be its role, attitude, shape, and place?

Methods and questions per CMS category

   1. Link Churches and individual members in UK
      a. Participant observation of the Mid-Africa Forum (November 2014). This is a conference of CMS community members from the UK and the Central African region coming together for encounter, support, and strategic reflections. I observed the following (noting speaker and context of discussion/comment):
         i. Community language – what words were used?
         ii. Relationship language across continents – what words were used?
         iii. What activities expressed worldwide community and are they organised or spontaneous?

> iv. Was there any *critical questioning* of the worldwide community?

b. Interviews (semi-structured) with one organiser of the conference, one UK participant who had been a mission partner with CMS serving in Africa, using the following themes:

> i. Who is the interviewee?
>
> ii. The four main case study questions as mentioned above.
>
> iii. How does this work in a liquid, postcolonial, and networked society?

c. Interviews (semi-structured, and following the same themes and question pattern as mentioned under b.) with several members of a Link Church in the UK – a member of the church leadership, the leadership of the mission committee, and regular church members.

2. CMS Office in Oxford

a. Initial survey in the CMS office:

> i. Introduction of the case study project to people working in the CMS office through a short presentation and a questionnaire with general questions about belonging, and the importance and benefit of belonging to community. The aim was to raise interest in the project and to set people on a track of reflecting on their lived experience of community (or not) rather than the expectations of what it ought to be.
>
> ii. Survey questions:
>
> > - Can you name some of the communities to which you belong?
> > - How have you become a member of these communities?
> > - Why are these communities important to you?
> > - Is CMS a community for you – or not? Why?

    iii.   People were asked if they were willing to participate in a focus group later in the year. Around 45 people were present at this presentation, of whom I received a total of 38 questionnaires in return. Of the people who responded through the questionnaire, 17 were willing to participate in the Focus Group. From these, I invited 8 people, who together would give a fair representation of the CMS office 'population.' I looked at level of responsibility and diversity from the different departments – and therefore also from different spaces in the office building.

b.   Focus Group – including 1 director, 2 managers, 5 employees from different departments in the organisation. During the focus group we first discussed the relationships and experience of people in the office and if that experience could be described with the word "community." Secondly, we discussed how people related their relationships within CMS in the office in Oxford, with the relationships with the CMS partners around the world.

c.   Interviews (semi-structured)

    i.   Persons with historic insight within CMS about the following themes:

- Personal context and relationship with CMS now and before.
- Why did CMS decide that it should become an acknowledged community?
- Why then, at that time? What was the context?
- How did it change CMS? (e.g. in structure, organisation, experience, and vision)
- What did you think was the understood meaning of CMS as a worldwide mission community?
- How was it related to CMS' mission understanding?

      ii.   Trustee, about the following themes:
- Who is interviewee?
- The four main research questions of the case study.
- How does this work in a liquid, postcolonial and networked society?

      iii. General Secretary of CMS following the same themes as the Trustee interview, and an added question about how he saw his own role in the CMS worldwide mission community.

   d. Document and archive research

      i.   Policy documents from the start of the 'Interchange' discussions till now.

      ii.   Overall history of CMS – there are a couple of books written about this.

      iii. Membership communications (Yes magazine, Connect, PrayerLines etc.) from the start of the 'Interchange' discussions till end of 2015.

3. CMS mission partners

   a. Focus group during the People in Mission Conference in the UK (close to London) in July 2014. Beforehand I asked participants to read a short Case Study Summary and say if they had ever had an experience of the worldwide mission community. Then they were asked: What would you like to tell about this experience or about the fact that you have not experienced this?

   b. The discussion during the focus group explored people's description of the concept of community, the lived reality of relationships across boundaries of geography, economic and social status, and the specific place of the Mission Partners themselves in this lived reality.

4. CMS Africa

   a. Semi-structured interviews with someone from the leadership of the organisation, with a manager, and with a co-mission partner. These interviews also covered the four main research

questions for the case study, including a question about the specific African context.

b. Participant observation during meetings organised around the CMS Mission Network meetings in Nairobi, 12-18 September 2015.

    i. Mission Education Forum, which brought together representatives working in mission education for each of the member organisations in the CMS Mission Network.

    ii. Network meetings of the leaders in the CMS Mission Network.

    iii. China Awareness Conference, organised by CMS Africa, seeking to build relationships between churches and Christians and the Chinese community in Africa – with a special focus on Kenya.

5. Checking the outcomes

a. Following transcription, a process of coding, and analysis of the gathered data, I wrote a first description of the lived experience of the CMS community, as I had found it. I asked three people who had not yet participated in the research, and who (had) occupied different places in the CMS organisation and community for their feedback on the written description of CMS. Where did they recognise the description, compared to their own experience? Where did they not recognise the description? Where did they disagree? What had I missed?

b. The same was asked to the two people who's stories I told in chapter 10, as an example of living with ambivalence.

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CURRICULUM VITAE

Gijsberdine van den Toren-Lekkerkerker was born in 1964 in Meerkerk, in the Netherlands. She received her HAVO diploma (secondary school) in 1982 at the Guido de Brès school in Rotterdam and began her theological education at the Reformatorische Bijbelschool in Zeist, where she specialised in Pastoral Studies and Religious Education and received her diploma in 1987 (3-year diploma). She graduated with her master's degree in Christian Studies, with a specialisation in Applied Theology and Missiology, in 2009 from Regent College, Vancouver, Canada. Her Master's thesis, "The Moral Education of Children in a Changing African Society," was based on a Ministry Research Project in which she worked with the women who were studying at the École Biblique et Promotion de la Femme in Bangui, CAR, using the approach of Action Research.

Berdine's work experience as a theologian is mainly in theological education, starting as a teacher of religion at a primary school in Giessenburg in the Netherlands. From 1997 to 2005 she taught at the École Biblique et Promotion de la Femme in the Central African Republic, and from 2007 she worked for the Church Mission Society in Oxford, UK, as mission educator organising training conferences and teaching people who were preparing for mission placements. Currently she is a CMS Mission Partner, teaching in missiology and Christian education at theological schools and universities in French-speaking Africa, Nepal, India and Malaysia.

As a consultant for mission education, she contributed to strategy development, to the development and publication of theological literature from and for French-speaking Africa, and to the training of new mission partners.

Berdine is married to Benno van den Toren and together they have three adult sons. As a family they have lived in the Netherlands, in the Central African Republic, in Canada, and in the United Kingdom. Currently, Benno and Berdine are living in the Netherlands.