

An Evangelical Code of Ethics for Christian Mission

Memo

This is a personal working document by Thomas Schirrmacher as a starting point for discussion by people especially involved in the discussion, for the Religious Liberty Commission, the Missions Commission, the Theological Commission, the International Institute for Religious Freedom, all of the World Evangelical Alliance, and for the National and Regional Alliances, as well as for all international evangelical bodies like the Lausanne Movement Int. Please send all comments to Thomas Schirrmacher: drthschirrmacher@bucer.de

The text still is a mix out of 1. arguments for such a code, 2. secular rules for all religions, 3. Christian rules only valid for Christians.

WV = taken from code of World Vision

IND = taken from Code of EF India

CAMB = taken from Code of EA Cambodia

OSLO = taken from Code of University of Oslo

WCCDraft = taken from draft of proposal by WCC, WEA and Vatican

1 Introduction: Mission corrupted

The international 'Lausanne Covenant' of 1974, probably the most influential Evangelical document in existence, calls wholeheartedly for mission, but nevertheless states in article 12:

"At other times, desirous to ensure a response to the gospel, we have compromised our message, manipulated our hearers through pressure techniques, and become unduly preoccupied with statistics or even dishonest in our use of them. All this is worldly. The Church must be in the world; the world must not be in the Church."

The World Evangelical Alliance regrets any case, in which evangelicals, especially those connected with the 128 national Evangelical Alliances, have put undue pressure on other people to call them to conversion or have violated human rights in the name of mission. Evangelicals love God and his Word and by using unethical means of evangelism, those who have used such methods were disobedient to God's word, as the First letter of Peter commands:

"But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this *with gentleness and respect*, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak badly against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. It is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil." (1 Peter 3:15-17)

Even though the WEA and the regional and national alliances often do not have the influence on their members they would wish to have and surely have no influence on the millions of other evangelicals, who even do not associate with the international evangelical bodies, the WEA is willing to use its influence in any way possible to ensure that mission stays away from any misuse of people and never violates their human rights and dignity.

Christians believe that all humans are sinners and that even when we are saved by God's grace, we still can and will sin. "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:8-9, see Galatians 6:3). Thus we cannot promise, that never ever again would any Evangelical sin while doing mission. We will have to be self critical. According to Jesus, our attitude should not be like the Pharisee, who prayed: "God, I thank you that I am not like other men" (Luke 18:11), but like the tax collector, who said: „God, have mercy on me, a sinner“ (18:13).

But with this code, we want to declare, what we think to be right and wrong and what the measure is according to which we want to be judged. And if we find out, that we acted wrongly, we seek Gods mercy and ask others for forgiveness.

In Romans 12:2 God commands us: „Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will.“ Thus we are open daily to be transformed in our mind, so that worldly thinking (eg in categories of power, money, race or pride) can successively be replaced by God's will. Thus we want to be open to any request to change our acts that do not comply with the love of God.

Mission is spreading the message, that God so much loved the world, that he gave his only son Jesus Christ for forgiveness and salvation (John 3:16). Thus not only the message, but also the way in which this message is spread, always has to mirror God's love and our love to God and to everyone.

Our way of doing mission always should honour God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Ethics and mission belong together. The Christian witness is not a room free of ethics; it needs an ethical basis to really do what Christ commanded us to do.

The Evangelical Alliance has always been in favour of mission as well as of religious freedom from its beginning in the middle of the 19th century. Thus the question, how a movement promoting world mission can protect the freedom of other faith as well as the peace of countries and societies, is not new to the EA and the WEA, but part of its identity. There is an ethic of world mission. The same Jesus, that called us, to go into all the world and preach his gospel, called us to keep all his commandments, not least the one to love others like ourselves. Christian mission done in an immoral way is no Christian mission. By promising to follow the following code of ethics, we do not go against mission, but against any way of doing mission that dishonours God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

What we want to achieve as Christians is the combination of a clear *YES* to spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ and to prayer, that the Holy Spirit convinces the heart of people, with a clear *NO* to unethical ways of doing it, ways that go against the command and the spirit of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Excursus: the terms ‚Mission‘ and ‚Proselytism‘

OSLO The concept of Mission arose in Christian environments, but is now also used as a religious science category. Other concepts like "proselytism" or "propagating a religion or belief" are also often used to describe this activity. In the context of this project it is important that the terminology used is understood as neutral – in the sense of not implying

approval or disapproval of the phenomenon referred to – and that it is easily understood. We believe that the term “missionary activities” best meets this requirement, and have thus chosen to use this term in this document. By this term we will come to understand the activity of communicating a religion or worldview through verbal communication or through various related activities as an invitation to others to adopt the religion or worldview. “Missionary activity” is the term used in this document for the activity of communicating a religion or worldview through verbal communication or through various related activities as an invitation to others to adopt the religion or worldview.

The term ‘proselytism’ had a neutral meaning most of history and only recently has been used either to designate the ‘stealing of sheep’ from other groups of the same religion, or to designate bribing or threatening others to change their religion. We think, that the problem under discussion cannot be solved by terms alone, but only by clearly stating, what kind of mission is seen as immoral.

But if the term ‘proselytism’ does make any sense, than only as a term to describe unethical ways of mission.

2 Theological rationale

A forced conversion is no conversion at all

Is a forced conversion a conversion? All Christian confessions agree that a conversion has to be first of all a deeply personal, well informed, finally thought through move of the heart, which cannot and may not be forced from the outside and does not take place, if someone just acts, as if he would believe in God, because according to Paul, one can have “the appearance of godliness, but deny its power” (2Timothy 3:5). A forced conversion is not what we want to achieve and nothing we can accept, indeed we claim, a forced conversion is no conversion at all.

We know that any conversion has results that go far beyond the unseen move of the heart, religious as well as sociological ones. But baptism – to stay with Christianity -, church membership, compensation, change of morals, consequences concerning family or society, they all are only valid as a Christian conversion, if the heart moved toward God. The love towards God is the source of love towards all humans.

Therefore if people tell us that they want to convert, we should always give them and offer them time for discernment and should not be in a hurry to baptise them, but be assured that they really know what they are doing. There also should be honesty and transparency concerning what Christian faith means and what is expected of Christians after their conversion. Christianity is not a secret cult but open to the public. Like Jesus himself, we do not have anything to hide (Matthew 10:26-27).

Jesus said concerning those who want to become his followers: “Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it?” (Luke 14:28; see vv. 27-33). We have to help people to calculate the costs, not to rush them into Christian churches, only for them to find out later, that they have been cheated.

We also should assure, as far as it is possible for us, that those wanting to convert, convert to *God* and get into peace with *him*, and do not convert to *us* and do not convert to

satisfy *us* as human beings. We also should not try to convert others for winning earthly or selfish gains like power, influence, wealth, pride or revenge. Acts 8:18-24 reports of a man called Simon, who was baptised. When he saw that people received the Holy Spirit when the Apostles laid their hands on them, he wanted to buy this influence. This is what Peter told him: „May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money! You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God.“ (Acts 8:21-22). Simon the magician seemed to be a Christian and thus was baptised. But in reality he only wanted to gain something and thus his conversion was in vain.

Beyond Christian conversion, that is speaking about the right to change ones religion in general, of which the Universal Human Rights Declaration of the UN speaks in article 18, we acknowledge that changing one's religion is a very profound step that should be preceded by time for adequate reflection and preparation during which time the person can freely consider his or her religious convictions and seek advice from whomever he or she wishes.

Such conversion should be free of undue pressure from the religion one might be leaving as well as from the religion one might join.

Humbly accepting the role of the Holy Spirit

From an Evangelical and Christian point of view, conversion is first of all an encounter between the spirit and heart of a human and the spirit and heart of God, who reveals himself through his Holy Spirit. “For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, ‚Abba, Father.‘ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.” (Roman 8:15-16). Even though this move will lead to outward actions and signs and only can become real in God's church, without the Holy Spirit everything will stay incomplete.

Those engaged in mission can call people to conversion, but the Holy Spirit alone can convert people. People can answer the call to conversion, but *we* surely cannot convert other people! While it is our responsibility to witness, we humbly have to accept that others do not have to seek peace with us, but peace with God, and that our God given task to testify does not go beyond any point, God has reserved for himself. Even as the Church has the God given task to call everyone to become its member as the body of Christ and even though one cannot be a Christian alone, but only together with all others that belong to the body of Christ, nevertheless it is the Holy Spirit that fills the Church and adds to it anyone filled with the Spirit.

Theological base for religious freedom

From a Christian point of view, religious freedom and all human rights flows from the very dignity of the human person, grounded in the creation by God of all human beings in the image and likeness of God (cf. Genesis 1:26) and from Jesus, who is the image of God and became fully human flesh, and by dying for all humans on the cross ennobled humanity at large. Therefore this human dignity and these human rights belong to everyone, not to Christians only.

As God is gracious and puts up with the opposition of humans during the time of this world, so that humans may deny him or mock at him, we have to be willing to do the

same. Calling fire from heaven on those, who disbelieve, was a wrong attitude of missionaries like the disciples in the New Testament (Luke 9:54-55) or Jonah in the Old Testament (Jonah 4,1-2). Jonah knew that God is very gracious and not interested in judging the unbelievers here and now (Jonah 4:2), but – even though a missionary and good theologian („I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love ...“) – wrongly hated Gods loving attitude anyway.

We remind all, that The General Assembly of the World Evangelical Alliance has voted in favour of its Resolution on Religious Freedom, in which religious freedom for all is seen as central to the well being of this world.

God so much loved the world ... - no violence

Our witness is compelled by the God of love who first loved us. Inspired by Christ, we are empowered to love our neighbours. Generous love is the best witness to the God in whom we believe. Christian love is free and is not practiced as a way of achieving other ends.

We want to convince others by showing them loving humility and compassion in attitude, word and deed. We want to show respect to all individuals of other or no religions, as they are created in Gods image and also need Gods gracious saving love and power.

We want to be recognised for our charity and compassion, and therefore renounce all forms of arrogance, boasting, superiority, condescension, and disparagement in our relationships with adherents of other religions.

As Christians in our witness we need to follow the example and teachings of Jesus Christ. Following this example of Jesus Christ we reject all violence and the abuse of power in our witness.

Christian churches amongst each other

Most of any mission work and call to change one's religious views worldwide takes place within major religions. Thus liberal Jews try to convince conservative Jews, Muslim mystics try to convince traditional Muslims, Hindu gurus preach to followers of other Hindu groups. This is also true within Christianity and everything we say here regarding Christian mission towards non-Christians is obviously true regarding the relation to other Christians, too.

As Evangelicals tend to more easily change their local church or change their denomination, eg when they move to another city or region, they may not realise how deeply rooted a person can be in a certain Christian tradition, especially if this tradition is closely connected to the history, culture and language of his people. We want to learn more about the motivation and the faith of those people and be quick to listen and slow to judge.

The theological debates among Christians started in New Testament times and always have been part of church history. Even though the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:1-31) of all Apostles and Presbyters is a good example, how such debates can lead to spiritual unity, we take it for granted, that there are different Christians theologies and that their adherents will try to convince other fellow Christians. This also takes place among members of the Evangelical Alliances. We want to learn to listen to each other, to learn from each other, to seek unity wherever possible.

But even where one cannot accept the teachings of fellow Christians, it should be a given, not to encourage members of others churches to join our own church by giving inducements such as cash, material gifts, scholarships, salary increases, etc. or by threatening them in any form. Anything said in this documents applies to inner Christian affairs too.

Church and State

We are aware that religious liberty is intricately connected with the entire question of the relationship between religion and the state. This question has occupied us for thousands of years. World history and church history teach us that this is one of the most complicated questions there is, foundationally as well as when we are dealing with concrete application. How do church and state, religion, and politics conduct themselves? If we tear the two of them too far apart and place them opposite each other, religious liberty is just as much lost as if they are too closely aligned. If religion and the state are too closely associated, that means that a certain religious preference rules the state and is used to oppress others. If religion and the state simply face each other, that virtually leads to an oppression of one or all religions.

Religion has been again and again misused to motivate or justify political goals including bad laws and wars. We have to resist any such endeavor to reach hand to people with bad and selfish political goals. We have to assure that our faith is not misused as justification for violence against members of other religions and people at all.

State legislation should not be used to stop or hamper or constrain the mission work of other religions. Where Christians are in a minority or Evangelicals are in a minority we expect from governments in countries with a Christian and non-Christian majority, that we receive equal rights to testify to our faith in public as well as to live out our faith. Those equal rights are also due in different areas like marriage laws, inheritance rights, work opportunities or ownership of religious buildings.

But at the same time we promise that we will use our influence on governments towards religious freedom for all and not for advocating laws that further our mission work but constrain those of other groups or fill our kitty but not that of others.

Christians are loyal citizens, who seek the welfare of their state, country and people, but whenever the State tries to force them to dishonor God, they must obey God *more* rather than man (Acts 5:29). The Church Father Tatian expressed this idea in the following words: "The Emperor commands me to pay taxes: I am prepared to pay. The Lord commands me to serve and to obey: I acknowledge that service. I must honor man in human fashion, but only God is to be feared ... Only when I am commanded to deny Him, will I disobey; then I would rather die ..." (Speech to the Greek 4.1).

Mutual respect and peace building

WCCDraft In contexts where years of tension and conflict have created deep suspicions and breaches of community, inter-religious dialogue can provide new opportunities for resolving conflicts, healing of memories, and creating structures for reconciliation and peace-building. We recommend that churches engage in such inter-religious dialogues.

WCCDraftWe commit ourselves to working with those of other religions and any people of goodwill in mutual respect, in harmony, and common action to build a better

world. Peace building in small and large societies is a central focus of the World Evangelical Alliance. Different views of the truth may not be an excuse for exploitation, turmoil or even civil war or war. Paul commands us: „as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone“ (Romans 12:18). For our God is „a god of love and of freedom“ (2 Corinthians 13:11).

WEA launched its Peacebuilding Initiative at the General Assembly in October 2008 and is planning to take an even more active role in bridge building in areas with violence and tension. ‚Just Children‘ is part of the initiative and seeks to bring children of different groups together, which naturally are enemies of each other.

3 Human rights rationale

Human rights

There are two different sets of boundaries to Christian mission. First, there is a narrower set of boundaries, that are valid for us as Christians and stem from our own faith. It is Christian ethics and revelation itself, that authorises mission only so far, as God sees it as his mission. Eg lying about others publicly is covered by the right to free speech, but forbidden by the Ten Commandments.

Then, there is a second, wider set of boundaries, that is valid for all religions and all people. As mission is part of the human right of religious freedom, it has to be set in harmony with other human rights also. These boundaries are the same for all men and for all religions. Presently internationally, but especially in the West, there is some debate on adding a growing list of further human rights, as there is some debate even in the UN Human Rights Council on abrogating some human rights, like the right to change ones religion or to criticise religion. The WEA follows the list of human rights, that have been expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948.

We affirm Article 18.2 of the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which says: “No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice.” We want this to be true for us, but we also want this to be true for others, with whom we engage in discussion.

We are aware, that often there are ethical dilemmas between different human rights and that often courts have to decide which human rights are more important in given situations. Thus also religious freedom can get into conflict with other human rights. It might not always be easy to find solutions – and might be different according to the history and culture of different countries – but we dedicate ourselves to work towards valid solutions and towards protecting all rights of others.

At the same time we acknowledge that errors have been perpetrated and injustice committed by the adherents of every faith. And violence and undue pressure cannot only be used to get people to leave a religion, but also to stay in it!

We also acknowledge that followers of other religions also have the right and the freedom to profess, practice and propagate their religion.

And we promise not to use violence or any other undue pressure, when people want to leave the Christian churches or faith.

Anti-conversion laws

Most of the existing anti-conversion laws are brief and leave a lot of ambiguity, which can be mis-used for inflicting harm on minority religions and create persecution. They do not lead to social freedom, but social unrest. Experts believe that most anti-conversion laws, even though they mention the wrongful use of gifts, actually want to prevent any conversion and freedom of religious choice, especially often any conversion to Christianity (like in India or in Sri Lanka or Kasachstan or Israel – just to name one example each from the major world religions) or to another form of Christianity than the state religion (like in Greece or Russia).

We do not deny that it is the right or duty of the State to prevent forced conversions. Eg if a youngster is set under drugs and forced to change his religion, it is a crime that has to be prosecuted and punished and the only authority that has the right to judge here is the State. The State especially may go against any private violence, non-religious or religious. But we deny anti-conversion laws, which go against the right to change one's religion at all, or that actually only want to prevent conversions from a majority religion to a minority religion and not the other way round. We presently see no anti-conversion law anywhere in the world, that does not have the goal to protect the majority religion alone.

We are willing to discuss any problems and to help to develop a valid set of descriptors of wrongful ways of propagating ones faith, where ever a national state sees the necessity do develop this. But we expect, that laws concerning conversion defend all human rights and are written and handled not in favour or against certain religious groups, but apply to them all the same.

We want to add: As far as we know, all specific cases in India or Greece, where Christian have been accused according to the existing anti-conversion laws, have in the end led to a acquittal.

Defamation of religion

(Section has been written by Dr Christof Sauer)

We seek to adhere to the commandment to bear no false witness against anyone.

We also see no need for abasing the religions of others in order to lift up our own, as we do not consider our faith something we have created or own, but as a gift from God. So there is nothing we could improve about our faith by abasing that of others.

At the same time we uphold the right to open debate on any issue, including religion, and to criticise worldviews or religions, any tenets they hold, goals they pursue or actions they perform. So our encounter with adherents of other religions and worldviews might include robust debate, including the exposing of inhuman practices, and opposing lies, falsehoods and deception.

Equally we are willing to accept criticism of our faith, its tenets and our actions. Our response will be a critical self-examination on the one hand and a possible correction of our actions and a peaceful, verbal defense of our faith on the other hand, as appropriate.

So while we seek to uphold the truth in love, we cannot forego the verbal defense of our faith (apologetics) or the critical engagement of other beliefs (polemics) where appropriate.

When we see the Christian faith attacked, ridiculed or defamed, we remember that Christ was willing to bear misunderstanding and ridicule of his person and message. So as his followers we consider it an honour to bear shame for his name.

We further consider it the God given responsibility of any civil authority to maintain the peace in their community. We therefore acknowledge the right of an authority to set limits to the freedom of speech in order to prevent malicious maligning of others in order to prevent civil strife. There is a delicate balance between freedom of speech and maintenance of public peace which is differently solved in various contexts.

Attempts made on various levels to protect religions per se against so called defamation, instead of protecting the religious freedom of the individual do not find our support. We equally deplore that so called blasphemy laws are being abused in a number of countries to falsely accuse Christians of crimes they usually did not commit, and we call for their abolition.

In the eyes of many observers the attempts of criminalising “defamation of religion” in international conventions, is a thinly veiled effort by its proponents to justify their abuse of religious freedom in their own countries by blasphemy laws, apostasy laws and the like. As these advances are usually made by Muslim governments, they appear as an attempt to establish the supremacy of Islam by warding off any criticism of its tenets and practices.

We therefore call on our national governments and the United Nations not to criminalise the defamation of any religions, in particular Islam.

4 Ethical conduct regarding special areas of contention Part I: Undue Pressure

Different ways of undue pressure, enticement and abuse of power

We see the following areas of undue pressure on other people:

- * threatening with violence or other consequences
- * political pressure
- * social pressure
- * economic pressure or promises
- * psychological pressure
- * manipulative techniques including certain advertising techniques in mass media

In the following specifics we will start with the economy and charity, discuss education, children and family, and then speak about the role of the state.

Money and economy

There should not be any attempts to use money or material benefits to entice people to become Christians. We condemn all forms of allurements, including financial incentives and rewards, which are manipulative means for the conversion of others. We shall offer our service to others out of concern for their well-being as people made in the image and likeness of God.

These means include to give or refuse financial advantages (e.g., through banks or in inheritance laws), material enticement in any form like money, gifts, privileges, medical treatment, education, opportunities, work or office. We should not offer people any non-spiritual rewards for their conversion.

Such material enticements exceed the area of freedom of speech and expression.

We also do not want to promise or give financial incentives to our staff as a reward for producing more converts or planting more churches. We also do not want to give the impression to our donors, that they pay us per convert.

Acts of charity and the vulnerable

As Christians we cannot dispense to help the poor and the weak. It is a special sign of grace and love, that we help those, who cannot help themselves, as God has shown his love towards us, who could not help ourselves.

But we clearly do not want to exploit vulnerability of any people or use the power of development and humanitarian programs to coerce conversion.

Manipulative attitudes and practises that exploit people's needs, weaknesses or lack of education especially in situations of distress, fail to respect their freedom and human dignity.

We do not want to threaten people with civil consequences, putting undue psychological pressure on them or press them for decisions they cannot overlook, e.g., because they are too young or mentally ill.

When people in vulnerable situations, whom we help, show interest in changing their religion, we should be careful to instruct them, that this is no condition for our help. We want to assure, that any serious steps taken to adopt the religion of the helping organisation spring from a genuine and non-coerced conversion and will stand time.

WCCDraft "Acts of charity including education, health care and relief services should arise from the unconditional love of Christ and should never be tied to conversion by force, allurement or persuasion. The exploitation of poverty and need has no place in Christian outreach. We acknowledge that our Christian social work, ministered in a spirit of love and compassion, can lead to the inner transformation of people and even to their conversion. We must let our light so shine before others that both our words and our works speak the Gospel, but they should not be used as enticement to convert. While ministries of healing, are an integral part of the Gospel, those who engage in these ministries in a multi-religious context require particular discernment and, exercise the ministry in such a way as to ensure that the vulnerability of people and their need for healing is not exploited."

We should not combine charity and preaching in ways that impair the freedom of the recipients to choose whether or not to listen.

At the same time we see no way to stop being involved in helping the poor and weak. It is an inherent part of our faith and very often, if we do not help, nobody else will.

WV We believe that God suffers with the poor and oppressed, and the grace and mercy we have received from Jesus Christ compel us to share in the suffering in the world. Evidences of God's reign are seen wherever people show compassion to those who suffer,

relationships are reconciled and people live with dignity, justice, peace and hope. We anticipate a future when all creation is restored and suffering and evil are defeated.

WV In the midst of sin, suffering and injustice, holistic ministry participates in God's intervention in all aspects of life leading to spiritual and social transformation. We affirm the value of all our ministries as witnessing to God's love for the poor and oppressed.

Education

Education has been a part of Christianity from its beginning. Becoming a 'disciple' of Jesus means to become a 'pupil', a 'learner', as is specified in the Great Commission (Mt 28,18). All humans have to learn from God and from each other. The ability to learn, to think and to discuss and through this to govern one's own life, is part of men and women being created in the image of God. We want to educate ourselves, education is an inherent part of any family and we want to extend education to all people, especially those who otherwise would not receive any education.

But as education has the goal to create humans, that can decide for themselves, we do not want to use education for manipulation or conversion under pressure, but to provide everybody with the necessary skills and knowledge to decide for himself, in secular things as well as in his relation to God.

When providing education to others, we will be transparent about our religious affiliation.

At the same time we acknowledge the right of those who run schools to promote their own belief traditions.

OSLO When running preschools and schools religious organisations should respect the religious affiliation of the pupils and not involve them in religious activities or expose them to religious propagation without explicit and voluntary consent of their parents or legal guardians. The schools should not prevent or discourage such children from practising the religion of their family when staying in the institution.

OSLO Organisations that run schools which provide religious instruction should not hinder pupils from receiving religious instructions for pupils with different religious affiliation, where such instruction is customary. Visiting these instructions should not have any consequences within the school (eg bad grades, being dismissed etc.).

Children

CAMBO "Children's work. At the present time when a lot of attention is being paid to how children are treated ..., groups must have the highest standards in their ministries with children. Schools and orphanages should be a witness to the compassion and righteousness of God. They should have the highest standards of financial accountability and show loving care of children. Staff selected to care for the children must be very carefully selected and trained. Discipline methods should not be by use of violence or hitting. Institutions must have high standards of hygiene, health and nutrition. Money must not be offered to community members to sell their children to orphanages."

OSLO Missionary organisations should acknowledge that children are vulnerable groups, and it is essential that cultural differences are understood so that conflicts due to these are avoided.

OSLO In accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (art 14), missionary organisations should respect the rights of the parents to give their children an upbringing in accordance with their beliefs in all relevant circumstances.

OSLO Missionary organisations should be sensitive to the development of the child as a free adherent to any religion or none. As a general rule, missionary activities should not be directed at minors without informed, explicit and voluntary consent by children and parents/guardians.

OSLO In the case of a minor wanting to convert to the religion of a missionary/charity organisation, the organisation should establish a dialogue with its parents with the aim of maintaining good relationship between the parents and their child.

Missionary organisations should accept that the perceived age of maturity varies from culture to culture and from legal system to legal system. Many countries provide legal ages for a decision for changing ones religion (eg in Germany with 14 years) or legal rules, which rights parents have for how long.

Orphans are especially vulnerable. On the one side, Christians feel compelled to care for orphans worldwide, as they often have no one else to look after them. In the absence of parents, the religious affiliation of the orphans can be a delicate topic. If Christians take the place of the parents, they have the rights of parents to look after the religious education of the children. On the other hand, like every child the orphans should have the right to choose their own religion, when old enough, and the care for them should not be tied to following the religion of their foster parents or the owners of the orphanage.

Family and marriage

WCCDraft “We maintain that people wishing to marry should not be forced to change their religious beliefs in order to marry. We acknowledge that we need to provide appropriate pastoral care to the families of individuals who have entered into cross-cultural and inter-religious marriages. We recognise that children of inter-religious marriages may be confused about their religious identity and may therefore need particular pastoral care.”

As Evangelicals we are dedicated to preserve the rights and integrity of all families and the human rights of its individual members. The two conflict often and often there is no easy way out. When the matter of religious membership or conversion is added, things do not become easier. We cannot promise that we can solve every single situation, but we intend to handle such cases as carefully as possible.

Women and gender issues

We acknowledge that women are disempowered in many cultures and religions. We recognize that women “have the right to have or adopt a religion or belief of her choice” (CCPR, art 18), and the “freedom to change her religion or belief” (DHR, art.18) independent of decisions taken by her husband or family. This also includes the right to retain her own religion in cases where her husband or family convert.

We know that conflict can arise here and are willing to do as much as possible, to save the peace of the nuclear as well as the larger family.

OSLO Missionary organisations should act with extreme care in cases where they know that there is a danger that a woman will come into conflict with her family (husband/father) if she should choose to convert as a result of their activities.

We also want to provide help to women, if problems occur. When women get into conflict, religious communities should not withdraw, but be willing to find peaceful solutions, but if necessary also help to find a battered women's shelter.

Legitimate use of violence by army and police

The monopoly of power and force belongs to the State. The State may punish anyone who uses force against anyone with the exception of self defense, may it be on an individual level or may it be groups against groups. The Christian Church has no right and no task to bear the sword.

In Romans 13:1-7 Paul makes it very clear, that Christian believers who do evil may be punished by the non-Christian State – even on God's command. At the same time the State has to protect everybody, that does the good.

This separation of the task of the Church and the State is only possible, if the State protects every citizen, that spreads his religion or conviction peaceful and hinders those, who do not.

The State and its army, police and courts, thus have the duty to defend peaceful Christians if they become the victims of illegal violence or if their human rights are violated. But it does not do this specifically because they are Christians, but should do so for anybody else becoming a victim of violence or human rights violations. We do not ask for any protection, that is not valid for anybody else.

Army, police or the State can never have the task to expand Christianity, propagate the gospel or conquer land for Christianity. In history some Christian areas were conquered by armies, but this was wrong, and using an army to spread a religion is always a wrongful confusion of the different tasks of the Church and the State.

We will not take part in using the authority of a state function while in office (e.g., as police or state school teacher) to force people to listen to our message or to convert to our religion.

Captive audiences

We do not want to preach to 'captive audiences', who cannot freely leave (e.g., army officers to their soldiers or a prison director to inmates) or, even if this is legally permissible in a country, we still want to give all people present a chance to leave anyway.

This is particularly true when proselytism is conducted in places where people are present by force of law and constitute a 'captive audience': classrooms, military installations, prisons, hospitals, and the like. Exposing people in captive audiences to undesired or uninvited preaching may be considered a violation of their rights and a form of coercion.

National laws – underground activities

CAMBO "To show respect for the Constitution and Laws of this country in so far as our conscience allows us to, understanding that our submission to God takes precedence over

our submission to man. The church should be a good example of respect for the rule of law. We must pray for our national leaders, and where possible, influence them so that laws promoting righteousness, justice and equity are enacted in the country.”

CAMBO “6.2.2 If there are difficulties experienced in dealing with local authorities as regards respecting the rights and laws of the Constitution and the Government of Cambodia as pertains to religious freedom, then appeals should be made through the correct channels.

6.2.4 In certain instances where the law of man is clearly in contradiction to the Law of God, one must obey God rather than men, but this is to be the very rare exception rather than the rule.

6.2.7 In order to obtain permissions for activities allowed by the Constitution and laws of the country, it is sometimes necessary to make payments. In order to be salt and light in a corrupt society, members should avoid supporting corrupt practices, eg. making payments for which there is not official written receipt.”

The undertaking of undercover missionary activities by foreigners is a delicate matter. In the interest of peace and security it is important to respect the laws of the country. Exceptions to this rule must be grounded in an thorough analysis of the actual human rights situation of the target group and in analysis, that proves, that there are no other options.

In countries, that deny religious freedom or any form of mission, underground missionary activity is just part of practising one’s faith underground as part of the human right to practise ones faith. Even though only local believers and national churches can decide, where they obey the State, even though it is mistaken, and where they disobey, in principle, the State may not forbid missionary work as such, and if he does, we have to obey God more than the State (Acts 5:29).

Colonialism, Superiority, Democracy, cultural imperialism, racism

We object to any form of cultural imperialism, racism, colonialism or superiority thinking. We want to assure, that our Christian mission is free of those attitudes, cannot be misunderstood in this sense and that we prevent others from misusing us or our message for such goals.

Even though we are in favour of democracy as the rule of law by a free people that choose there own government (with the intention to also protect human rights, minorities and the poor and weak), we also do not want to mix preaching the gospel with introducing democracy and surely not with the programme of any existing political party.

5 Ethical conduct regarding special areas of contention Part II: Language and Respect

Honesty and general respect

(A lot has been said under “defamation of religion” already.)

WCCDraft “In our inter-religious encounters we should speak honestly, respectfully, and authentically. We should approach them each other with willingness to listen and understand each other’s beliefs and practices.”

WCCDraft "In our inter-religious encounters, we affirm the need to speak in truth and charity and, where deemed appropriate, critically about the beliefs and practices of others. But in doing so, we undertake not to (1) adopt disrespectful, condescending, and ridiculing language in our criticisms, (2) compare disparagingly the practices of other religions with the ideals of the Christian faith, (3) criticize other religions if we have not attempted to understand them, (4) criticize other religions without providing constructive alternatives, (5) be critical of other religions without also being self-critical and being open to receive the criticism of religious others."

Sensitive use of language

INDIA "We believe evil in all its forms is in conflict with the rule of God. Evil is our enemy and not people. We object to language that can wrongly label people as enemies, or appear aggressive. Although the gospel call to follow Christ may cause offence and be opposed by some, we must take care to avoid vocabulary that can be distorted to justify that opposition.

INDIA Warfare language is not our motivation for mission. We share Christ because we experience the love and grace of God, leading us to worship and proclamation. As God loves all people without discrimination, so should we. We respect and serve all in words, attitudes and actions, regardless of caste, race, class, creed and gender."

INDIA We acknowledge that some churches and Christian missions have borrowed offensive secular terms, and over-extended military metaphors from the Bible. For example, the Bible uses 'soldier' to illustrate how we should obey God, but not to encourage an aggressive attitude to other people. While we want to avoid inappropriate military language, we profit from Bible metaphors that call us to respect and obey God and those in authority. However, warfare words, such as 'army', 'advance', 'attack', 'battle', 'campaign', 'crusade', 'conquer', 'commandos', 'enemy', 'foe', 'forces', 'marching orders', 'mobilize', 'soldier', 'tactical plan', 'target', 'victory', 'weapons', have been wrongly used as motivational tools for missions. Other offensive words include 'pagan', 'darkness', and 'heathen.' Emphasis on such vocabulary is unloving, inappropriate and counter-productive. Language that excludes women also offends. We must continuously examine both our attitudes and our language.

Culturally sensitivity

OSLO When coming from the outside to another society, the missionary organisation should be sensitive to cultural differences within that society and avoid actions that are considered disrespectful and objectionable in that society, including those defined as such for religious reasons. However, one need not be bound by restraint by cultural and/or religious norms that are opposed to the freedom to promote and receive ideas or that promote inequality between groups.

WCCDraft „We shall strive to show respect for others through a desire to understand their language, history, traditions, and religion. We renounce the view that our own particular culture and expression of Christian life can be a universal norm.“

Christian mission should always go hand in hand with existing local churches. They know better than anybody else how the real situation is and how peace building can take

place culturally relevant. It is up to them, where they want to fight for their rights and where not.

The primary agent of mission is the local church, wherever it exists already and as an international body together with our international global partners we dedicate ourselves not to organise mission against the local and national churches, but together with them and upon their counsel.

6 Recommendations to our members and all Christian churches and organisations

1. Write your own ethics code

The Roman-Catholic Church, the World Council of Churches, and the WEA together propose:

WCCDraft "Recognizing the particularity of each context, we suggest that local churches, confessional bodies, local, national and regional bodies and mission agencies, formulate their own code of conduct of witness, in the light of this document."

So we ask national and regional alliance and international and national mission agencies to formulate their own general code of ethics or one for mission or to adopt existing codes, when these are appropriate to their situation.

The ethics code of the WEA has to be very general and cannot fit the different nations, cultures and legal systems alike. Many borderline cases cannot easily be assessed and need the local experience.

2. Educate the newly converted for peaceful testimony and mission

The newly converted are sometimes too aggressive towards the adherents of the religion they have left. It is the responsibility of the church and missionary organisations to help those who have converted to its faith to heal the wounds of parting and to come to terms with their religious past.

This is especially true for the smaller and larger family of the converts. Even so we want to comfort them, if suffering for Jesus sake even in the family, we should educate them and help them to do the utmost possible to seek peace in the family and to help their relatives to understand their decision.

3. Educate your own members on how to treat those of other faiths.

Any teaching on evangelism and mission should take into account, that mission and conversion have become hot global topics, and are discussed in world media, in courts and by governments. We should know common misunderstandings, know how to argue against them, but especially assure to „keep a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. It is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil“.

4. Engage in peace building

[Insert a short statement by peace building initiative here]

7 Missing topics – should they be discussed?

Should we propose ombudsmen or council for difficult cases to report ??

Prosperity gospel ?? – new statement of theology working group of Lausanne: PG easily puts undue pressure on possible converts and leaves no time to think: The instant conversion is seen as sign of the spirit, not the longterm conversion

Tele-evangelists ?? – their statements are seen internationally and often go against what Christians in a country say

Is **highly contextualised mission deception** of others?

8 Appendix: Further topics not yet discussed above – sections from my lectures

Improvements in recent Christian history

Changing one's religion – and the political unrest following it - is not a new phenomenon, but a very historic one, be it famous people like Augustine, be it whole continents (e.g., Southeast Asia to Buddhism, Europe to Christianity or Northern Africa and the Near East to Islam) and it has often played a central role in local and world politics.

Not changing one's religion was in Christian, Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist societies very often more due to the pressure of culture and surroundings, than due to conviction. In history, probably more people were forced to change their religion or to stay in their own religion, than there were people, who freely and knowledgably choose or kept their religion.

In most of the past centuries Christians were often, like most Muslims are today, demanding that other people leave their religion and convert, but not allowing to leave one's own religion, be it Christianity or Islam, punishing apostasy with all kinds of civil results, from losing family, civil rights, reputation and jobs to losing one's life.

We experienced and still experiencing the end of the Constantinian era, which includes the end of safeguarding Christianity by means of the Caesar and forcing people into the church by political, juridical, economical and other civil pressures. Most Christians feel this is not a catastrophe but an advantage. The Christian faith again can live by spiritual means and through the power of the Holy Spirit, and does not need the help of the worldly powers, be it armies, governments or business.

In the overall picture, Christianity and its churches as a whole have taken the right course in the last hundred years, abstaining more and more from violence, from being involved in wars or civil wars, and from using political means or economical pressure for missions. There are still some bad situations, but if you compare the year 2009 and roughly a century ago, today bad situations like Northern Ireland or the so-called Christian terrorist organisation 'National Liberation Front' (NLFT) in Northeast India or the Nagaland rebels are at the fringe of Christianity, and the churches or Christians involved are criticised by the vast majority of Christians or churches worldwide, while e.g., in the First World War in Europe many major churches fueled the war and gave their authority to European countries involved in war as well as in the whole colonial world. Praise God,

there no longer is a broad acceptance of violence in propagating its own message in the Christian world.

The forced conversion of the Saxons by the German emperor or the Goa inquisition in India are mainly history, and we Christians are glad, because they belong to the darkest pages of church history. Today millions become Christians every day, who do not come from a Christian background, but do so by pure conviction without any pressure. More people are converting to Christianity than at any time when Christians allowed violent expansion to corrupt its message. What the gun boats of Western colonial powers did not achieve in China, the gospel message achieves nowadays without outside help and in full respect for the old Chinese culture.

The number of religious conversions is growing worldwide

Globalisation including radio, TV and internet confronts every adherent of a specific religion at least in theory with all the many other religions in the world, while 100 years ago the vast majority of the world's population never got into contact with the message of another religion or another confession in their whole lifetime!

At the same time the number of cross religious marriages is growing – to take just one typical area of change -, because young people on average get to know many more possible partners than a generation ago and among them more possible partners from other religions than ever before. In Germany, marriages between Catholics and free church-evangelicals have become common, even though it is still something pastors on both sides do not like at all. So suddenly a Catholic priest and a Baptist pastor, who otherwise ignored each other, have to meet on behalf of a couple.

The human rights revolution protecting religious freedom has brought about a religious balkanization and a growing war for souls, which all kinds of anti conversion laws have often tried to stop – usually with no real results.

We hope that Christians are mature enough to find ways to discuss these things, to find ways to solve these problems in discussion together, and to find basic general guidelines for an ethical code dealing with complicated situations, at least to clarify what should *not* be done.

Holding the next generation to one's religion?

We have to see that worldwide developments do not make things easier. Globalisation will lead to an ever growing meeting or confrontation between religions, from the private level up to world politics, whether it be peaceful and fruitful, or whether it be senseless or harmful. A higher percentage of the world population changes their religious affiliation every year than ever before.

Children today often change the profession, life style and music of their parents, even move to totally different places or countries, and many feel less and less obliged to follow the traditions of their forefathers. A growing number of orphans or displaced people even have no chance to get to know their parents' culture and home. In the Western countries parents have to pay for their childrens' education, even if they do not like the professions their children choose. What started in the West makes inroads into one country and culture after the next.

Religion is no exception here and it can hardly be made the only exception. In the Western world it is just normal that children change religion and political orientation. In other regions of the world statistically this phenomenon is on the rise and often meets cultures that are totally unprepared and experience this as a shock.

The modern relationship between parents and children and globalization is supplemented by the growing number of democratic states in the 20th century. In a democracy there is religious freedom and religious pluralism. That normally helps small religious communities without any political influence more than the majority religions, who in pre-democratic times often could rely on the help of politics and civil society for at least subtle pressure of the whole culture to stay with the religion in which one was born.

Especially in democracies many young people choose their favourite religion as they choose their favourite music style or even cell phone company and have no grasp what major impact this has for society, culture and tradition. In Eastern Europe many churches and religious groups are experiencing this more and more since 1989 and for many it is like a thief in the night.

Every religious community needs conviction or some sort of pressure and coercion in order to keep its adherents. Everyone who has children knows that. Either one communicates convictions of why people should remain with their own religion, or one has some sort of societal pressure that ensures that they will not want to change or cannot change. You can observe this in traditional religions as well as in highly industrialized, secular societies. An unalterable, stable, and unified religious culture is only possible by coercion. If the next generation does not have the possibility to make its own decisions about what it will believe, that in itself is a case where human rights have been violated.

Religious Conversion as an Expression of Religious Liberty

The classic definition of religious liberty is found in Article 18 of the United Nations' Universal General Declaration on Human Rights:

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

Religious conversion is something that generally no one takes lightly, but in the public view, it is seen as an unnecessary cause for trouble. However, the right to convert from one religion to another was the basic design of religious liberty. Why? The question is, What do I do if out of inner conviction I no longer hold to that which was previously taken for granted or which has been instilled in me? And what civil consequences will my free decision have?

Religious liberty in a country means that increasingly religious affiliation from civil status are uncoupled. Someone can stand at a public marketplace and propagate something religious (or political) without his employer, who happens to come by, being able to fire him for it. This benefits Christians, atheists, Muslims, as well as adherents of all religions and was precisely the primordial cell of the question of religious liberty.

In the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the question of religious conversion is mentioned first, and therefore the question of whether an Iranian may become a Bahá'í or

a Christian is an essential issue of religious liberty. Where religious conversion is not possible, there is no religious liberty.

Peaceful Missionary Work as an Example of Religious Liberty

Peaceful missions work is doubly anchored as a human right. The human right to conduct missions is derived from the right to freedom of expression. Missionary activity is nothing other than the freedom of expression. Just as political parties, environmental groups, and even advertisers and the media in a country publish their view of things, so the same applies to religions. The right to freedom of religious confession has to do primarily with categories of speech and the expression of religious content, and it ensures the right to express individual religious convictions to the surrounding world and to plead for them everywhere in public.

The Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion and Belief (Resolution 36/55 of the General Assembly of the United Nations, November 25, 1981, article 6, paragraph d) describes religious liberty as embracing the right “to write, issue and disseminate relevant publications in these areas.” The freedom of the expression of religion does not just mean that one can secretly pray in his or her own private chamber.

Whoever is against Christian missions also has to forbid all Christian worship services—and here one finds that numerous Islamic countries are, for all intents and purposes, consistent—because every worship service is, according to the Christian understanding, an invitation to receive God’s grace. They would also have to deny any Christian child rearing at home and in youth centers.

The alternative will be whether we can rally all countries and religions to enable peaceful missions work among each other and to refrain from all violent or societal pressure, or whether the spread and protection of religions will occur by means of violence instead of missionary efforts.