

IAMS Matters July-September 2014

Dear IAMS members,

Greetings again after a longish break! Meanwhile, the preparations for the 14th Assembly in Korea are progressing so that you will find the call for papers below. Even this time, we intend to raise funds for subsidies for participants from economically less privileged positions. Note that the subsidies will be available for IAMS members (or official representatives of institutional members) who will be presenting a paper.

As you know, IAMS Secretariat has been hosted by CMS in Oxford for six years now, and will be hosted until the Seoul Assembly. From late 2016 onwards, the secretariat is looking for a new home and new staff. IAMS needs a new general secretary, preferably also an assistant to her/him as well as institutional support. In case you have any ideas about persons and institutions that would be willing to volunteer, let me know. (This is literally a question of volunteering.)

IAMS finances: IAMS is still running a tight budget but due to drastic measures to cut costs, the deficit is very small. So, we are close to the rock bottom, but will not be hitting ourselves hard, if we proceed this way. There are also a couple of notifications on conferences in the end.

Yours,

Mika Vähäkangas, IAMS president

Call for Papers

14th Assembly of the INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR MISSION STUDIES

August 11–17, 2016

Seoul, South Korea

Conversions and Transformations: Missiological Approaches to Religious Change

No matter what the goal of mission activity is considered to be, mission aims at transformation of some sort. The issue of conversion – a traditional goal of much Christian missionary activity – is much debated, both within and between religious communities. This is often due to the controversial methods and aims some Christian communities have employed. The nature of the transformation brought about by religion is also a contested field: Is it “purely” spiritual or does it also have social, cultural, political and other dimensions? The Scripture and the different Christian traditions abound with ideas, models and impulses about the types of religious change to be followed and those that are rejected. The way Christians perceive the nature of religious conversion and transformation influences the ways they relate to other Christians and to the people of other faiths. In this way, religious change, as viewed from theoretical, theological, ethical and practical perspectives, occupies a central place in the field of mission studies.

This 14th IAMS Assembly will examine issues of conversion and religious change from the multiple perspective shaping contemporary mission studies. The issues of conversion and religious change have not received enough scholarly attention by missiologists and Christian theologians working in the discipline. In many ways the questions of conversion and transformation have been dealt with by other sciences, such as social studies, general psychology and psychology of religion, philosophy, developmental studies, etc. At the same time, these questions have often been answered by theologians and missiologists employing historical or denominational approaches to conversion and transformation. Merely historical or denominationally specific approaches to such questions can keep theologians from the wider exchange of views important for Christian life issues.

One of the aims of the 2016 IAMS Assembly is to contribute towards creating a space for critical and constructive dialogue among scholarly disciplines, different Christian traditions and varying contextual backgrounds. From this perspective, we would expect to see paper contributions that relate mission studies with other relevant disciplines and sciences so that issues of conversion and transformation are critically analyzed and theoretical approaches to religious change in interreligious contexts are elaborated.

We welcome papers on mission, conversion, transformation and the various missiological approaches to religious change from the perspective of the main fields of the IAMS Study Group, as well as from other scholarly fields of study. Other paper topics are welcomed, too, provided they contribute to the wider exploration of Christian mission and mission studies.

While preparing for the 2016 Assembly, please keep in mind the following information.

IAMS-2016 Study Groups

The academic procedure of the 2016 Seoul Assembly includes presentations of panel papers and session papers within the framework of the work of IAMS' seven study groups. These are:

- BISAM: Biblical Studies and Mission
- DABOH: Documentation, Archives, Bibliography and Oral History
- Healing/Pneumatology
- Gender in Mission
- Religious Freedom and Mission
- Theology of Mission
- Interreligious issues

All papers accepted should be presented within one of the Study groups. When proposing your paper, please think of which Study group your theme of research belongs to.

Timeline

1. Proposed topics with 250-word abstract are due by 31 August 2015.
2. Applicants will be notified of the acceptance of their papers in November and December 2015.
3. Draft papers of 2000 words are due by 31 May 2016.

Guidelines for writing paper:

1. Papers presented during the conference are not to exceed 2000 words or 20 minutes to allow 10 minutes to be allocated to questions and answers.
2. If conference participants intend to submit their papers to *Mission Studies* for publication after the conference, they should develop them to between 6000 and 10,000 words, including notes.
3. Authors are expected to strictly adhere to the Style Guide for *Mission Studies*

<http://missionstudies.org/index.php/journal/style-guide-for-mission-studies/>

Process governing acceptance of paper

1. All proposals with abstracts will be reviewed by the IAMS Academic Committee who will finalize the Seoul programme in early 2016.
2. Applicants will be notified of the Academic Committee's decision by the end of January 2016.
3. If additional clarifications are needed, paper presenters and the Chairs of the six IAMS Study groups will additionally review the submitted paper abstracts and notify the paper presenters by 31 March 2016.

Papers admittance criteria

While writing your paper and before submission, check that you can answer the following questions positively:

1. Is your paper topic relevant to the IAMS-2016 Assembly general theme or the theme of your Study group?

2. In what way does your paper make an original contribution to the chosen field of study?
3. Does your paper show the following features:
 - Clarity and logic of argument;
 - Originality and concreteness of content;
 - Level of engagement with relevant scholarship;
 - Accuracy of form, expression, and language inclusiveness.
4. Is your paper abstract less than 250 words, and your draft paper for presentation less than 2000 words?

Address all correspondence to:

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IAMS Seoul Assembly 2016.

Conference on “Ecclesiology and Ethics: The State of Ecumenical Theology in Africa”, University of the Western Cape, 3-5 June 2015

The Department of Religion and Theology at UWC will be hosting a major international conference on the state of the current debate in ecumenical theology in the African context from Wednesday 3 to Friday 5 June 2015.

This conference may be understood as a follow-up to a conference on “African Christian Theologies in Transformation: Respite et Prospice” that was also held at UWC in June 2003.

The aim of the conference is, quite simply, to assess the state of the current debate in ecumenical theology in the African context. We plan to engage the current generation of African theologians and ecumenical leaders on this theme. This will of course also be of interest outside the African context. Moreover, such a conference will have to address the deeper divides within Christianity in Africa. These divides are not merely denominational but also theological and contextual. How, for example, is the ecumenical movement related to the Pentecostal movement?

More specifically, the theme of the conference builds upon a WCC initiative in the 1990s. All may agree that churches have an immense social responsibility in the African context, but the emphasis may be placed either on the nature of the church or on the nature of that responsibility. In the field of African theology this may also be explored with reference to theologies of inculturation (where issues of faith and order are typically at stake) and theologies of liberation and reconstruction (where such social responsibilities are explored).

The invited plenary speakers include Frank Chikane, Ezra Chitando, Mvume Dandala, Musa Dube, Andre Karamaga, Tinyiko Maluleke, Jesse Mugambi, Sarojini Nadar, Nelus Niemandt, Theresa Okure, Isabel Phiri and Jerry Pillay.

Lund Mission Studies seminar 23rd-24th March 2015

Theological and philosophical responses to syncretism

One of the greatest areas of mismatch between the self-image of many religions and the way the religions are analyzed from outside is in the question of syncretism, or blending of religions. In many religious traditions, there is a strong urge to attempt to preserve the purity of religions, and even the idea that there is *pure religion*. However, from an analytical outsider perspective it has generally been agreed that there is no such a thing as a pure religion.

Interestingly enough, this type of unrealistic religious self-image has parallels *outside* the religious communities. The idea of religions as pure and monolithic entities is also cherished in other contexts, both academic and political. This undergirds a generally tense and conflictual relationship to religion as a phenomenon. In other words, the image of religion as pure may constitute a hindrance to creative and (de-)constructive academic approaches to religious studies. It may block a political or societal understanding of the role of religion.

The aim of this seminar is twofold. First, it aims to elaborate theologically the consequences of syncretism to Christian faith. Second, this project aims to elaborate the consequences of syncretism to philosophy and empirical research on Christianity.

The plenary speakers of the seminar are selected in such a manner that it facilitates the blending of theological and outside perspectives, as well as theoretical and empirical approaches. The plenary speakers are:

Prof. Gavin D'Costa, University of Bristol
Dr. Tan Kang-San, CMS, Kuala Lumpur
Dr. Jonas A. Jørgensen, Copenhagen University
Prof. Mika Vähäkangas, Lund University
Dr. Patrik Fridlund, Lund University
Ms. Lotta Gammelín, Lund University

The program will begin at 10:15 am on Monday 23rd March 2015 and end at 6 pm to be followed by paper sessions on the following day at 9:15 am until 12:30. Location: LUX building, Lund University,