



Review

Christian Solidarity in the Cross of Christ

by *Olav Fykse Tveit*

*World Council of Churches Publications,
Geneva, Switzerland, 2012, 146 pages*

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Olav Fykse Tveit is General Secretary of the World Council of Churches. An ordained pastor in the Church of Norway, the Rev. Dr. Tveit served as general secretary of the Church of Norway Council on Ecumenical and International Relations (2002-2009) before his election in 2009.

In his present book he explains the meaning of the cross for our world. The cross is also the symbol of World Council of Churches - WCC (a boat upon the waves, with the cross as its mast).

The author emphasizes that „the Greek word *oikoumene* - the whole inhabited earth - from which the term *ecumenical* originates, encircles the craft and indicates its trajectory. This image is a reminder of the fishing boats of Jesus' early disciples, the sailing ships that carried apostles“.



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This can also be the symbol of church that „can carry us safely through stormy waters, from continent to continent and island to island and bring us at land, to harbour“.

It is very important to understand the meaning of the symbol of WCC, because „in the case of the ecumenical ship, we see that the cross stands at the centre. The sailors and their passengers do not set forth as crusaders, conquerors or colonizers, but as ambassadors of good news and of the love God gives to unite the world's people. We travel in order to show solidarity in the spirit of Jesus Christ who lived as one of us and suffered as we suffer and triumphed over death“.

Sometimes, the semnification of the cross is not understood. The cross has been seen as an instrument of execution, but in Christ, we can see the cross as a blessing for hope, faithfulness, unity and common future.

Olav Fykse Tveit says that the message of the empty cross is that God remains with us and for us („I will be with you always“ - Matt. 28:20). „The meaning of the cross is profound and belongs to the mysteries of faith. The cross teaches us that the Triune God still identifies with creation and show us visions of a renewed creation in which the ravages of sin are no more“.

The cross can help us to recognize that we can't do anything without God, „the cross calls us to our knees in humility, self-criticism and confession of our sinfulness“, and in the same time we become stronger through the cross, „the cross empowers us to embrace life anew“.

The author notes that „we, as disciples of Jesus Christ, are guided by the Holy Spirit into solidarity with the people of God and with all of creation so that the power of the cross may be evident in our life together“.

We must try to present the christian solidarity in the world and for the world, but in the Cross of Jesus Christ.

We can read in this book, that God is God of the Spirit, the omnipresent Spirit. „The Spirit of God is moving the whole world, the oikoumene and therefore also the churches, which

are us, the women and men in the churches“, because He is the God of life.

The ecumenical movement of creation is in relation with ecumenical movement of the cross.

Tveit says that „the cross is more than a sign of our religious identity. It is the reality check of our churches, of our ministry, of our ecumenical movement, of our faith“, so we can understand that human solidarity can be possible in the cross of Christ, who embracing the whole world from the cross.

„The gift of the cross binds us together, our open arms can be a sign of the ecumenical movement of the cross, showing that we need one another, that we want to share God's gifts with all in this beloved world“ (p. 17).

Christian Theology of the Cross can break the power of sin through the pace of Jesus. „We are called to be one in Christ, to be one in our solidarity with a suffering world. To be one in Christ's identification with victims of sin. To be one in our faith that there is a possibility for change, for forgiveness“ (p. 50).

The call to be one in Christ is a call to peace, the peace of Jesus Christ and to communion, together under the Cross - the tree of Life, for mission, diakonia, dialogue and reconciliation in a global and multicultural reality. So the cross can be seen as a sign of global peace and justice.

„The mission of the church has always been and will always be to bring reconciliation by offering a new perspective“ (p. 115), and us, as the members of church, must promote solidarity, in openness and sharing, in serving and worshiping God together.

In conclusion, the author underlines that our future will be common, if „on the journey of just peace, we journey together“, in the Cross of Christ (p. 143).

I was very impressed by the new perspectives of this book and I'm sure that only through communication between us, between religions and confession, we can be in communion!