

Migration, Multi-Ethnicity and Protestantism in Europe: An Immersion Class to Waldensian/Methodist congregations in Northern Italy (Bieler/Veddeler)

A course taught in the context of the Enhancing-Life-Project

Introduction

This was the first class I taught in the context of the Enhancing Life Project. It was the first immersion experience created in a series that will focus on issues of multiethnic integration of churches in different European countries (those will not be part of the ELP requirement). We travelled to Northern Italy (Vicenza, Padua and Verona) and met with congregations whose members are mainly of Ghanaian Methodist and Italian Waldensian descent. For various decades, Italy has seen a vibrant movement of migrants from various African countries who seek to settle in Italy. The Waldensian church in Italy, a small Protestant minority in a predominantly Roman Catholic context, took on the challenge to respond to the changing demographic landscape in Europe due to such transnational movements of people who seek to find a better and safer life in Europe. In addition, due to the current refugee situation in Europe we focused on the initiatives the Waldensian Church has developed that seek to address the dramatic situation connected to the hundreds of deaths that have occurred as people have drowned in the Mediterranean Sea who were seeking to get to Lampedusa. The class focused on the exploration of the collective memory, ethos, practice and theologies that are operating in these communities. These explorations helped to frame questions of how such communities perceive what enhancing life means for them, what religious values and convictions are motivating their thoughts and actions. The class in Vicenza was enriched by the presentations of two Professors from Rome: Paolo Naso, who is an expert on the history of migration and the current situation in Italy as well as Yann Redalié who spoke on the vision, the practice, and the challenges of becoming an ethnically integrated church.

The topic of this course overlaps with one of the case studies I seek to develop for my own research project within the ELP. The following syllabus reflects the study day we did in advance and the schedule of the immersion trip.

Study day in Preparation of the immersion class
Migration, Multi-Ethnicity and Protestantism in Europe: An Immersion Class
to Waldensian/Methodist congregations in Northern Italy (Bieler/Veddeler)
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Wednesday, September 23rd, 2015
Kirchliche Hochschule Wuppertal/Bethel
Lecture hall 4
10 am-6 pm

Course content

This immersion class introduces students to Waldensian congregations in Vincenza, Padua, and Verona which have been challenged, renewed and transformed by the encounter with migrants from African countries and from Eastern Europe. This class explores how these congregations understand the enhancement of life in relation to the challenges that migrants are facing in Italy. Special attention will be given to the spiritual and cultural resources people draw upon as they are engaging attempts to work towards a deeper sense of spiritual and social communion among the members who are of Ghanaian Methodist descent and those who are Italian Waldensian. Special attention will be given to concepts of collective memory, religious identity formation, cultivation of ethos, spiritual values with regard to everyday life and to the vision life ought to be.

The Waldensian Church in Italy deals with these aspects in its program “Being Church together” in a notable way. In Vincenza we will also have the opportunity to work together with professors from the Waldensian faculty in Rome, who have been focusing for years on refugee politics within the European Union.

The aim of the study day is to introduce three important aspects which we will lay the ground work for a deeper immersion experience in Italy:

- a) The history and the current situation of Waldensian congregations,
- b) Reflections on various aspects in the development of multiethnic congregations,
- c) The European Asylum laws and regulations and its special influence on Italy

This course is related to the work of the international and interdisciplinary research group “The Enhancing Life Project” in which scholars work on the question of how individuals, scientists, religious and political groups from civil society reflect on the enhancement of life.

For further information, check out: <http://enhancinglife.uchicago.edu/>

Schedule of the Study Day

10:00-10:20 am

Introduction of the group members and the program

10:20-13:00 am/pm

1: History and Current Challenges of Waldensian Communities in Italy

- a) We begin with a reconstruction of major aspects of the history of Waldensian Church focusing the following questions:
- What are the characteristics of Waldensian theology and of their religious practice?
 - How have they changed during the centuries?
 - How can the history of persecution and resilience be described? What are the spiritual values, conceptions of counter-worlds and further religious and cultural concepts operating in this context?
 - What are the challenges nowadays?
 - What do we want to understand more deeply on the immersion?

These questions will be discussed by means of the “World-Café”-method. Please work actively on these questions in advance.

Literature:

- *Euan K. Cameron, Artikel: ‚Waldenser‘, in TRE Bd. , 388-402*
- *Klaus Fitschen, Protestantische Minderheitenkirchen in Europa im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert, Kirchengeschichte in Einzeldarstellungen IV/4, Leipzig 2008, 52-81 (chapter on Italy)*
- *For further historical studies (optional):*
 - *Gabriel Audisio, Die Waldenser. Die Geschichte einer religiösen Bewegung, München 1996.*
 - *Barbro Lovisa: Italienische Waldenser und das protestantische Deutschland 1655 bis 1989, Göttingen 1994.*

11:45-12:00 am Coffee Break

- b) Lecture by Pastor Thomas Krieger (Department for Mission and Ecumenical Work and of the EKvW)

1:15-2:15 pm Lunch

2:15-4:00 pm

2) Migration and multiethnic congregations: ecclesiological, educational, intercultural, political and theological aspects

The second part of the study day aims at a deeper reflection of the discussions on migration and multiethnic congregations in Germany to be prepared in a more appropriate way for the dialogue in Italy.

- a) Lecture by Dr. Barbara Dümling, Head of the intercultural work in the project "Together for Berlin" and Co-director of the Institute for Urbane Transformation in Berlin
- b) Discussion and creation of a map of perception as preparation for the study trip

Literature:

- *Gemeinsam evangelisch! Erfahrungen, theologische Orientierungen und Perspektiven für die Arbeit mit Gemeinden anderer Sprache und Herkunft, EKD-Texte 114, Hannover 2014*
 - *Optional: Bianca Dümling, Migrationskirchen in Deutschland. Orte der Integration, Frankfurt a.M.*

4-6:00 pm

3) European asylum laws and regulation

- a) **Visit of the exhibition of Pro Asyl on this theme (library of the Protestant University Wuppertal/Bethel)**
- b) **Discussion**
- c) **Evaluation of the Day**

Literature and Films:

Please take note of the exhibition online:

- <http://www.proasyl.de/de/home/ausstellung-asyl-ist-menschenrecht/>
- Steffen Angenendt, Wege zu einer kohärenten Politik, in: APuZ 25/2015
- Katrin Hirsland, Aktuelle Zahlen und Entwicklungen, in: APuZ 25/2015
- Oliver Gerson, Frontex und die europäischen Außengrenzen, in: APuZ 25/2015
- Stefan Luft, Herausforderungen europäischer Grenzpolitik, in: APuZ 47/2013
- Franck Düvell, Flüchtlinge an den Grenzen Europas, in: APuZ 47/2013

- Please watch the following documentaries in advance
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WiYKrvY965Y>
- Und "Die Anstalt"-Folge vom 18.11.2014 ein (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YQi1PZ1fnnw>)

Immersion Class to Italy

Addresses

Our Host

Pastor William Jourdan
CHIESA EVANGELICA VALDESE
(Unione delle chiese metodiste e valdesi)
Chiese metodiste di Vicenza e di Bassano del Grappa
Viale Ortigara 5,
36100 - Vicenza
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Our Place of Accommodation

Ostello Olimpico
Viale Antonio Giuriolo, 9,
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Contacts in Germany

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Program

Date	Location	Program
Friday, 25.09.	Düsseldorf Arrival Venedig	Meeting at Düsseldorf Airport at 8.30 Departure 10.50 Arrival Venedig 12.15 h Bus to Vicenza

	Vicenza	<p>Lunch at Ostello Olympico Settling in at Ostello Olympico</p> <p>Introduction into the planned program Introduction and Discussion: History of the Waldensian Church with a focus on experiences of displacement, forced migration, and being a Protestant minority in Italy</p> <p>Getting to know Vicenza Dinner in Vicenza</p>
Saturday, 26.09.	Vicenza	<p>Introduction: Refugees, Migration</p> <p>8.00 Breakfast 9.00 Morning devotion 9.30 Lecture Prof. Paolo Naso, Chair for Politology, University “La Sapienza”, Rome: <i>Situation of Refugees, European Asylum Politics and Migration in Italy</i></p> <p>Break and Coffee 11-13:00 Discussions and work in groups</p> <p>13.00 Lunch at Ostello Olympico Afternoon: Travel in two groups to Padua and Verona by train: Visit and talks with the congregations there. Getting to know the implementation the program of “Being Church Together” in the congregations</p> <p>Dinner in groups according town planning Travel back to Vicenza at own time in the groups</p>
Sunday, 27.09.	Vicenza, Wesley-Hall	<p>Communion Service, Celebration and Encounters</p> <p>Sunday Service and Celebration with the congregation in Vicenza, Agape, Joint Lunch Sermon: Rev. Pieter Grove</p> <p>Discussions in groups with congregants: Challenges, realities and visions of a multi-ethnic congregation</p> <p>15:00 Enhancing Life in multi-ethnic community building</p> <p>Dinner in Vicenza</p>
Monday, 28.09.	Vicenza	<p>Analysis, Reflection, Feed Back, Further Steps</p> <p>8.00 Breakfast 9.00 Morning Devotion 9.30 Lecture Prof. Yann Redalié; Chair for NT, Waldensian Faculty, Rome: “Being Church Together”: Developing multi-ethnic congregations</p>

		<p>13.00 Lunch at Ostello Olimpico</p> <p>Afternoon:</p> <p>Dialogical Lecture: Rev. George Ennin (Pastor, Bassano del Grappa)</p> <p>Rev. William Jourdan (Pastor, Vicenza): Leading a multi ethnic congregation</p> <p>Input from students and APK members (theses for reflection)</p> <p>Reflective discussions</p> <p>Evaluation</p> <p>Agreement on further steps</p> <p>Dinner in Vicenza</p>
Tuesday, 29.09.	Vicenza-Venedig-Düsseldorf	<p>7.30 Breakfast</p> <p>8.00 hr Morning devotion</p> <p>9.00 hr Departure by bus to Venedig</p> <p>11.00 hrs Arrival at Venedig Airport</p> <p>13.00 h Departure to Düsseldorf</p> <p>14.35 Arrival in Düsseldorf</p>