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**Christian Mission in Urban Context:**

**Identifying Main Conditioning Factors in the Growth**

**of the Christian and Missionary Alliance in Lima, Peru**

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# Abstract

This dissertation is the result of a socio-theological analysis of the substantial membership growth of the Christian and Missionary Alliance – C&MA – in Lima, Peru, during the last 40 years. The C&MA is a Christian Protestant denomination with a worldwide work, particularly in North America, Latin America, Africa and Asia. The focus in this dissertation is on its work in Lima, Peru. The C&MA started its work in Lima in 1957, and had 120 members by the beginning of 1973. Today the C&MA in Lima has about 40 000 members with heterogeneous social backgrounds. It is this substantial membership growth, which started at the end of 1973 which has motivated the main research question: *What are the main conditioning factors that have led to the substantial growth of the C&MA in Lima since 1973?*

The research work is based on written sources, qualitative interviews with local informants in three selected C&MA congregations in Lima, and participatory observations. The collected data have been categorized thematically and analysed hermeneutically.

The written sources include historical and socio-cultural studies of Peruvian history, society and culture as well as relevant theological and missiological literature. The empirical data collected through qualitative interviews and participatory observation is used in order to obtain an emic perspective from first hand informants from the three C&MA congregations in Lima.

The initial chapter deals with methodological considerations and theoretical perspectives. The main body of the dissertation identifies the main conditioning factors in three steps (Ch. 2-4). *Historical* conditioning factors for the growth are identified through a postcolonial reading of modern Peruvian history. And further, through a study of the historical background of the C&MA and its work in Lima (Ch. 2). *Socio-cultural* conditioning factors for the growth are then identified through a study of the Lima context combined with information collected in interviews with members of the three C&MA congregations. These are related to religion, culture and other social realities (Ch. 3). The third step is a study of *church internal* conditioning factors, focusing on the *spirituality* in three selected C&MA congregations in Lima (Ch. 4). By identifying these main conditioning factors – historical, socio-cultural and spiritual – it is possible to explain more adequately why people have joined and remained in these selected C&MA congregations.

The analysis reveals that church external forces (the historical and socio-cultural) and church internal forces (spirituality) have interacted dynamically in attracting members to and creating the substantial membership growth in the C&MA congregations. Altogether fourteen main conditioning factors for the C&MA growth in Lima are identified. Five of these are historical, five socio-cultural, and four are specifically related to the spirituality in the C&MA congregations.

Based on the information gathered through participative observation and interviews with lay and ordained C&MA members it is possible to identify some main characteristics of the spirituality of the C&MA congregations which make them attractive to newcomers and members alike: Instead of institutional religion the C&MA congregations promote personal religion which addresses relevantly peoples’ spiritual and social needs and engage adequately in their daily lives. They are heterogeneous communities which welcome and include people regardless of their socio-economic or other cultural differences. They offer socio-diaconal care for their members as well as other people in the Lima society. They promote a spirituality which inspires personal faith in Jesus Christ and an ethos that is molded by his life and teachings. According to the informants it is this kind of spirituality which has attracted newcomers, and made them join and remain in the C&MA congregations.