

# EVANGELICAL REVIEW OF THEOLOGY

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# Editorial

We live in troubled times. In our life-time we have witnessed nation after nation falling under the oppression of marxists, military or religious dictatorships. Churches face increasing suffering and persecution. Jesus warned that this would happen especially as the endtime draws near. As the Lausanne Covenant states "A Church that preaches the Cross must itself be marked by the Cross". Persecution is part and parcel of our Christian calling. It may result in church growth. It is reported that the Church in Uganda grew from 55% to 70% of the population during the cruel dictatorship of Idi Amin. But persecution may lead to the death of churches as history has often shown.

The WEF Theological Commission believes that it is time to call the churches to prepare themselves for witness under political oppression. The report "Church and Nationhood" of the Basel consultation in 1976 marked the beginning of this concern. Bishop David Gitari of Kenya, one of the converters of the study unit Pastoral Ministry, recently convened a consultation on Church and Persecution in Eastern Africa. It is hoped that the report, now being revised, will be published in the Theological Monograph series. The theme will be examined from an international perspective at the Commission's consultations in London March 1980. How then shall we live? Churches that resort to violence to resist violence destroy themselves, but those who passively capitulate to the Lordship of Caesar also die. The boundary between the prophetic rebuke and political resistance is not always easy to determine. History and contemporary events amply affirm that it is the quality of life of the Church as the community of the people of God that counts. A Church whose sense of values enables it to practise a simple lifestyle and whose spirit of love enables it to care for neighbours and persecutors will continue witnessing under oppression. But love alone is not enough. Such a church must unite godfearing, worshipping families, faithfully taught in the Scriptures, and who with a resting confident faith in our Heavenly Father practise and proclaim righteousness and social justice, penetrating the world as salt and light. The articles in this issue on the Jubilee Fellowship and the Church in USSR illustrate the theme in different contexts. [p. 161](#)

## The Lord's Prayer in the First Century

by SIMON J. KISTEMAKER

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BECAUSE THE Lord's prayer is so much used and so well known, we tend to forget its place, setting and significance in the early Christian Church. Admittedly the evidence relating to the Lord's prayer in the first centuries of the Christian era is sparse. Yet valuable background information may be gleaned from sources including Qumran, Judaism, and even Scripture itself.

Source material from the early Church is very limited. Besides the evidence in the *Didache* and references in the writings of the apostolic fathers, virtually no information is

available. Also, these sources “give us no clear description of the way in which the church of that period used the Lord’s Prayer.”<sup>1</sup>

The Christian Church, as is evident from the book of Acts, has its roots in the Jewish synagogue. It is therefore not surprising that the early Christians adopted much of the liturgy of the synagogue worship service. By way of the NT and the apostolic fathers we learn that the early Christians used the word “synagogue” rather indiscriminately. James speaks of a rich man and a poor man entering the “synagogue” of the early Christians ([Jas 2:2](#)). And Ignatius, in his letter to Polycarp written on the way to Rome in A.D. 108, exhorts the readers to have frequent meetings in the synagogues (*Ign. Pol.* 4:2).

The apostles proclaimed the gospel first in the local Jewish synagogues. Paul reasoned with Jew and Gentile in the synagogues, for example, of Thessalonica and Corinth ([Acts 17:2](#); [18:4](#)). In this setting the apostles taught the Lord’s prayer. They [p. 162](#) placed it within the framework of the rich liturgical tradition of the Jews, and they used a form already sanctioned by long devotional use.<sup>2</sup>

## I. JEWISH PRAYERS

The fact that Matthew addressed his gospel to the Jews and that Luke wrote for the hellenists is demonstrated in their respective versions of the Lord’s prayer. Matthew’s version is liturgically rich, while Luke’s is brief and liturgically poor.

*Matt* [6:9–13](#)

*Luke* [11:2–4](#)

Our Father in heaven hallowed be your name; Father, hallowed be your name; your kingdom your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Give us each day our daily bread.

Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

And lead us not into temptation.

In Matthew’s prayer the address includes the possessive pronoun “our” as well as the phrase “in heaven.” Luke merely has “Father.” Also Luke does not have the petition “your will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” and he omits the second half of the last petition (“but deliver us from the evil one”). Lesser differences such as “debts” in Matthew and “sins” in Luke may also be noted.

Matthew’s address is full: “Our Father in heaven.” The Jew would avoid using the name of God. Therefore the divinity of the Father is circumscribed, much the same as the phrase

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<sup>1</sup> G. J. Bahr, “The Use of the Lord’s Prayer in the Primitive Church,” *JBL* 84 (1965) 153.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. F. H. Chase, *The Lord’s Prayer* (Cambridge: University Press, 1891) 14.

“kingdom of God” is expressed as “kingdom of heaven” in Matthew. Moreover, p. 163 the Greek uses the plural *ouranois* for “heaven,” which is a literal translation of the Hebrew plural (dual) *samayim*.

The Jew of Jesus’ day faithfully prayed the prayer known as the Eighteen Benedictions. In that prayer the address “our Father” is used repeatedly.<sup>3</sup>

Another Hebraic peculiarity may be seen in the petition, “Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors.” In the last part of this petition Matthew has the aorist tense *aphekamen* (“we have forgiven”), Luke has the present tense *aphiomen* (“we forgive”), and the *Didache*, which is akin to Matthew’s version, also has the present tense *aphiemen*.

It is interesting to see the translation of [Matt 6:12b](#) in the various Bible versions. The *KJV* translates it in the present tense, “as we forgive our debtors.” All the modern translations show the past tense, “as we also have forgiven our debtors.” The Latin Vg has the present tense *dimittimus*. The *NAB* of the Roman Catholic Church also gives the present tense. And the Syriac Vg (the Peshitta) has the perfect tense.

In Syriac, as in other Semitic languages, the perfect tense expresses a finished action. The perfect tense does not refer to time but to the quality of an action. Semitic languages do not have a present tense form; the perfect tense is used to bring out a present perfect idea. “In actuality, however, there lies behind Matthew’s past tense form what is called in Semitic grammar a *perfectum praesens*, a ‘present perfect,’ which refers to an action occurring here and now. The correct translation of the Matthean form would therefore run, ‘as we also herewith forgive our debtors.’”<sup>4</sup>

An interesting parallel to this petition is found in the apocryphal book of Sirach. In [28:2](#) the writer exhorts his readers as follows: “Forgive your neighbor the wrong he has done, and then your sins will be pardoned when you pray.”

The last petition of the Lord’s prayer shows some affinity to the prayers known from documents discovered in the Qumran area and to prayers recorded in the Talmud. In the Qumran Psalm p. 164 scroll, a poem entitled “A Plea for Deliverance” has this petition: “Let Satan not rule over me, nor an unclean spirit.”<sup>5</sup> This petition is the same as that in the Aramaic *T. Levi*, fragments of which were discovered at Qumran. Moreover, except for the wording “Satan ... unclean spirit,” the text is derived from [Ps 119:133b](#): “And let no iniquity get dominion over me” (*RSV*). This text is also part of three Jewish prayers known from the Talmud. For example, Rabbi Judah the Prince, editor of the Mishna, prays a private prayer at the end of a public worship service: “May it be thy will, O Lord our God ..., to deliver us from the destructive Accuser.”<sup>6</sup> And last but not least, in an apocryphal psalm recorded in a Qumran scroll the following petition is found: “Remember me and forget me not and lead me not into situations too hard for me.”<sup>7</sup>

Not just the last petition of the Lord’s prayer is similar to Jewish prayers of the first century. Also the beginning of the Lord’s prayer resembles an ancient Aramaic prayer

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<sup>3</sup> Str-B, 394.

<sup>4</sup> J. Jeremias, *The Lord’s Prayer* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964) 14. Also see J. M. Ford, “The Forgiveness Clause in the Matthean Form of the Our Father,” *ZNW* 59 (1968) 127–131.

<sup>5</sup> J. A. Sanders, *The Dead Sea Psalms Scroll* (Ithaca: Cornell, 1967) 121. Cf. D. Flusser, “Qumran and Jewish ‘Apotropaic’ Prayers,” *IEJ* 16 (1966) 195.

<sup>6</sup> I. Epstein, ed., *The Babylonian Talmud, Zer. Ber.* 16b (London: Soncino, 1948) 99.

<sup>7</sup> J. A. Sanders, *Dead Sea*, p. 111.

used at the conclusion of a synagogue worship service. The prayer is known as the *qaddish* (“Holy”), familiar undoubtedly to Jesus and the disciples.

Exalted and hallowed  
be his great name  
in the world which he created  
according to his will.  
May he rule his kingdom  
in your lifetime  
and in your days  
and in the lifetime  
of the whole house of Israel,  
speedily and soon.  
And to this, say: Amen.<sup>8</sup>

## II. BIBLICAL SETTING

Jesus taught the Lord’s prayer in the context of the liturgy of P. 165 his day. Moreover, some of the petitions of this prayer have parallels in the other prayers of Jesus. In the Lucan account of Jesus’ Gethsemane prayer we read, “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done” (Luke 22:42). Obviously, the last part of the prayer is parallel to “your will be done” (Matt 6:10). In the high-priestly prayer of Jesus, recorded in the fourth gospel, Jesus prayed for his disciples and said, “Protect them from the evil one” (John 17:15). Except for the verb, the petition is the same as “deliver us from the evil one” (Matt 6:13). These prayers are addressed to God the Father and are offered in the presence of Jesus’ disciples.<sup>9</sup>

In the broader context of the Gethsemane scene the word *peirasmos*, “temptation,” stands out. After the institution of the Lord’s supper, Jesus said to his disciples, “You are those who stood by me in my trials” (*en tois peirasmois mou*). Trials would also be the disciples’ lot. Jesus prayed for Peter because Satan had asked to sift the disciples as wheat (Luke 22:31, 32). In the garden of Gethsemane Jesus told the disciples, “Get up and pray so that you will not fall into temptation” (22:46). Jesus asked Peter to watch and pray. Shortly afterwards, Peter succumbed to temptation when he denied Jesus three times.<sup>10</sup>

The last petition of the Lord’s prayer, “Lead us not into temptation” (Matt 6:13), has parallels in the book of Sirach. “My son, if you come forward to serve the Lord, prepare yourself for temptation” (Sir 2:1), “No evil will befall the man who fears the Lord, but in trial (*peirasmos*) he will deliver him again and again” (33:1).

In the NT the word *peirasmos* occurs 21 times. It is James, in his general epistle, who clarifies the meaning of the word: “When tempted, no one should say, ‘God is tempting me.’ For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone” (Jas 1:13).

Further clarification is given in the Babylonian Talmud in a Jewish evening prayer that may go back to the times of Jesus: “And bring me not into sin, or into iniquity, or into

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<sup>8</sup> J. Jeremias, *Lord’s Prayer*, p. 21.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. G. Smith, “The Matthean ‘Additions’ to the Lord’s Prayer,” *ExpTim* 82 (1970) 55.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. C. B. Houk, “Peirasmos, Lord’s Prayer and Massah,” *SJT* 19 (1966) 221, Cf. F. H. Chase, *Lord’s Prayer*, p. 109. And cf. M. H. Sykes, “And Do Not Bring Us to the Test,” *ExpTim* 73 (1962) 189.

temptation, p. 166 or into contempt.”<sup>11</sup> Obviously the lines of this prayer stand in apposition to each other. “This evening prayer thus prays for preservation from succumbing in temptation. This is also the sense of the concluding petition of the Lord’s Prayer.”<sup>12</sup> The consequence of falling into temptation is a turning away from God, which leads to apostasy. Therefore the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews sums up his teaching on temptation in 3:12: “See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.”

### III. EARLY CHURCH

Throughout the Mediterranean world Jews had established synagogues and had gained proselytes. Jews and proselytes were schooled in the OT Scriptures. When they accepted the Messiah as Lord and Savior, they knew how to pray because of their rich liturgical background. In these Jewish Christian circles the Matthean version of the Lord’s prayer became the accepted prayer.

From excavations at the ancient city of Pompeii, we have learned that the Lord’s prayer was in common use by A.D. 79 when the city was destroyed because of an eruption of Mount Vesuvius. The Rotas-Sator square discovered at Pompeii is eloquent testimony to the use of the Lord’s prayer at that time.<sup>13</sup>

From tomb inscriptions archaeologists have learned that there were numerous synagogues in the city of Rome. The synagogue, serving as the house of prayer and instruction, drew countless Gentiles. When the gospel was preached in subsequent times by apostles and apostolic helpers, Gentiles who had been proselytized were most receptive to the Christian faith. They had been instructed in the use of prayers in the synagogue, and upon membership in the Christian Church they readily prayed the Lord’s prayer in the Jewish setting known to us from Matthew’s gospel.

We cannot overestimate the influence of the Jewish synagogue in regard to religious education of the community. “Programs of study were a prominent feature of the Synagogues, and schools p. 167 for instruction were from early times attached to it.”<sup>14</sup> Both Philo and Josephus indicate that the Scriptures were taught for the spiritual and physical well-being of the people.<sup>15</sup> In the middle of the second half of the first century “the Lord’s Prayer was a fixed element in instructions on prayer in all Christendom, in the Jewish-Christian as well as the Gentile-Christian church.”<sup>16</sup> Because the Lord’s prayer as recorded in Matthew’s gospel has a liturgically rich tradition, it soon became part of the liturgy in the entire Church. It is therefore not surprising that the *Didache* has the Matthean form of the Lord’s prayer.

The *Didache* reflects Church life that is rather close to apostolic times. The conjecture is that it was written in the last quarter of the first century or the beginning of the second. The book deals largely with worship: baptism, the Lord’s supper and the Lord’s prayer. In

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<sup>11</sup> Epstein, *Talmud, Ber.* 60b, p. 378.

<sup>12</sup> J. Jeremias, *Lord’s Prayer*, p. 30.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. F.J. Botha, “Recent Reseach on the Lord’s Prayer”. *Neot.* 1 (1967) 189.

<sup>14</sup> R. R. De Ridder, *The Dispersion of the People of God* (Kampen: Kok, 1971) 81.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Philo Judaeus, *The Works of Philo Judaeus* (London: Heinemann; New York: Putnam, 1958), 6: *De Vita Moses* 2.167; Falvius Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.18.

<sup>16</sup> Jeremias, *Lord’s Prayer*, p. 10.

chap. 8 the Matthean Lord's prayer is given, followed by the doxology, "for thine is the power and the glory for ever and ever." A general exhortation concludes chap. 8: "Three times a day thus shall you pray."

The prescribed frequency in the use of the Lord's prayer finds an echo in that of the Eighteen Benedictions. This prayer likewise might be said in the morning, in the afternoon and in the evening.

The *Didache* teaches us that the Lord's prayer and the Lord's supper were treasures given to the believer by the Lord. To pray the Lord's prayer must be seen as a privilege. Joachim Jeremias observes that in the so-called Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, still in use today, the introductory part of the Lord's prayer reads as follows: "And make us worthy, O Lord, that we joyously and without presumption may make bold to invoke Thee, the heavenly God, as Father, and to say: our Father."<sup>17</sup>

Granted that the believers treasured the words of the Lord's prayer, we also learn that prayer should not be restricted to this one prayer. In fact, leaders such as Origen and Tertullian indicate that the Lord's prayer is a sketch or an outline for prayer. Origen, for example, says concerning this prayer: "And first of p. 168 all we must note that Matthew and Luke might seem to most people to have recorded the same prayer, providing a pattern of how to pray."<sup>18</sup>

Origen summarizes what an outline on prayer should be: praise, thanksgiving, confession and petition. The prayer should be concluded with a doxology.<sup>19</sup>

Likewise, Tertullian indicates that the Lord's prayer embraces "the characteristic functions of prayer, the honor of God and the petitions of man."<sup>20</sup> Already in the gospels we find the admonition of Jesus that if we pray in faith God will answer such prayer: "Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you will receive it, and it will be yours" ([Mark 11:24](#)). This means that the prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. And such prayer offered in faith is not limited to the words of the Lord's prayer.

When Jesus taught the Lord's prayer, he did not instruct the disciples to neglect the prayers they had learned in the synagogues. To be sure, Peter and John went up to the temple at the time of prayer—at three in the afternoon ([Acts 3:1](#)). They continued in the tradition they had received from their elders.

In conclusion, though the Lord's prayer should be seen against the background of the liturgy of the first century, the prayer itself is unique in spirit, tone, and succession of petitions.<sup>21</sup> The Lord himself taught his followers to pray the perfect prayer.

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.>

<sup>18</sup> J. E. L. Oulton, *Alexandrian Christianity: Selected Translations of Clement and Origen* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1954) 275.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 327 ff.

<sup>20</sup> Tertullian, *On Prayer 1, Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963), 3. 681.

<sup>21</sup> A. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953), 1. 536.



# What is the Church?

by HOWARD A. SNYDER

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*In this article Howard Snyder outlines his understanding of the Church as the community of God's people and the importance of the widening of our understanding and practice of the Christian ministry for the Church's renewal. Snyder's thesis at the Lausanne Congress, "The Church as God's Agent in Evangelism" has been developed in two books, The Problem of Wineskins and The Community of the King.*

*This article is followed by one contemporary experiment model of Christian Community in a poorer and multi-racial section of Germantown, Philadelphia, USA where Arbutus and Ron Sider and the other families of the Jubilee Fellowship seek to live out some of the principles in Ron Sider's book, Rich Christians in a Hungry World.*

*For an appreciative understanding of the Church as a structured institution, especially in times of persecution, see below Michael Bourdeaux's "The USSR—The Church after sixty years of Persecution."*

(Editor)

I CAME to the conclusion, while I was working in Brazil, that I couldn't really give an intelligent answer to the question "what is the church?" I was a missionary, had served a couple of years pastoring in Detroit and had spent a year in language school, but I was still confronted with new questions in Brazil. I came to the conclusion that the church needs to rely more heavily on smaller informal structures. It seemed to me that the book of Ephesians had put a lot of that together; so I spent a year of personal study in that book.

During this time I reaffirmed that the church is the community of God's people. We can take the phrase "the body of Christ" p. 170 or others which are used to describe the church, but the expression that seems to me to put all of that together most completely is to call the church "the community of God's people."

I take the fact that the church is the body of Christ as being much more than a figure of speech. We have many figures in the Scripture, and when we talk about the body of Christ, we are talking about more than a metaphor. We are talking about a reality of what the church is. Jesus Christ was here in His physical body on earth, but He said to His disciples, "It is better for you that I go away, because if I go away, the Holy Spirit will come." And so Christ's physical body was removed from the earth in order that the Holy Spirit would come and indwell His body, the church.

We are confronted with the reality of the church; but as we begin to explore it, we suddenly discover that we keep bumping into structures and understandings and ways of doing things that seem to come into conflict with it. If the church is the community of God's people, this has a lot of things to say about what it means to be the expression of that body in the world.

The issue comes down to the ministry of the Christian community as an expression of the community life of the church. The whole matter of ministry is in crisis today. The person who finds himself out in the pastoral role finds that role challenged from several angles. He finds it challenged by the breakdown of the consensus of society that held the traditional pastoral role in a good deal of esteem. He finds it in crisis because now he expects to function in a role that he has trained for, and yet he finds that much of his training doesn't line up with what he is called upon to do.



Increasingly I'm getting letters and having discussions with younger men and women and working in local pastoral situations where people are saying, "I just feel as if I don't fit here." I received a letter from a young man who is two years out of seminary. He has been through a M.Div. program and supposedly was well-trained, but now he is working in a church in California, and he said, "My wife and I just don't feel at home here. We have lots of questions about the traditional pastoral role that we are called to, and we feel isolated." He is an assistant pastor who is working closely with another pastor and with a group of people who know and love the Lord, and yet he feels that something [p.171](#) is out of focus and out of gear as far as his own personal ministry.

In the midst of the crisis, not only of community, not only of fellowship, but partly because of ministry, it is interesting to take a look at the history of the church. One of the things that you will note as you trace back through the centuries of history is that the renewal in the church has always been accompanied by a widening of the understanding and practice of Christian ministry. As the church institutionalizes, it seems to take a ministry which has been given to the whole body. It narrows that ministry to the point where only certain people at certain times with certain training can perform it. Then someone understandably says, "Well, he is a minister" or "He is called to the ministry," and we automatically think of the ordained pastoral ministry or something related to that.

With this kind of thinking, the worst thing that could be said of a pastor is that he has left the ministry. That may mean in some cases that he has really entered the ministry! The whole process of what it means to be a minister is involved here. If we look back through the renewal movements in the Catholic church before the Reformation, a number of movements during the Middle ages, movements in the first century, or some of the Protestant renewal movements—all of which have resulted in new denominations—many times we discover that the ministry of the gospel which has been restricted to a certain place, a certain time, a certain people has now broken out of those barriers and ministry has been given and is being experienced and is being carried out by the whole body of Christ.

One example is the Franciscan Revival. St. Francis realized that when he heard the gospel read and it said that he should go and preach it, he should do so. He started doing just that, unordained, and he touched a sensitive point in many of the people of his age. Soon there were thousands of young men and later young women who were actually ministering the gospel of Christ. What they were doing was within the church; yet they were to some degree conscious that it was a judgment upon the church.

Another example would be the Wesleyan Revival in the 18th century in England. John and Charles Wesley and George [p.172](#) Whitfield were going up and down the British Isles preaching. In addition, John Wesley had an organizational bent, so when people began to come to him saying, "we want more instruction," he organized small classes of about a dozen each and appointed people in charge of them. Through this process leaders began to emerge and Wesley appointed various ones of those as lay preachers. They would go preaching and raising up new Methodist societies, which led to a whole range of other kinds of opportunities for ministry that were involved with the class leaders and various other kinds of leaders.

In both the Wesleyan and the Franciscan revivals, the gospel was extended to the poor. Both were also expressions of ministry where something of community was bound up in them—community as the facilitator of ministry. And in that process we see something that we might call discipleship and the awakening of spiritual gifts.

In [1 Peter 2:4-9](#) we read about a holy priesthood which will offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Basic in the understanding of the church that Peter is talking about here is the community of God's people. Often, if we have a mindset of an

institutional model of the church and we are not aware of the fact that we have that mindset, we try to clamp our mindset onto the Scriptures. If we come across the word “pastor,” we think of our understanding of the pastor rather than the scriptural one. When we read about a holy priesthood, we must first of all say, “what is Peter presupposing here?” He is presupposing the church as a community and as God’s people, and so he calls it God’s people. There is the idea of being a corporate reality which God has placed in the world for some basic purposes, and one purpose is to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. There is the idea of expression of worship and praise to God and then a ministry unto the world. All of this is based on the fact that we are a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, a chosen race, a holy nation, God’s own people. We are aware, of course, that this passage, and particularly verse [9](#), was a key passage for Martin Luther in his development of the doctrine of the priesthood of believers. [p. 173](#)

## I. PRIESTHOOD OF BELIEVERS

The priesthood of believers is the key—the fact that if we have come to know Jesus Christ and have been made a part of that body of Christ, we have been made a part of His priesthood. In 1 Peter, the author refers back to [Exodus 19](#) where Moses was about to go up on the mountain and God told Moses that these people would be a kingdom of priests. But there’s another, more foundational truth to the idea of priesthood in the Old Testament, and that is that God’s people were to be God’s priests before the world. In a large measure, of course, that commission wasn’t fulfilled, and yet it was there.

When we think of the priesthood of believers in the Protestant evangelical tradition, probably the main thing we think of is direct access to God. This, of course, was a strong emphasis of the Reformation. But the priesthood of believers means more than the fact that we have direct access to God. It also means that if we are a priesthood, we are priests to each other. We are a fellowship. We are a community of God’s people. I’m thankful that there have been those in the fellowship of the church who have been priests to me. Some have been pastors (ordained people) and others have been brothers and sisters in the body of Christ.

## II. SENT ONES

The priesthood of believers also suggests to us that we are sent as missionaries in the world, and this is why Peter says “that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” We are in the world to be the channel of God’s love, God’s ministry, God’s revelation, the incarnation, and the proper sense of love. We are in the world to gather up its concerns and to represent it before God in intercessory prayer.

The fact that I want to emphasize here is that this is not a restricted priesthood. It is interesting to see what happens to the idea of priesthood from the Old Testament to the New Testament. In the Old Testament, we had the restricted priesthood, the priestly tribe. In the New Testament, focus is on Jesus Christ who is [p. 174](#) the one Great High Priest who now takes up all the mediatorial functions. He is the mediator between God and man, and being Himself truly God and truly man, He became the Great High Priest and He became the sacrifice through which we have access to God.

The idea of priesthood does not end there. Not only is it narrowed down and summed up in the very person of Christ; it is, on the other hand, broadened to include all of us. We have a share in the priesthood of Jesus Christ. He is our Great High Priest, but we are all priests, for as believers a priesthood has been given to us. One of the most fascinating

things about the New Testament is the disappearance of the whole mentality that some people are priests and some are not. It is interesting that Acts records that a great number of priests became obedient to the faith; then we do not hear any more about them. They did not suddenly become priests in the church and then receive an invitation to speak at some big convention. Rather, leadership was exercised by those who had been carefully disciplined by Jesus Christ.

When we talk about ministry in the church, we are not talking about a differentiation between some who are priests and some who are not. But we cannot just say, “okay, we are all ministers, so let’s all go out and minister; we will not worry about who is trained and who is not trained or who is ordained and who is not ordained.” We have to realize that there is more to the ministry of the body of Christ. The idea of the priesthood of believers has to be lined up with the teaching on the gifts of the Spirit.

### III. THE SPIRITUAL GIFT

The basic passage that deals with spiritual gifts is [Ephesians 4](#). It talks about the unity of the church—there is one faith, one Lord, one baptism. Then there is a transition in verse [7](#). It says “grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ’s gifts.” When we look at the context, we learn that this is not the grace by which we are saved. That is discussed in chapter two. In chapter four Paul is talking about the grace for ministry. In fact, when Paul talks in the book of Ephesians about the ministry that was [p. 175](#) given to him, he sometimes says “this grace which was given to me.”

The word for grace and the word for spiritual gift (charisma) are related, so the unique word for spiritual gifts which Paul and Peter used is related to the idea of grace, and it literally means a gift of God’s grace. Remembering that, we begin to understand what Paul means when he says, “but grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ’s gifts.” We are all one in Christ. We are all one body. We are all part of that community of God’s people. We all share in the priesthood of believers. But grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift.

There is a sense in which none of us can grow up into the fulness of Christ; it is the whole body which is to grow into this fulness. In [Ephesians 1](#) Paul has said that the Church is Christ’s body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all. So this idea of the fulness of Christ is really an expression of a functioning unity in which various gifts are being exercised. When each person within that body has come to realize what God’s particular manifestation of grace is in his or her life for ministry, then the body grows and builds itself up in love. What Paul is saying here is that the exercise of spiritual gifts is basic to the healthy life of the church and implicit in a ministry in the world.

I think that the matter of spiritual gifts suggests three things for the ministry of God’s people. First of all, all ministry is by God’s grace. That is a very fundamental fact in Scripture and yet one which is only beginning to dawn on us in a new way today. It is not a matter of how much training we have or how intelligent we are or whether we are ordained or not. Maybe those are important in context, but they are secondary to the basic fact that ministry is by God’s grace.

Secondly, God gives a wide variety of ministries. It is clear both in [1 Peter 4:10, 11](#) and in the early part of Hebrews, that when the Scriptures talk about gifts for ministry—the spiritual gifts—they are talking about a variety of ministries. The whole matter of diversity is basic to what is being taught. Of course, this is where we line up the gifts of the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit. [p. 176](#) The fruit of the Spirit is for all Christians. We are all to have love, joy, peace, long-suffering. I have no right to say I have no love but I have a lot of joy; or I do not have any peace but I am good at long-suffering. But when it

comes to the gifts of the Spirit, the very nature of what is being discussed is diversity. The whole idea of the figure of the body is that we are not all hands; we are not all feet; we are all given different gifts according to what God has in mind for us in working out His grace in our personalities.

Thirdly, every believer has some ministry. I think that a biblical understanding of the Church is revolutionary, for then we understand that every person in the Church was created in God's image, and God's grace wants to work through each individual. I like what Gordon Cosby says about the gift of personhood—the fact that just being a person is part of God's gift to us, and this is where the matter of gifts of the Spirit begins.

Unfortunately, the church has too often succumbed to the idea that some people have value because they can do certain things. Others do not have value because they cannot do those things. But the biblical perspective is that every person has value, because every person is created in the image of God. What about the handicapped and the mentally retarded? One interesting point about God's grace is that He knows how to use that which has been warped or tainted by sin—whether it be the sin of the individual or the unfortunate things that happen in people's lives because of sin in society from earlier times. Yet, God knows how, in the body of Christ, to take even those who are worthless to society and make them instruments of His grace. This is a view of personhood which is essential and basic to the scriptural understanding of who God is, who we are, and, therefore, what the church is.

What we know in regard to the priesthood is true also in regard to the gifts of the Spirit: both priesthood and the gifts of the Spirit are given to all the Church. We line these two up, of course, and see that while each of us is a priest, the way we exercise the priesthood is going to vary according to the gifts God has given to us. [p. 177](#)

#### IV. SERVANTS

Another important fact is that in the ministry of the body of Christ, we are servants. A key passage that helps us get a clearer grasp of the nature and ministry of the church is [John 20](#) where Jesus says, "If you're going to be a disciple of mine, there is something different here than is going on in the world. In the world you know how the Gentile leadership is great to exercise authority over those under them." Then He talks about how it is in the religious establishment with the high priests. "But," He says, "not so with you. Whoever will be the servant of all will be considered great." Ministry is service.

Jesus is the model for ministry, which keeps us from an exaggerated emphasis on the Holy Spirit where it becomes a subjective kind of thing. Success is measured by service; it is measured by Christlikeness. It is interesting to me that in [Philippians 2](#) where Paul talks about Jesus emptying Himself, he is not primarily giving us teaching about who Jesus Christ was, though that is part of it. What he is saying is that we should have the mind of Christ within us. Jesus, though He was in the form of God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped. He emptied Himself and took on the form of a servant.

As we study the priesthood of believers, the gifts of the Spirit, and the fact that we are called to be servants of Christ, the essential point is that we need to rethink this whole matter of ministry and realize that to be a member of the Body of Christ is to be given a ministry. How we are going to define the various kinds of ministries, the ways we are going to carry on training, the rules of discipleship, etc. then flow out from that. But we are all ministers.

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Howard A. Snyder, formerly Dean of the Free Methodist Theological Seminary Sao Paulo, Brazil, is now Executive Director of Light and Life Men International. [p. 178](#)

# Jubilee Fellowship of Germantown

by ARBUTUS SIDER

*Reprinted from The Other Side (April 1977) with permission*

WHAT IS Jubilee Fellowship? Most simply, we are a church in the Germantown section of Philadelphia. We have roughly twenty members, plus about fifteen children.

In backgrounds we are an ecumenical group: Brethren in Christ, Mennonite, Presbyterian, Reformed Quaker, United Church of Christ.

A little over three years ago some of us began meeting regularly as a Christian fellowship and support group. At that time we all attended separate churches in the city. A year and a half ago we started meeting in one another's homes for Sunday worship. Over the past two years, one by one, our families have moved into a multiracial area of Germantown. Within a few months, God willing, all but three of us will be living within a six block area.

We have been variously called a church community, a house church, and a fellowship. Recently we adopted the name Jubilee Fellowship of Germantown. We chose the name *Jubilee* as an ideal we would all like to strive after. To us it suggests, on the one hand, joy, jubilation, and praise. On the other hand, it points to a willingness to share with each other and with the poor beyond our fellowship—in the spirit of the Year of Jubilee. This is the spirit that Jesus seems to have referred to in his first sermon, announcing that he had been chosen to “proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” ([Luke 4:14–18](#)).

This is an ironically appropriate name for a Christian fellowship in Philadelphia, since our city’s Liberty Bell refers to that same Year of Jubilee. Inscribed on the bell are the words, “Proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all the inhabitants thereof” ([Lev. 25:10](#)). [p. 179](#)

So much for our name. What about our style of life?

We do not live communally, nor do we have a common purse. But we live in the same neighborhood so we can share what we have—and what we are—with each other as any has need. And we do share economically in certain group projects.

We meet regularly on Sunday mornings—three Sundays a month—for teaching and worship, followed by a simple meal. Then we spend as much of the day together as our schedules permit: playing football, hiking, or the like

On Thursday evenings we meet together without our children for worship, sharing, and discipling of each other. These are the times when we share most deeply our cares, frustrations, weaknesses, and spiritual struggles—as well as our hopes and dreams and joys. We give each other both support and counsel.

Some of us also meet four days a week for prayer and singing and reading of the Scriptures before our work day begins.



Those are our regular gatherings. As needs arise, we also schedule work days—perhaps to help a new family move, or to help people (either within or outside our community) scrape walls or put on a new coat of paint.

We do not have pastors or elders, as some other house churches do. We are not closed to the possibility that the Lord may one day lead us in that direction, but we cherish a nonelitist, nonsexist form of community, based on consensus decision-making. We believe the Lord has a lot to show us about how such a model can bring wholeness.

We do have specific tasks to perform, and therefore teams of three or more attend to counseling, teaching, the nurture of our children, the leadership of worship, and deaconing. (All of us share at some time in child care, meal preparation, teaching the children, and planning worship.)

Why have we committed ourselves to this life together?

At one level the answer is very simple: we believe God has called us together to be his people in this part of Philadelphia.

For seven years Ron and I went to the same church in Philadelphia almost every week. It had a marvelous pastor and fine people, but I can remember being in a home of one of the other members only twice. We met together Sundays for worship and on weekdays for choir practice and maybe bowling, but we certainly [p. 180](#) did not function together as brothers and sisters who loved each other as we loved ourselves.

To achieve this closer fellowship, we adopted a life very different from that of the normal parish church. Actually it is a very old form, found in the New Testament itself: the house church.

We do not mean, however, to shut ourselves off from other Christians. In fact, our decision to meet together only three Sundays a month was prompted, in part, by a desire to leave one Sunday open for members to attend other churches.

While we are together, however, we work hard at developing our gifts. Such gifts often lie dormant in a traditional congregation, where the pastor is wrongly conceived as one who either possesses all the gifts or as one who is paid to exercise them for all the others.

The greatest gift of all, of course, the one that hangs like a cloak over all the rest—without which the others are useless—is love. On our inward journey we seek to grow in love for one another. We are still babes in Christ when it comes to caring for each other. But we are learning, we are growing, and we find that, even when our love fails, God's does not.

In Jubilee Fellowship, we are committed to communicating the whole biblical message. And that includes more than many of us previously associated with preaching the gospel.

We see the gospel as the good news of forgiveness and our reconciliation with God—brought to the world through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is the good news that all who accept him as Savior and Lord become new creatures and enter the new kingdom, the church.

Evangelism is therefore a crucial part of our outward journey, an essential type of communication.

But in our evangelical heritage, evangelism in this sense has been the only thing we have worried about. Proclaim the message and welcome the believer, we thought. And then our job would be done. But that is about as realistic as the ending of a Grace Livingstone Hill novel, for her novels always end when the storm is just beginning: with the wedding!

The clear teaching of both Old and New Testaments is that God is a God of justice. He is a God who sides with the poor and oppressed, and he calls his people to do the same. [p. 181](#)



The gospel of the New Testament is for the poor. It was not only by the preaching of the gospel that the coming of the King and the kingdom was identified, but by the healing of the sick, the raising of the dead, the freeing of prisoners, and the liberation of the oppressed.

I wonder if one reason we hear this so infrequently is that so few of us are poor. So few of us have been in prison. So few of us have experienced oppression. Though we live in a world where there is a bigger and bigger gap between the rich and the poor, we Western Christians have not shared Jesus' special concern for the wretched of the earth.

At Jubilee Fellowship, we believe we must communicate the whole biblical message, the vast scope of God's relationship to his people, the truth he revealed through Abraham, Moses, David, and the prophets, and most especially, through Jesus.

One way we do that is through our involvement in the community. We have helped a number of people buy and renovate abandoned, government-owned buildings. Our whole fellowship has gotten involved. In addition, one of us belongs to the neighborhood housing corporation that tries to provide more such homes to low income people.

Some of us are also involved in block organizations, in running a local food coop, in working for improvements in the public schools, and in seeking opportunities for the retarded. One of our group serves as a counselor to nursing mothers. Another has been the administrator of a community service center.

Though we do not have any person who seems to have a special gift for evangelism we do try to have an evangelistic outreach. At the moment, for example, Ron meets regularly for Bible study with a young man who, through a series of discussions, has grown from a very skeptical view of the gospel to a real hunger for the Word. It is beautiful to see. Others are involved in similar situations, and one person is even working as a consultant to the evangelism working group of the National Council of Churches, helping interested churches rediscover biblical evangelism.

We have hardly turned Germantown upside down, and it is highly unlikely that we ever shall! But where God's Spirit is present and at work, there is always that explosive potential.

Turning to another area, several of us are involved—some as [p. 182](#) staff and others as associates—with *The Other Side*. We feel this is a good example of witnessing not just in Jerusalem but in Judea and Samaria as well. *The Other Side* speaks to many of the themes we think are important.

Then, through our ties with Evangelicals for Social Action, many of us are involved with a new venture called "discipleship workshops". Through workshops in churches and on college campuses, we seek to spread our vision of the biblical message of social justice.

We also have several members involved in Liberty to the Captives, a nonviolent action group that uses many means to raise public consciousness about the many thousands of "prisoners of conscience". Liberty to the Captives works to get laws passed (and adhered to) that will stop our government from supporting repressive regimes. We think it is an important ministry.

Finally, there is Jubilee Crafts, which is officially a ministry of *The Other Side*, but which has sprung very much out of the life of our community. All of us are involved in this effort in some way. By helping to market crafts produced by Christian Cooperatives abroad, we provide an income for the poor and encourage their gifts. We also give ourselves an opportunity to communicate some of the injustices of the world economic system.

Jubilee Fellowship is not a large group. We come from many different backgrounds. But we are united by a love that we want to share with others.

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Arbutus Sider is a mother of three children and has been involved in the Jubilee Fellowship from its beginning. p. 183

# Christianity and African Culture

by JOHN S. MBITI

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(September 1977) with permission (Abridged)*

## I. INTRODUCTION

### (a) Importance of this topic

AN AFRICAN proverb says that "the crown of a man is in his hands". Culture is man's crown. Therefore the question of culture and the Christian Faith is very important as exemplified by the fact that since the time of our Lord and the early Church, it has continued to come upon every generation of Christians in new and demanding ways.

Three recent world gatherings of Christians spoke about culture. I quote some statements from them. The Conference on Salvation Today at Bangkok, Thailand in 1973, said: "Culture shapes the human voice that answers the voice of Christ". The Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization in 1974 spoke of "the rise of Churches deeply rooted in Christ and closely related to their culture. Culture must always be tested and judged by Scripture. Because man is God's creature, some of his culture is rich in beauty and goodness. Because he has fallen, all of it is tainted with sin and some of it is demonic". The World Council of Churches Faith Assembly in Nairobi in 1975 said: "Despite all of our cultural differences, despite the structures in society and in the Church that obscure our confession of Christ, and despite our own sinfulness, we affirm and confess Christ together, for we have found that He is not alien to any culture and that He redeems and judges in all our societies."

### (b) Working definition of culture

In this address, culture will be used to mean human pattern of p. 184 life in response to man's environment. This pattern is expressed in physical forms, (such as agriculture, the arts, technology, etc.) in inter-human relations (such as institutions, laws, customs, etc.), and in the form of reflection on the total reality of life (such as language, philosophy, religion, spiritual values, world view, the riddle of life-birth-death, etc.).

In this respect, African culture is like any other culture in the world. We can also speak of African cultures in the plural, if we wish to draw attention to regional and local expressions of culture. But for our purposes I will use culture generically in the singular.

## II. THE GOSPEL AND CULTURE

### (a) God takes the initiative

“God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son” ([John 3:16](#)). This is the well known biblical statement about God in His love invading man in his culture. The Incarnation of our Lord was God’s act of intercepting human and cosmic history. The Gospel was revealed to the world, in the context and language of culture, and not in an empty vacuum. This revelation took place in a specific cultural place, Palestine, among a specific people, the Jews, at a specific movement, two thousand years ago. Since then the Gospel has been proclaimed, propagated and accepted within the cultural milieu of the peoples of the world. God gave us the Gospel. Man gives us culture. When the Gospel and culture meet, and if the Christian Faith is generated, then Christianity is the result.

### **(b) The Gospel enters and traverses culture**

Because the gospel traverses culture, it moved from the Palestine of two thousand years ago, into all parts of the world today. In this global outreach, the Gospel has been carried on the wings of culture. [Acts 2](#) is the classical record of how the Gospel and culture became intimate partners. “When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place ... And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues ... And at this sound the multitude came together and they were bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. And they were amazed and wondered saying ... We [p. 185](#) hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God” ([Acts 2:1-11](#)). Here then is the Gospel being proclaimed, being understood, being believed by people in their different cultures throughout the world. Without cultural transmission, the Gospel might as well have remained and been forgotten in Jerusalem. So the Holy Spirit entrusted the Gospel into the hands of human cultures and this divine arrangement has remained that way ever since.

African culture is one of these cultures to which God has entrusted the Gospel of His Son Jesus Christ, exactly as He entrusted it to the Jewish, Greek, Roman, German, American, Indian and other cultures of the world. The Gospel is a stranger in every culture—a stranger who settles down, when it is so accepted by Faith, and yet a stranger who continues to wander on from culture to culture, from generation to generation, calling all people to a newness of life in Christ. The Gospel is greater than any single culture and all cultures put together.

### **(c) African Response to the Gospel**

Conversion to the Gospel takes place within a cultural framework. The Gospel has been and should continue to be proclaimed within the melodies of our African culture—through words of our one thousand languages, through the vibrant tunes of our three thousand musical instruments, through the joyous rhythm of our bodies and the solemn symbols of our artists. It is within our culture that we have to wrestle with the demands of the Gospel, and it is within our culture that we have to propagate the Gospel of our Lord. The Gospel does not throw out culture: to the contrary, it comes into our culture, it settles there, it brings its impact on our total life within that culture. It is within our culture that God loves us and calls us to repentance; it is also within our culture that God wants us to love, worship and obey Him. God does not want us to be aliens to our culture—but only aliens to sin. Our culture is the medium of receiving, diffusing, tuning in and relaying the Gospel. Without culture we would not hear the Gospel, we would not believe the Gospel, and we would not inherit the promises of the Gospel. [p. 186](#)

### **(d) The Gospel is not a cultural monopoly**

And yet, the relation between culture and the Gospel demands that no single culture should imprison the Gospel. The Gospel was first revealed and proclaimed in the Jewish culture, but soon it was proclaimed in the Greek and Roman cultures. So it went on, until eventually it reached our African culture—and it must go on, from culture to culture. We have no right to imagine that we can monopolize the Gospel or keep it only to ourselves. The Gospel is not the property of European or American culture, neither should we make it the property of our African cultural plurality as the Gospel gets to be proclaimed in all societies of the world. One can say: “this is our culture, this is our culture,” but nobody can say: “this is my Gospel, this is our Gospel” This belongs to Jesus Christ, and it refuses to be made the exclusive property of any one culture, or nation, or region, or generation.

So then each culture must count it a privilege to have the Gospel as its guest. African culture must extend its hospitality to the Gospel as an honoured guest that, hopefully, may stay for many centuries and millenia as the case may be. Some cultures of the world have rejected the Gospel while others have restricted its effectiveness. It is tragic when a culture—perhaps through no fault of its own—rejects the Gospel, closes its doors to the Gospel, or turns a deaf ear to the Gospel. Each culture is in danger of doing this, sometimes dramatically and forcefully, sometimes slowly and imperceptibly. So let our African culture treat the Gospel with respect, with gentleness with all due hospitality—or it is a divine message coming into frail cultural vessels.

### III. AFRICAN CULTURE AND CHRISTIANITY

#### **(a) “He who has never travelled thinks that his mother is the only good cook in the world” (an African proverb).**

We have established that Christianity is the end result of the Gospel coming into a given culture whose people respond to the Gospel through Faith. As such, there is no divine form of Christianity which is 100 per cent suitable for all peoples and at all times. Every form of Christianity has its impurities—because of man’s sinfulness. Therefore every cultural setting has a right [p. 187](#) to evolve its own form or expression of Christianity. No single form of Christianity should dominate another.

It was very unfortunate, therefore, that Africans were told by word and example, by those who brought them the Gospel, that they first had to become culturally circumcised before they could become Christians (according to the form of Christianity developed in the home countries of those missionaries). There is no theological justification for this kind of burden. Already at the time of the Apostles the Gentile Christians faced a similar burden from the Jewish brethren who insisted that they should observe Jewish cultural habits. “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved” ([Acts 15:2](#)), This sparked off a major controversy in the early Church, which had to be settled in what was probably the first Christian Council to be held. Saint James spoke much sense when he told the assembly that: “My judgement is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God” ([Acts 15:19](#)). I wish that this judgement would have been observed by our brethren from overseas who brought us the Gospel of Christ. Sometimes Africans have been pressured or hypnotised into being converted to a foreign culture, rather than to the Gospel. Consequently, the Church in Africa is paying heavily for this tragic short-sightedness.

Cultural imperialism must terminate first, in order to allow the indigenous culture to relate more effectively to the Gospel, on its own terms and without pressure from outside. With humility and gratitude let us borrow and learn from other cultures, but let us not become their cultural slaves. The only lasting form of Christianity in this continent, is that

which results from a serious encounter of the Gospel with the indigenous African culture when the people voluntarily accept by faith the Gospel of Jesus Christ. A Christianity which is heavily intertwined with an imported culture may indeed be very impressive but it cannot be a sufficient substitute for this kind of Christianity that should grow out of the spontaneous free impregnation of the Gospel in the fertile womb of African culture. Another African proverb reminds us that: “A bee does not start a new home with honey”.

Therefore, even imported Christian honey, however sweet, will not be a sufficient basis of a permanent home for Christianity in Africa. Until we can cultivate a genuine Christianity which is [p. 188](#) truly MADE IN AFRICA, we will be building on a shallow foundation and living on borrowed time. Let it be said once and for all, as loudly as technology can make it, that IMPORTED CHRISTIANITY WILL NEVER, NEVER QUENCH THE SPIRITUAL THIRST OF AFRICAN PEOPLES. The wisdom of our forefathers speaks clearly about this, in a proverb: “That which comes from charity is never sufficient to fill the granary.” Thank God for the missionaries from Europe and America who, in recent centuries, have brought us the Gospel. Africa wants and needs the Gospel. But Africa does not require imported Christianity, because too much of it will only castrate us spiritually or turn us into spiritual cripples who can only move on broken and imported crutches.

### **(b) Africa has enough tools to evolve a viable Christianity**

The only tools needed to evolve a viable form of Christianity are: the Gospel, Faith and Culture. Thank God, we have these three fundamental tools now in plenty in our continent. With them we are obliged to fill the spiritual granaries of our peoples. Have we not enough musical instruments, for example, in this continent with which to raise the thunderous sound of the glory of God even unto the heaven of heavens? Have we not enough mouths in this continent, to sing the rhythms of the Gospel in our own tunes until it settles in our bloodstream? Have we not enough artistic talents in this continent to expose and express the mysteries of our Faith? Have we not enough hearts in this continent, to contemplate the marvels of the Christian Faith? Have we not enough problems and spiritual needs in this continent, with which to concern the riches of the Gospel? Have we not enough intellectuals in this continent to reflect and theologize on the meaning of the Gospel? Have we not enough feet on this continent, to carry the Gospel to every corner of this globe?

What more, then, do we need? Why then have we to continue living on borrowed Christianity when all the necessary tools are present with us? Thanks be to God for His Gospel, thanks to the missionaries who brought it across the seas to our forefathers, thanks to the riches of our cultural heritage by means of which this Gospel can be understood, articulated and propagated. But shame be to those who think falsely that God speaks only English or French or Latin. God has a thousand tongues in this continent [p. 189](#) by which to speak to us about the mystery of His will and plan for the world. If God did not speak through African languages, there would not be today the 180 million Christians on this continent. Let us, therefore, not put to silence any of these tongues by which he speaks; let us not erase these channels of communication through which He makes Himself known; let us not tread under our feet these cultural vessels of African peoples by means of which He is worshipped, adored, proclaimed, believed and hoped in.

Unless we can adequately become the depositaries of the Gospel, unless it can stretch out its roots in our cultural setting, we as the peoples of this continent, shall be found unfaithful in the sight of God, and a day would come when He would take away the Gospel. The Gospel is like a submarine: it does not sit on the water, but moves deep down in the depths of the ocean—and if that water is not deep enough for it, then it moves away to other regions. It is my belief that our cultural waters are deep enough to contain the Gospel.



#### IV. AFRICAN CULTURE AND CHURCH LIFE (ABRIDGED)

I see the specific relevance of African culture in the following areas of Church life.

1) *Worship*: Christians are called to worship God in Spirituality which bears witness to their Faith. Worship takes on many forms and has many aspects such as architecture, traditional African music and prayer forms, the home and family in worship life, the community approach to worship and the Sacraments, as the use of religious dancing in worship, clapping of hands, confession of sin, exorcism of troublesome spirits, visions and dreams, symbols, etc.

2) *The Community*: African traditional life is largely built on the community. Since the Church is also a community of those who have faith in Jesus Christ, hence this overlapping concept in terms of the family, the relatives, the neighbours, the departed, the question of mutual interdependence and the sustaining of one another in times of need. In African traditional world view, the well-being of man is intimately connected with the well-being of the total creation. "There is corporate sinfulness of man and p. 190 creation, there is also corporate hope of man and creation to be set free at the culmination of the purposes of God ..."

3) *Church Nurture and Education*: In the African setting, the home has always been the centre of nurture and education for the children. I suggest that true Christian life must be cultivated and nurtured first and foremost at home, and only in a secondary and broader way, in the Church building and through the Church institutions. I believe that there is much to be said about "home churches" in Africa. It is at home where the Bible will be read, discussed, and given time to 'sink' into the spiritual book of the faithful.

4) *Christian Values and Ethics*: The Christian faith mediates certain values which sustain the life of the individual, of the community and of the Church. We can only mention a few examples of these, such as: love, truth, justice, the right of life, the 'right' use of sex, freedom, etc. These values and ethics cannot be applied or taught in a vacuum. They have to be related to the living, existential situations of African peoples in their cultural milieu—whether in terms of individuals, communities, nations, or international affairs.

5) *Christian Service and witness*: Corporate life, community life and Church life, are not life in isolation. It is at the very heart of what our Lord Himself did: He went about preaching the Gospel, healing the sick, raising the dead, feeding the hungry ... African Church life must reflect and incarnate this work of our Lord, within the context of the people of Africa. There are many who are ready to listen to the Gospel—but they must hear it in their own languages and life situations. There are many who are sick, and the Gospel must bring them hope, healing and newness of life. There are many who are spiritually and morally dead, politically oppressed, economically exploited, socially ostracised. The Gospel and the Church must bring healing to them all. Evangelism has two dimensions: the human effort, and the divine superintendence. On the human level, evangelism must be related to the culture of the people concerned. Therefore, no cultural element should be left out, if it can be used in evangelism and for the nurture of the people of God. The Church should not pose as a spiritual police of people's cultural life, since the church itself is made up of sinful men, women and children, and p. 191 its own history is not without fault.

6) *The Christian and his culture*: There are those who embrace culture uncritically, as though culture were perfect and always right. Another view regards Christ as having come to 'save' the whole person, including the person's culture and history and environment. Culture shapes man, and man creates culture. African Christians are also makers of culture.

7) *The Bible and African Culture*: Language itself is a major cultural element. African cultural elements enter the Biblical period. The process of translation is, in fact reciprocal.



African readers of the Scripture, feel much at home in parts of the Old Testament. Thus: respect (for the aged, for parents, for authority), justice, truth, friendship, hospitality, the value of children, marriage customs, marriage gifts, etc., can be given as examples to illustrate this point. There are historical and mythological parallels, ethical parallels, and parallels in world-views, etc. We see, therefore, that for African peoples, the Bible is not only the book of their Christian Faith, it also gives them a place in which they project their cultural life, history and experiences. It is also the Bible that gives us the basis for judging culture.

8) *Culture and the Gospel as allies*: The beyondness of the Gospel derives from the fact that God is the author of the Gospel while man is the author of culture. Culture makes us very earthly and human, the Gospel makes us very heavenly and divine. It is not culture but the Gospel which has the final say over us as human beings. Yet the Gospel makes us new people in Christ within the framework of our culture and not apart from it.

## CONCLUSION

### (a) African Culture Must Bring Glory To God

If we take it that the Gospel of our Lord is intended for the whole man in the whole world (*oikumene*) the whole cosmos and the whole creation ([Mt. 28:19](#), [Mk. 16:15](#), [Eph. 1:91](#), [II Cor 5:17](#), [Col 1:15–20](#) etc.), then the Church must take African culture seriously. It must ask how the Gospel is to work on culture and in culture so that it can manifest the transforming work of Christ [p. 192](#) in creating all things anew. In the book of Revelation, the final picture of the new creation is one in which, among other things, the people of the whole world bring into the holy city, the New Jerusalem. “the glory and the honour of the nations” ([Rev. 21](#)). I believe that Africa is spiritually capable of bringing its contribution of glory to the city of God through the elements of our religiosity and culture—healed, saved, purified and sanctified by the Gospel.

The Cross of Jesus Christ was, in fact, a fabrication of culture—a Roman method of punishing criminals. But, that which was an actuality of torture, oppression, punishment and death, was lifted out of its debasement into a symbol and actuality of our Salvation. A human cultural form of degradation and affliction was turned by God into a form of glorification ([John 3:14](#), [7:39](#), [8:28](#), [12:23](#), etc.) and the human foolishness became God’s power and wisdom ([1 Cor 1:23f](#), etc.). Once yielded to the Gospel, even the weakest of our cultural expressions and elements can be used of God to bring glory to Him. We must not, therefore, hide away our culture from the Gospel: instead, we have to lay it before the Gospel, and use it for the Gospel.

### (b) The Gospel Must Judge African Culture

While advocating this positive use of our culture in Church life, we must also, without fear or hesitation, bring the Gospel to bear upon our culture in order to evaluate it, to judge it, to transform it. Because culture is created by man, and because man is sinful, what he creates, however beautiful, however great, however highly cultivated it might be, it nevertheless bears the imprint of human sinfulness—through individual sins, corporate sins, structural sins, economic sins, social sins, political sins, national sins and international sins. Culture does not cleanse itself of its own impurities; it does not rescue itself from decay and deformities. Culture has its demons, which only the Gospel is equipped to exercise and disarm. So now, it is the duty of the Church particularly through its leaders and theologians, to guide our people in getting our culture evaluated, judged and rescued from its demonic powers and sinfulness. I do not advocate a rejection of

culture, but I advocate a merciful judgement of our culture by the Gospel of Jesus Christ.  
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### **(c) Ecumenical Openness Towards Other Cultures**

One must plead for a deep sense of humility in our use of African culture, because the Gospel is present also in other cultures of the world—it is not our own exclusive property. All cultures have a right and access to the Gospel—and they will express its presence in ways that may not be the same as ours. We need, therefore, to cultivate a genuine openness—an ecumenical openness that is willing to share and receive the meaning of the Gospel in other cultures. Indeed, many of the things I have said about African culture in this lecture, are equally applicable to other cultures.

We must realise that we belong to the world-wide Church, and Christian fellowship demands that we mutually share the riches of our experience in Jesus Christ. Just as the cultures of Palestine, the Mediterranean and Europe, carried and conveyed the Gospel to other parts of the world—we too should carry the same Gospel and share it with other parts of the world. “Freely you have received, freely give”. ([Mt. 10:8](#), cf. [John 1:16](#)). So our Lord reminded us. The Church has become truly global in this century, therefore, Christians should seek the ways and means of sharing the grace of God so as to take into account this globalness, and to appreciate the global outreach of the Gospel.

For a large numbers of Christians, the ecumenical movement—whether expressed locally or in its world-wide manifestations—seems to offer the possibility for sharing this global expression of the Gospel and Christian fellowship. We have to learn to live together to be Christians together, to share our riches and our problems in response to the will of God for our world. African Church leaders would do well to study carefully the ecumenical movement, to listen carefully to what the Spirit of God is saying to the Church through this movement.

There is nothing secret about it, and that which is based on faith in Jesus Christ as God and Saviour, certainly deserves the attention and affection of all Christian. This ecumenical movement also takes cultures seriously, since the Gospel wanders from culture to culture and the confession or proclamation of Christ is made within these cultures of the whole mankind.

### **(d) An Agenda For Further Consideration**

1. A clarification of cultural elements that are common and/or p. 194 different, in the Bible and in African Societies.
2. The use of African cultural elements and creativity in Church life.
3. Serious attention be given to contemporary areas of African cultural expressions and activities, such as modern literature, art, drama, music, dance, entertainment, press, radio, television etc. This is to enable the Church to keep up with cultural change.
4. The question of the relationship between culture and leadership in the light of the Gospel, both within and outside the Church in a variety of such issues as hierarchy, respect, authority, human rights, role and dignity of women and children, etc. The New Testament speaks of leaders who are servants rather than masters of their people.
- 5 Identity as expressed through culture, and identity as expressed in Christ. How can one be simultaneously and harmoniously an African (by culture) and a Christian (by faith)?
6. Culture and the Ecumenical Movement—the contexts in which the Christian Faith is embraced and expressed throughout the world today, the mobility of people and ideas, the meaning of Christian fellowship in a global scale etc.

7. Culture and Communication in terms of: sharing information, evangelism, propagation of ideas, ideology and culture, propaganda and culture, indoctrination and culture, etc. What is the role of the Church in Africa, in all these areas?
8. Inter-cultural encounters, particularly through language, social intercourse, symbols, modern technology and mass media. Where is the Church in the complex world of cultural encounters? What is its specific role?
9. In the area of culture and change, people are both actors and spectators. Africa is going through such change. What then is the particular Christian contribution in Africa today in this process?
10. There is a strong invasion of western and technological cultures upon African culture, producing a dynamic cultural interaction. African culture has also influenced other parts of the world, at different times in history. In this process, there is borrowing, adapting, copying, and imitation. How far has the Church been instrumental in this process, and to what extent should it continue to play that role? p. 195
11. A careful study or understanding is needed about the impact of the Bible on African culture.
12. What are the areas of cultural bankruptcy and decay as we look at our African culture today? Culture has its limitations, and these should be clearly recognised. What does the Gospel judge and save in our culture?
13. The question of how we can prompt or facilitate the Gospel to deepen its roots in African culture.
14. What is the message of the Gospel to our culture in the areas of human problems and needs, such as oppression, exploitation, poverty, starvation, injustice, destruction of human life, extravagant spoliation of nature, pollution and dangers to human survival (such as armaments, wars, domination, even science and technology)? How can the Gospel raise an alarm through our culture in these areas of urgent concerns?
15. Africa lacks a theology of culture, as indeed of many other issues. The more we open up the issue, the sooner a theology of culture will evolve, hopefully to aid the Church in coming to terms with African culture at all levels.

#### **(e) Christian First, Then African (American, German, etc.)**

Christian leadership in Africa should be well equipped to help the Christians in responding simultaneously to the demands of the Gospel and the demands of their culture. Sometimes these demands will overlap and be complementary, sometimes they will be neutral to each other, and sometimes they will be mutually opposed or contradictory. The Christian should be enabled to distinguish between these possibilities, and consequently to act, to decide and to speak with freedom, when confronted by the situation. Culture can be “all powerful” over an individual—at least temporarily. The Gospel is “all powerful”, at least ultimately. We need to assimilate this temporality of culture and this ultimatum of Gospel—simultaneously, meaningfully, and harmoniously. Culture says to each one of us: “You are mine, you belong to me. I have made you truly an African, a Muganda, a Nigerian, or an American. You owe me allegiance.” To the Christian there comes also the Gospel voice which says: “But you are mine. I have saved you. I have bought you with a price. You are deeply valuable. You belong to me and I am jealous p. 196 because I wish to own you entirely to be mine ... I am making you a new creation.”

It is not easy for many Christians in the world to say whether they are first and foremost “African”, “European”, “Asian” or whatever else their culture has made them: or whether first and foremost they are Christian. For many the first choice is what their culture has made them, and later they are Christian.

But the New Testament order is: first Christian, and then Jew or African, beggar or king, male or female. We have no choice other than to be first Christian, and then African, cost what it will, first Christian, and then American, cost what it will, first Christian and then Indian or English, cost what it will. The trouble comes when we reverse this Gospel order—and many there are who fall into that temptation.

### **(f) Eschatology, Culture and the Gospel**

We must finish with the difficult question of the relationship between the Gospel, culture and the future. Culture has no eschatology: it is concerned with our past and present and promises no special goal in time and history. It may boast of a golden age, but it knows not of paradise regained.

In contrast, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is intensely eschatological, and draws everything towards its conclusion and finality (telos). Culture knows how to bury the dead, but it does not know what to do with the soul of man in the final analysis because it has no resurrection so to speak. Culture has limitations beyond which it cannot take mankind. Therefore, the Gospel must take over from where culture reaches its limits. While culture and the Gospel may work as allies, it is the responsibility of the Gospel to knock down the cultural idols and chains which may otherwise detain man from reaching the promised land of his faith in Christ. The Gospel is deeply protective and jealous, to make sure that culture does not monopolise and keep man forever on the cultural level of life alone. There are other values and heights beyond those of culture. Therefore the Christian is a cultural pilgrim, and not a settler, moving even with his cultural luggage towards the eschatological goal of the Gospel. To this end, the Church must equip its people to be faithful and courageous pilgrims under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In my judgement that is the essence of Christianity. And here lies the most difficult, [p. 197](#) and yet most exciting, piece of homework for Church leaders, not only in Africa but throughout the whole world.

As an African proverb says: “He who guides you by night can be trusted by day;” I pray that God may enable you to guide His people by night and by day. Amen.

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# **Christianity and African Culture a Review**

*by* TITE TIENOU

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WHY is a review of a lecture delivered at the Pan African Christian Leadership Assembly held in Nairobi in December 1976 still valid? There are several reasons for this. First, even

though more than two years have passed since PACLA, its full impact has not yet been felt. As developments take place as a result of PACLA (for instance the coming South African Christian Leadership Assembly), much will be said and written about the momentous Nairobi gathering. For this reason it is worth examining one of the important lectures delivered in plenary session.

Secondly, the subject itself is very important and has abiding theological relevance both in a general sense (the Gospel and Culture) and in a particular situation (Christianity and African, Asian, European, American Culture). Because man is a cultural being and because culture is forever changing, there can be no final word on the relationship between Christianity and any human culture. In recent years, the subject has come increasingly to the forefront of world theological debate as exemplified in the 1973 Bangkok Conference on Salvation Today, the 1974 Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization, the 1975 Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, and the 1978 Willowbank Consultation on the Gospel and Culture. It is a paradox of our times that the world is becoming more and more a global village (and this includes the cultural realm) yet, never in human history has so much been said about cultural distinctives and particularities. It is as if we all seek refuge and security in those distinctives and particularities. Because of this hardening of cultural attitudes, p. 199 we need to critically examine our own culture if we want to prevent our theologies from becoming too provincial and too culturally tainted.

Thirdly, Professor John Mbiti is well known among African theologians and even considered by some to be the spokesman for African theology. For this reason anything written by him is worth reading. The editor(s) of the *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* must have felt the importance of the lecture for they printed it *verbatim* in the issue of September 1977, No. 20, pp. 26–40.<sup>1</sup> In his conclusion, under the heading “An Agenda for further consideration”, Professor Mbiti encourages us Africans to pursue the matter further when he writes: “Africa lacks a theology of culture ... The more we open up the issue, the sooner a theology of culture will evolve, hopefully to aid the Church in coming to terms with African cultures at all levels” (p. 38). The present review article is an effort to contribute to the opening of the issue.

## THE DEFINITION OF AFRICAN CULTURE

After stating the importance of the topic, Professor Mbiti offers a working definition of culture as a “human pattern of life in response to man’s environment” (p 26) This definition is as satisfactory as any other. The author then continues by affirming that “in this respect, African culture is like any other culture in the world” (*loc. cit.*) which sounds like an echo of the first sentence of the preface of his book *Concepts of God in Africa* (London: S.P.C.K., 1970): “African peoples are not religiously illiterate.” Nobody—at least no African—would disagree with such assertions nowadays. But the following is less likely of unanimous agreement: “We can also speak of African cultures in the plural, if we wish to draw attention to regional and local expressions of culture. But for our purposes I will use culture generically in the singular” (p. 26). One may ask: are African ethnic cultures merely regional and local expressions of *an* African culture? Furthermore, the author does not explain why he takes “culture generically in the singular” nor how it is possible to do so. P. 200

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<sup>1</sup> Page references are according to the printed article of the *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*.



It is, of course, clear that Africa is not culturally homogenous. There are nevertheless some elements which seem to be common to all African peoples: they have the same conception of the relationship between cause and effect; they conceive of space and time the same way; they have the same view of knowledge, the only valid knowledge is a practical one; and for them community is very important.<sup>2</sup> While these four elements, among others, make it possible for us to speak of African culture in the singular, we should never forget that African cultures are numerous<sup>3</sup> and that in no way are the diverse African ethnic cultures only regional and local expressions of culture. If we do not minimize the heterogeneity of African cultures, we will be able to safeguard ourselves against the temptation of easy extrapolation and generalization. What is true of West African cultures is not necessarily true of East African cultures. What is true of the culture of one ethnic group in a given country is not necessarily true of the culture of another ethnic group.

I know that such statements are not popular in this age of African unity but realism commands us not to see unity where, in fact, there is diversity. Let me illustrate by citing one instance of over-generalization in Mbiti's lecture. Under the section "The Bible and African Culture" he points out such important African cultural elements and values which find parallels in the Bible as: respect for the aged, for parents, for authority; justice, truth, friendship, hospitality, the value of children, marriage customs being the necessity to get married, marriage gifts, protection of women, divorce customs, plural wives especially for leaders such as chiefs and kings, inheriting the wife of one's dead brother, etc. (p. 35). He further enumerates cultural elements which are hated in African life and in the Bible. But, enumerating elements from African culture may mislead readers into thinking that those elements are the same for all ethnic groups. In the case of marriage customs, for instance, Professor Mbiti is certainly aware of the fact that they differ widely across the continent. One cannot just cite six or seven elements of a complex social institution such as p. 201 marriage. There are, of course, ethnic groups in Africa where one inherits the wife of one's dead brother but there are also others where one inherits the wife of one's dead father (provided she is not your mother!). The danger of faulty extrapolation should cause us to do meticulous basic research in this field, as in any other, before attempting generalization. In spite of the foregoing criticism, Professor Mbiti is certainly right in stressing the similarities between African and Biblical cultures; in this respect, the Bible is the Book of the African's Christian Faith and cultural life (p. 35).

## THE DEFINITION OF CHRISTIANITY

After the definition of culture which is presented in the introduction (Part I), Mbiti proceeds in Part II, to the issue of the Gospel and Culture. Part III and Part IV are respectively: African Culture and Christianity and African Culture and Church Life, before the conclusion (Part V). In Part II, under the heading "God takes the Initiative", the author states: "God gave us the Gospel. Man gives us culture. When the Gospel and culture meet, and if the Christian Faith is generated, then Christianity is the result" (p. 27). This statement is visualized in a diagram (p. 28). What must we understand by such a definition of Christianity? Some of us equate the Gospel with Christianity but for Mbiti, the Gospel + Culture + Faith produce Christianity. There are then different forms of

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<sup>2</sup> Fontus, Fritz "L'Afrique noire et la theologie chretienne" ICHTHUS, No. 55-56 (October-November 1975) pp. 50-51.

<sup>3</sup> Sanon, Anselme Titianma *Tierce Eglise, ma mere* (Bobo-Dioulasso: Imprimerie de la Savane, 1977) p. 260.



Christianity depending on the culture with which the Gospel interacts. Although this is not the classical definition of Christianity, it is helpful in explaining the differences found in the Christian movement from culture to culture. To me the most disturbing is the omission of a clear definition of the Gospel. The reader may understand the Gospel to be either Jesus Christ himself, God's "love invading man in his culture" (p. 27) or as something which "belongs to Jesus Christ" (p. 29). Had the author provided us with a clear definition of the Gospel, one would ask fewer questions about his definition of Christianity.

But, regardless of what one thinks of this way of understanding Christianity, it is an important premise in Mbiti's lecture. Because of it he can make statements such as: p. 202

"... there is no divine form of Christianity which is 100 per cent suitable for all peoples and at all times. Every form of Christianity has its impurities—because of man's sinfulness. Therefore, every cultural setting has a right to evolve its own form or expression of Christianity" (p. 29).

And:

"The only tools needed to evolve a viable form of Christianity are: the Gospel, Faith, and Culture. Thank God, we have these three fundamental tools now in plenty in our continent." (p. 30) and finally:

"The Gospel is like a submarine: it does not sit on the water, but moves deep down in the depths of the ocean—and if that water is not deep enough for it, then it moves away to other regions. It is my belief that our cultural waters are deep enough to contain the Gospel" (p. 31).

How the reader should understand this last image of "cultural waters containing the Gospel", the author does not say. Consequently, there may be many interpretations leading to misunderstandings. The following is another instance where a figure of speech used by Mbiti led to misunderstanding.

## **THE GOSPEL AS A GUEST**

After establishing the fact that the Gospel cannot be the exclusive property of any one culture, Mbiti had this to say by way of conclusion:

"... each culture must count it a privilege to have the Gospel as its guest. African culture must extend its hospitality to the Gospel as an honoured guest that, hopefully, may stay for many centuries and millenia as the case may be ... So let our African culture treat the Gospel with respect, with gentleness, with all due hospitality—for it is a divine message coming into frail cultural vessels" (p. 29).

Speaking of the Gospel as a guest is, in itself, a cultural way of communicating not readily understood by people of other cultures. Some readers and hearers (especially western) have taken the expression to mean that Mbiti thinks the Gospel is relative and temporary in African culture. They have no doubt, from their own cultural heritage, thought of the guest as a temporary dweller p. 203 with no authority in the house while the host is permanent and endowed with all authority to rule his household. So they have seen in this expression of Mbiti's an illustration of a theological relativism, putting culture above the Gospel. But this is a wrong inference. If there is theological relativism in Mbiti's writings, it must be found somewhere else. Unfortunately, this appears to be another instance of Evangelical rash accusation without proper basis.

We African Evangelicals must refrain from such easy criticism and engage in solid detailed research upon which we can base our assertions. This will make our case stronger.

So, in what sense can the Gospel be called a guest? Obviously this must be understood against the background of hospitality in Africa. Hospitality has been thought by some to be the key to the understanding of cultural conversion in Africa for it weaves reciprocal relationships of integration and welcome.<sup>4</sup> If indeed this is the case, then speaking of the Gospel as a guest means that one seeks to welcome and integrate it in such a way that it is no longer foreign. This appears to be the reasoning of Mbiti. It seems that his way of expressing his thought here points to a greater and more complex problem: is there only one cultural mode of doing theology? Or, are we from the so-called Third World, the only ones to make the jump from one cultural heritage to another which is thought (consciously or unconsciously) to be universal? These are important questions as many of us from the Third World are frustrated with the imbalance in the methodology, and even in the finality, of theology. Mbiti expresses this frustration elsewhere in these terms: "... the Church has become kerygmatically universal, but is still theologically provincial ..."<sup>5</sup>. If we all made the effort seriously to take into account the fact that, in a real sense, we are already in the age of "culturally differentiated christianities"<sup>6</sup> then figures of speech such as this would not create unnecessary misunderstanding for we would be sensitive enough to ask "what does he mean?" before making any judgment. p. 204

It is rather unfortunate that the expression "the Gospel as a guest" has caught the attention of hearers and readers around the world thus becoming the tree which hides the forest. For the meaning of the expression is made clear when the author addresses himself to the issue of "African Culture and Christianity." His call is to free African Christians from cultural circumcision and cultural imperialism (pp. 29–30) so that their culture may relate to the Gospel without undue borrowing from outside culture. To this effect he quotes this African proverb: "A bee does not start a new home with honey" which means that, as the bee starts with raw materials and produces honey, so Christians in Africa must take the raw materials of the Gospel and their own culture to produce a Christianity made in Africa (p. 30). Mbiti emphasizes his point by stating: "Let it be said once and for all, as loudly as technology can make it that *imported Christianity will never, never, quench the spiritual thirst of African peoples*" (p. 30 - Italics his), before quoting another African proverb: "That which comes from charity is never sufficient to fill the granary." Clearly what he means is that we cannot take someone else's guest and make him our own. If the Gospel is to stay in Africa and speak to Africans it must not be a "borrowed" guest but an invited one.

Does this mean then that Africa must become a cultural ghetto, refusing any relations with outside cultures? Certainly not, for Mbiti calls African Christians to manifest an ecumenical openness towards other cultures (p. 37). Even with an openness towards other cultures, some may say, there still remains a danger in cultivating a Christianity made in Africa. Let us remember, however, that this danger is to be faced by Christians in all cultures as is evidenced, for instance, by what Kenneth Kantzer says about the Americanization of the Church: "It would be far truer to say that America has conquered

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<sup>4</sup> Sanon, Anselme Tiianna *op. cit.* pp. 190, 192.

<sup>5</sup> Mbiti, John S. "Theological Impotence" in *Mission Trends* No. 3, ed. by G. H. Anderson and T. F. Stransky (New York/Grand Rapids: Paulist Press/Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1976) p. 8.

<sup>6</sup> Chenu, Bruno "Point de vue d'un théologien Européen" *Lumière et Vie*, (Nov.–Dec. 1974) T. XXIII, No. 120, p. 81.

the Church than that the Church has conquered America.”<sup>7</sup> Obviously, the Americanization of the Church is not better than the Africanization of it—if this means that a particular culture domesticates the Gospel. What is needed, therefore, is not a refusal to relate the Gospel to culture but rather a continued subjection of our own culture to the judgment of the Gospel. p. 205

## CONCLUSION

We have mentioned the most salient features of Mbiti’s article, the essential argument of which is “the positive use of our culture in Church life” (p. 36). Instances of this positive use are: worship, the community, Church nurture and education, Christian values and ethics, Christian service and witness (pp. 31–34). For this, according to the author, “African culture needs to be studied, analysed, and utilized in the evolution of relevant spirituality and worship life of the Church” (p. 31). The necessity to integrate Christianity with African culture runs like an Ariadne thread in Mbiti’s and other African writers;<sup>8</sup> it has been felt as far back as the second half of the nineteenth century by people like Mojola Agbebi.<sup>9</sup> One would have thought that we were beyond stressing the need and into specifics. It is precisely for this reason that Mbiti’s article is somewhat disappointing. Given the title *Christianity and African Culture*, one hopes to find specific and definitive treatment of the subject. But this is not the case; the only specific section is “African Culture and Church Life” (pp. 31–36) which still remains rather general. In his conclusion Mbiti offers a fifteen point agenda for further consideration (pp. 37–38) which should have been the object of his article. Unless we deal with these points specifically, I am afraid we will accomplish little more than stressing the need to do this and that, which can be only empty slogans. Granted it is a difficult exercise but the reward is great for the rooting of the Gospel in our continent.

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# Humanism and the Kingdom of God

by KLAUS BOCKMUEHL

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<sup>7</sup> Kantzer, Kenneth S. “Evangelicalism and the Inerrancy Question” *Christianity Today* (April 21, 1978) Vol. XXII, No. 14, p. 16.

<sup>8</sup> Mbiti, John S. “Theological Impotence” *op. cit.*, p 11; Ayandele, E. A. *A Visionary of the African Church* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1971) p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> Ayandele, E. A. *op. cit.*, p. 4.

IN ORDER to investigate the subject of humanism and the Kingdom of God let us first try to define the two concepts, then describe their relationship to each other.

## I. DEFINITION OF CONCEPT

### (a) What is Humanism

We do not encounter humanism as a closed and timeless system but only as a multiform history of conceptions, both in the sense of what true humanity should be and also how that ideal could be realised. This history began with Greek enlightenment when the Sophists, after the flagging of the folk religion, sought to anchor the goals and values necessary for human existence in man himself. The main stages of this history then are the ethics of Aristotle, the Stoics and Cicero, the Renaissance, the Enlightenment and German Idealism up to Nietzsche. In our day Marxism and Existentialism (Jaspers, Sartre) and the world-view of the Neo-Darwinists (Julian Huxley) claim to represent humanism.

For all these world-views man is the basic theme, the highest value, and the central if not the only object of thought and action. Moreover, all 'isms' are concerned not only with values but also with goals. 'Isms' describe programs and aspirations whose goal is expressed in the term used. Humanism, therefore, has a definite goal in view and pictures man not only as he is but also as he should be. The goal of humanism is the "true", "ideal", "future" man or perfect humanity reached through a process of development called "humanization".

Humanism, then, can be understood as a movement in a manward direction. If that is the definition of humanism, then of [p. 207](#) course theology can also speak of "God's humanism", meaning God's condescension, God's movement in a man-ward direction as it takes place in the coming of Christ into the world. However, it must not be overlooked that the most common definition of humanism, i.e., "man in the centre", is also understood in another sense, namely, that man is not only the *object* but also the *subject* and steersman of that humanization process, man as his own creator and developer. Humanism then is the movement originating with man and aiming at man: radical humanism. Here, therefore, an emphatically *secular* answer is being given concerning the authority, the source and the measure of man's nature and destiny.

This creed, which makes man the overall departure point, can be found with varying degrees of both radicalism and of polemical rejection of all other authority, especially God's. Julian Huxley, for example, puts man in the centre, thus making him the object of a new religion. This obviously includes a moderate, dispassionate atheism. Friedrich Schiller, one of the initiators of German idealism, is stronger, describing the Fall ([Gen 3](#)) as "without doubt the greatest and most propitious occurrence in mankind's history"; it is only in emancipation from God that the way begins to man's free, artistic self-realization. Karl Marx is even more radical when at the beginning of his literary career he writes: "Prometheus is the chief saint in the philosophical calendar," i.e., *rebellion* against the gods is the point of departure for all progress. Only when God is no more can man be everything. Huxley's quiet and detached atheism is being replaced in Marx by a militant anti-theism.

Does this radicalization process, then, point to an inherent tendency in humanism towards autonomy and so to atheism, simply because it places man in the centre? Thus, does humanism inevitably develop into humanism-without-God unless express precautions are taken against this? For the moment, we will leave the possibility of a "Christian humanism" open.

## (b) What is “the Kingdom of God”

While humanism can be understood only in the as yet unfinished history of its designs, the concept of the “lordship of God”, unlike humanism, presents itself as *revelation*, not as a collection of propositions. **p. 208** This revelation contains history as well, but a history whose content is most fully expressed and determined by the life of Jesus Christ. The concept of the kingdom or lordship of God is central to Christian belief. It is characteristic for biblical religion, perhaps even unique, as compared with the other great religions, such as Buddhism. God’s relationship to his people and the world is described by use of political analogy, the relationship of a king to his subjects. This immediately eliminates the individualistic notions of salvation and the other-worldliness of certain religions.

Significant traits of this basic biblical conception can be found in the Old Testament: the terms of the covenant that Yahweh concludes with his people, Israel, is the clause: “you shall be my kingdom of priests, my holy nation” ([Exodus 19:6](#)).

The royal psalms and the message of the prophets underline in addition the universality of the kingdom of God; it is not limited to Israel but includes all nations. “The Lord is King ... he has established his kingdom over all the world, and determined that it shall remain” ([Psalm 93:1](#), see also [96:10](#)). This indicates clearly that God’s reign has already been *declared* and *established*, but still is in a process of realization and completion until it has penetrated everywhere.

The theme of God’s lordship is to be seen also in the whole history of the life of Jesus. From the very beginning he proclaims the “gospel of the kingdom”. After he was crucified on account of this very question (the inscription on his cross read “Jesus of Nazareth, king of the Jews”) he speaks with his disciples about the kingdom of God during the forty days between his resurrection and ascension ([Acts 1:3](#)). The kingdom is the ground and content of the apostolic proclamation until his return ([Matt 28:18-20](#); [Eph 1:20-22](#) and [Matt 24:14](#)).

As in the Old so in the New Testament the universality of this kingdom is constantly emphasized, as is the fact that this kingdom is still in process of realization. That is to say, it is still controversial in the world. From its very beginning Jesus’ ministry involves “all the kingdoms of the world and their glory” ([Matt 4:8](#)). Another person, at whose disposal they appear to be, offers them to him as a reward for allegiance. But Jesus affirms his loyalty to the one God. **p. 209**

The struggle for cosmic mastery evidenced in the temptation account, determines the content of Jesus’ proclamation from that moment on: “Repent, for the kingdom of God is near!” These words are to be understood in light of Jesus’ victory over the tempter and through it the realization of God’s authority on earth. That struggle also gives a polemic note to the Lord’s Prayer: “Thy kingdom come”—“Thy will be done.” That becomes especially clear when the doxology to the Lord’s Prayer ([Matt 6:13](#) following [1 Chron 29:11-13](#)) “for Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory” is seen in contrast with the devil’s offer ([Matt 4:8](#)).

This rule of God therefore must still “come upon” men everywhere ([Matt 12:28](#)). It must be realized in struggle; it must be received by men. That is God’s concession to man’s understanding and freedom of choice. His kingdom must succeed step by step as men are made disciples of Jesus until at one point it will be revealed that undisputably “the sovereignty of the world has passed to our Lord and his Christ and he shall reign forever and ever” ([Rev 11:15](#); [12:10](#)). Until then the kingdom of God is at war, in process of development. It comes about, as in the temptation of Jesus, by a change of lordship in an individual’s life.



As in humanism, man has an essential place in the biblical doctrine of the kingdom of God. Man is, however, not the central or the exclusive theme, but he is an important theme in the message of the kingdom as it takes place in his life.

Again, just as in humanism, true humanity is not only a static dimension but a goal, a state that is still to be reached by a process of transformation into the image of Jesus Christ. The biblical message, too, recognizes the “not yet” that sees man as on the way between his nature and his destiny. Contrary to humanism, the full measure of true humanity is already real in one man Jesus, “the firstborn of the new creation.” The process of humanization—if that is how one would refer to the transformation of men into Christ’s image—has therefore a definite point of departure, the God-man Jesus Christ. God and his kingdom is also the point of departure in the sense of authority, origin and standard throughout. Here we are speaking of a movement from God to man and also from man to God.

Having described humanism and the lordship of God we can now attempt to relate the two concepts. Both concepts, each in p. 210 its own way, make man the object of their consideration and concern. Both offer an image of man, information as to what man is, and a goal as to what he should be. In short: *both have a concept of humanity and the way of its realization*. This parallelism makes possible a further investigation of the theme which can be stated more precisely: *Humanism and the kingdom of God in pursuit of the realization of true humanity*. We will therefore have to deal with both the respective conceptions of humanity and the respective means proposed for its realization.

## II. THE CONCEPT OF HUMANITY IN HUMANISM

### (a) The Decision for the Principle of Self-Realization

The Latin term *humanitas* from which our word “humanity” is derived, alongside the quantitative meaning of “mankind” includes two qualitative meanings: it is a rendering of the Greek word *philanthropia* (love for mankind) as well as of *paideia* (education, training, culture). Even today we use derivatives that point in the two different directions: “humanitarian” refers to help given to those in need, while the “humanities” are the subjects included in a classical education. The adjective “humane” still includes the double meaning of “tender, kind-hearted” as also “tending to refinement, polished.”

History shows that humanism has understood the concept of humanity essentially in the sense of *paideia*, i.e. education, urbanity, cultivation of the individual. Werner Jaeger, who sought to validate what he called a “third humanism” (after the pattern of the Renaissance and of German idealism) in his masterly studies on the intellectual world of Greece (*Paideia* 1933/44) makes the option only too clear when he writes “*Humanity* has, since the time of Varro and Cicero, a second and higher and stronger meaning alongside the older and more common definition which does not here come into consideration: it describes the education of man to his true form, towards his real humanness. That is real Greek *paideia* ...”

The ideal of humanism is therefore described as “noble, fully educated human nature” and as the development of the personality so that it corresponds with the ideal. Humanism aims at self-realization. And this is the same state denoted by the key concept p. 211 of ancient ethics, *eudaimonia* (happiness or satisfaction).

### (b) The Fluctuation in Humanism’s Concept of Humanity



All the values mentioned so far are formal concepts which can be filled with quite different contents. Consequently, in the history of humanism the answer to “what is true human existence?” has varied widely.

### (1) Kallikles

The Sophists (the “first humanists” according to W. Jaeger) understood by *eudaimonia* sensual pleasure, especially that made possible by domination of other people. Thus education was to be aimed at a small elite who had the ability and the resources to enjoy life. We see this clearly in Plato’s dialogue “Gorgias” when the Sophist Kallikles says, “he who would live aright must let his appetites become as great as possible. He must not limit them, but then he must also be able to satisfy them, however great they are, by his courage and intelligence. He must gratify them wherever his desires lead him.” Kallikles suggests, in addition, that the gratification of the *hunger for power* promises the greatest enjoyment. Thus he stresses the ability “to create for oneself a kingdom of power and domination,” and underlines this by countering Socrates’ proposal for self-mastery with “How can anyone be happy who serves anybody?” His human ideal is clearly sensual and material self-realization whereby the individual, whether by means of inherited advantages or by study, stands over against the mass and exploits it. It is an ideal of life apart from—or rather, and worse—*against* one’s fellow man.

### (2) Aristotle

The Nikomachean ethics of Aristotle, the first “gentleman’s ideal”, has as its basic principle *mesotes*, the middle way or “moderation”. Comparing this with Sophism, it represents a remarkable refinement and cultivation in the attaining of the ideal of self-development. Aristotle’s “virtue of distinction” presents *eudaimonia* as honour and intellectual satisfaction granted by the development of rich talents and the creation of a great work admired by all. The ideal here is the aristocratic, independent, wealthy, widely educated, and politically active man who acts on a large [p. 212](#) scale, presenting his town with a new community hall, a theater or a warship. He enjoys the applause of his fellow citizens, but only insofar as they represent some worth and their approval counts.

Werner Jaeger emphasizes that the ancient concept of virtue and education was not at first individualistic, only gaining that character after the collapse of the Greek *polis* in later antiquity and in Hellenism. But it has maintained that emphasis up to the present day in the concepts of humanist scholars. Jaeger explains that in the early days virtue was a concept linked with the structure of social life. From a purely external and formal point of view, this observation is correct. The Sophists, for example, taught the off-spring of the town’s aristocracy, who could afford this style of private education, to successfully make their way in society. And the political horizon of Aristotle’s educational ideal (the “social reference of virtue” according to Jaeger) is hardly more respectable. He presents an internal ethos of the ruling elite, in which the slave is not seen as a subject of action, where tradesmen and artisans are looked down upon because of their economic position, and where none of those participate in the striving for distinction. They are disqualified because—a significant formula—they are “condemned to live for others.” Aristotle’s idea of virtue is not concerned with these who are, after all, also part of society or at least of mankind. To be precise, the liberality of his high-minded hero is indeed concerned with the township sphere, but not *for* the township; the city is only the theatre of glory for the self-presentation of the individual.

Even the excellent virtue of *philia* (friendship) as proposed by Aristotle ultimately creates an impression of egocentricity. It is a dominant category insofar as it presupposes

*time*, a value judgment about the other person which precedes all actions and must first declare the other one worthy of one's friendship. Behind this there is everywhere the sociological concept of concentric circles around the central point of the self. Parents love their children because they are, as it were, a part of themselves. Friends love each other because they find in the other a reflection of their own class and sentiments (and are therefore best found in the circle of one's own family or from people of one's own age).

Aristotle's ethics even lay the foundation for further development [p. 213](#) towards the individualistic Stoic ideal of life. The tendency of Stoic philosophers to present the individual as sure of himself and, despite all theoretical love of mankind, striving above all to realize his individuality, is already prepared in Aristotle's ethics when he teaches that one should regard lightly the recognition given him by others, for only the upright man himself knows what he is worth and others cannot estimate him by the real standard of his merit. So ultimately the significance of the state, as well as of society, disappears for the individual who is content in himself.

### (3) Cicero

The works of Cicero unquestionably represent the highest summit of classical humanism, if not of all humanist thought. Here we come to the *other* formulation of the concept of humanity, namely humanity as affection for one's fellow-man, *humanities* in the sense of "philanthropy", indeed even as *humanitas contra minores*, as kindly inclination towards the weaker one—perhaps because this humanism has a religious direction. Limits, however, still remain in that this picture of authentic humanity again is linked to the idea of a potent personality and so attains a scent of condescension. Works of charity, for example, here for the first time made obligatory, are to be performed *honoris causa*—for the sake of the name of a good man. The individual and his moral development remain the final reference point.

### (4) Interim Summary

Kallikles and Aristotle represent the two opposing ideals of humanity which constantly recur in the history of secular humanism. Cicero, however, is not simply hailed as the master of form and language but also taken seriously as a teacher of probity and compassion, and thus humanism flows into the soon developing stream of Christian humanism. Humanity as self-realization, the goal of secular humanism, will hereafter be linked either to Kallikles or Aristotle, and from now on we will deal solely with the intentions and possibilities of this secular humanism.

In a modification of the typology of art given by Friedrich Nietzsche one could call these two programs of the ideal of self-realization a "Dionysian" humanism (from Dionysios) and an "Apollonian" humanism (from Apollo, the god of order and [p. 214](#) form). The former is primarily concerned with vitality, the other with shape and form.

These two versions of the ideal are necessarily in conflict with each other, and the overall problem in the history of humanism is the continual to and fro, toppling over from one to the other, from high spirituality to vital intoxication, from stark sexuality or the worship of naked power, to the necessity of sobriety of shape and form—until the game begins again. The goal concept of humanity thus remains uncertain.

A second problem common to these two is the integration of one's fellow man: how can a program of total self-realization of the individual (whether carnal or intellectual) be linked with the existence of one's fellow man? It is this problem which in recent days has become ever more pressing with the growth in consciousness of an increasing number of people.

### (5) Modern Humanism

The history of secular humanism only comes to light again in Italy's Renaissance movement. After a thousand years of absolute domination of Christian ideas it produces as its most effective model a new Kallikles, the extremely influential *Prince* of Machiavelli and a cult of personal realization of power which, unrestrained by any considerations, raises lack of scruple to the level of principle for its surprise-effect. After the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation, the history of humanism continues into the Enlightenment as a form of humanism that belongs more or less to the "Apollonian" type.

The work of the protagonist of German Idealism, J. W. von Goethe, constitutes a whole compendium of the two types of secular humanism. In the "muscleman" period of his youthful poem "Hercules", as also generally in his early "Sturm und Drang" writings, there is a return to Dionysian humanism. By contrast, at the height of his glory Goethe represents the Apollonian type. The most famous of his works, *Faust*, reveals all the problems of secular humanism in the life of this Renaissance type man. Faust's goal is the complete development of the person and the enjoyment of the whole world even at the cost of a covenant with the Evil One. Therefore the first love affair already brings death and the final scene demonstrates that the integration p. 215 of one's neighbour, who is hindering one's own development, does not come off. In nature, re-created by Faust for the well-being of mankind but especially for the assurance of his own posthumous glory, there remains a peaceable elderly couple, Philemon and Baucis, living at a place which Faust desires. So the other person is a thorn in the flesh which is then removed without pity. Apollonian humanism too, which strives not directly for happiness but for the performance of its creativity, destroys life. The artist, the scientist and the statesman with their titanic efforts to create their life's work, again and again find themselves like King Ahab who, in order to round off his splendid possessions, acquired Naboth's vineyard with the shedding of blood.

Hardly unsurpassable, this Faustian, Apollonian-Dionysian humanism comes to a head in the work of Goethe's successor, Friedrich Nietzsche. Here we find the extreme development of the philosophy of self-enhancement and the gratification of the "strong, healthy man", a downright imperial egotism. It is the return of Kallikles—and also a corresponding hatred of Socrates and Plato on principle. Nietzsche explicitly recommends "to push what is on the brink of falling", but also, if necessary, to make sick that which is healthy if it stands in the way of one's own development. After the pattern of Machiavelli, Nietzsche also presented his philosophy with respect to the collective actions of nation and race, thereby directly preparing the way for the unscrupulous practices of the national-socialist Third Reich with its euthanasia programme.

This development, then, clarifies for us the dilemma of secular humanism, i.e. that Apollonian humanism is always being swallowed up by Dionysian "in-humanism". In the final analysis neither system can guarantee the existence of one's fellow man. While the Apollonian humanist, concerned only with himself and his work, either relates his neighbour to it or ignores him, the Dionysian tends to consume him.

### (6) Marxism

Against the background of this problematic history of humanism Marxism appears as the gigantic attempt to secure the development of the individual *and* the concerns of society at the same p. 216 time. In his *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* of 1844, the young Marx emphatically expresses the ideal of the "rich, all-round and profoundly developed man" of the future. But in contrast with the history of secular humanism, which, even in its most recent and varied representatives as Karl Jaspers and Julian Huxley, constantly

appears as an individualism, Marx envisages the emergence of that man as possible only in a paradoxical future union of individualism and communism.

However, if we again enquire into the whereabouts of the fellow man, he is primarily taken into account only in the shape of an abstract future neighbour to whom the concrete, present neighbour can even be sacrificed. In its development Marxism has demonstrated itself to be a very “consuming” humanism. It believes that it must “consume” today in order to be able to sustain tomorrow. Its goal-orientedness opened the door for the phrase “the end justifies the means”, and its radical secular humanism led to such unlimited applications of this phrase that Stalinism, including the personality cult, brought in a world-scale, unscrupulous Machiavellianism.

#### *(7) The Methods of Secular Humanism towards the Realization of True Humanity*

We must now ask “By what means does secular humanism intend to reach the goal of humanity?” It appears that secular humanism here finds itself in a dilemma similar to the one regarding what content “humanity” was to have after all.

At this point we may perhaps distinguish between a parenetic and a dictatorial, legalistic humanism. The well-meaning humanist, who has definite ideas about what must be changed in the world so that it may be more humane, will first appeal to the good in mankind. He appeals, for example, to conscience or to man’s self-respect, principles which since Democritus have been thought able to take the place of God in assuring correct behaviour. But the appeal to individual conscience is not sufficient, for Kallikles exploits the weak with a seemingly clear conscience and indeed with an appeal to “natural law”; i.e. the right of the stronger to dominate in nature. Therefore parenetic humanism moves from an appeal to a general sense of fairness on to an impassioned entreaty which, however, pleads the different demands of humanity p.217 with mere “must” formulations, and which gives no more motive than the warning that humanity would otherwise perish.

In the concluding words of a representative symposium volume, *The Humanist Frame*, Aldous Huxley contradicts himself as soon as he addresses the realization of the perceived good. Knowledge, he admits, does not produce any action by itself. It only directs action which has to be set in motion by feelings and the will. Nevertheless a few lines later he concludes his thoughts with the sentence: “Knowing the good thing that we might do, and knowing also the disastrous things that are happening and will happen if we continue to act as we are acting now, we may perhaps be moved to will the consummation which our philosophy assures us will be desirable—the realization of our full humanity.” So at the end there is clear helplessness concerning the power to achieve that which is good. Parenetic humanism is at a loss when it is a matter of moving from theory to practice.

Julian Huxley, the important representative of neo-Darwinian humanism, has for many years been propagating the need for a psycho-social evolution of humanity (an evolution which he thought was already in process), i.e. for a change of attitude as the means of realizing full humanity. Having obviously despaired of the good will and judgment of mankind, he has finally set his hope on a “eugenic evolution”, that is to say, the production of true humanity by means of biological engineering and controlled procreation. Frederick Crick, who shares those same opinions has, as we are given to understand, already considered the legal measures needed to be taken that will put an end to the purposeless procreation of present day humanity and ensure the successful improvement of mankind. With this he moves in fact from parenetic to dictatorial humanism.

Marxism has been on this way from the very beginning. It sets out from the principle that, in his present condition of self-alienation, man is a wolf toward his fellow-man. All means are to be employed to conquer and subdue the beast. Marxism is not afraid to make

use of Machiavellianism in order to conquer Machiavellianism. It propagates enmity as a means to the goal of brotherhood. For the time being dictatorship is to ensure social behaviour by decree. It leads to an aggravation of the lordship of man over man in the name of the liberation of man. There [p. 218](#) is a belief in a future historical transformation-point. But this faith is demolished for many by the suffering of so many innocent people in the present. The use of force, not merely to stem evil but to create the true man, seems a deed of sheer despair. Both parenetic and dictatorial humanism fail before the inexplicable egotism of man who constantly withdraws from the ideal and indeed necessary claims of humanity.

To summarize: the history of secular humanism shows three apparently invincible problems:

(a) When man is the highest authority, then uncertainty reigns concerning the content of "humanity". For the questions "What kind of man?" and "Which design of humanity?" the Apollonian or Dionysian remain impossible to decide.

(b) Without a higher authority Dionysian humanism can never be brought into shape or form. Dionysian as well as Apollonian humanism leave man's fellow-man insecure and unprovided for. The question "How is brotherhood possible?" remains unanswered, indeed it was never even asked through the long history of secular humanism. What is needed, therefore, would be a binding statement concerning the content of humanity which would at the same time ensure the existence of one's neighbour.

(c) Besides these two cul-de-sacs there remains the perplexity concerning the means of achieving true humanity. Needed here is a new kind of motivation beyond parenthesis and dictatorship that would be able to bridge the ugly gap between theory and practice.

### III. HUMANITY UNDER THE LORDSHIP OF GOD

#### (a) Humanity as Love of Neighbour

We have already stated in the introduction that the reign of God includes an image of true human existence set before men as a goal. The kingdom of God, too, is concerned with a humanization of man. In contrast with humanism, however, the Christian faith starts from the fact that this image of perfect man, this concept of humanity, has already been realized in one man, Jesus Christ. Therefore the process of humanization is to be understood as a process of assimilation, of being made similar to Jesus Christ.

Let us list a few features which would characterize humanity [p. 219](#) under God's rule. Basic to this humanity is the "Double Commandment of Love", " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind.' That is the great and first commandment. The second is like it, 'Love your neighbour as yourself' " ([Matt 22:37-39](#)). Jesus completely fulfilled this commandment and thereby showed not merely a theoretical proposition but the practical realization of humanity under the rule of God. *He is the man for God and the man for others.*

Already in the Old Testament the neighbour's right to life is guaranteed concretely and in particular by God's authority (cf. the guarantee given in the various commandments concerning the protection of one's neighbour by the returning formula: "for I am the Lord, your God," in [Leviticus 19](#), above all in the resume: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself, for I am the Lord" ([Lev 19:18](#)). Jesus then makes it our duty to care for our neighbour's life and eternal salvation. For Jesus, God's authority occupies the first place. He gives visible proof that responsible and comprehensive care for one's neighbour is only possible under the condition not just of obedience but of *love for God*.



Humanity under the rule of God has its centre of gravity not in the self but outside the self, in God and in one's neighbour. This alternative to the self-centred world-view of secular humanism (see above) is strikingly seen in the Parable of the Good Samaritan ([Luke 10:25-37](#)) with which Jesus expounds the command to love one's neighbour. A lawyer, talking to Jesus, begins a discussion concerning the concept of neighbour with the question "Who is my neighbour?"—a question which might also have been asked by the Greeks. Jesus brings the discussion to a close by questioning the prevailing concept of neighbour: "Who was a neighbour to the one who fell into the hands of robbers?" It is no longer me but the neighbour who stands in the centre of the world-view of love.

We might call this a neighbour-centred humanity in contrast to the ego-centred concept of humanity. While humanism usually has its goal in the formation—even perhaps the religious formation!—of the individual personality, and therefore can be fully described in terms of the individual, the humanity of Jesus is only realized in encounter with God and fellow-man. Of the two meanings of the word *humanitas*, *philanthropia* now decisively [p. 220](#) comes to the fore. And the one who practices that philanthropy will also find *paideia* but in a new sense, in terms of formation of character and in terms of goodness.

The humanity of the Good Samaritan stands in sharpest contrast to Kallikles' ideal of life. Jesus seeks not his own happiness but service of his fellow-man. He in fact is fully aware of the antithesis between the Dionysian ideal of existence and the way of life under the rule of God. In an inconspicuous parable in [Matt 24:45-51](#) he describes the contrasting ways in which two servants behave during their master's absence. One constructs for himself a provisional, practical atheism ("the master is a long time coming"), eats and drinks with his drunken friends (intoxication as a Dionysian principle!) and beats his fellow-servants who naturally stand in the way of his self-development. The other servant, faithful to his commission in the interim period, provides food for the household at the proper time and so participates in God's own sustaining work for his creation (cf. [Ps 104:27](#)). Jesus teaches in this parable that man is either a *consumer* or a *sustainer* of his neighbour. There is no third way.

This alternative is again made strikingly clear in the life of Jesus himself. [Matthew 14](#) juxtaposes Herod, who holds a banquet and slays John the Baptist, with Jesus who feeds the hungry five thousand. Further antithesis to the attitude of Kallikles, namely "service instead of personal happiness" is the explicit instruction of Jesus to his disciples in [Matthew 20](#). Here too it has the form of an either-or: "You know that in the world rulers lord it over their subjects and their great men make them feel the weight of their authority" (Jesus, as it were, knew Kallikles and his descendants) "but it shall not be so with you. Among you, whoever wants to be great must be your servant" ([Matt 20:25ff.](#)). The perplexed question of Kallikles, "How can anyone be happy if he serves anyone?", becomes clearly irrelevant if we are concerned not with the servitude of one who has no other choice, but with service freely chosen and a sacrifice offered in the imitation of Jesus ([Matt 20:28](#)). Such a one will always experience the rule of the kingdom of God: "He who exalts himself will be abased but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

We have seen that secular humanism, humanism without God, produces a humanity without fellow-man. The lordship of God [p. 221](#) lays our neighbour so much on our hearts that next to God he becomes the centre of our life's activity.

### **(b) The Means of the Kingdom of God towards the Realization of True Humanity**

When Jesus says "A new commandment I give to you that you love one another" ([John 13:34](#)) and underlines his appeal with his own example in washing the disciples' feet, does this mean that also in the kingdom of God only admonition and example are available as



the means to reach true humanity—something that can also be found in the history of secular humanism?

The lordship of God means neither law nor mere parenthesis. That can be seen already in the Old Testament. It has been discovered that the Decalogue, the basic law of God's rule, bears a formal similarity to the contemporary Hittite master-vassal contracts. Israel lives with the consciousness that she is not a troop of slaves under the thumb of an oriental despot but, as it were, a people of which each is a royal official. Correspondingly, the creation narrative sees man as God's representative and steward who has received God's instruction for responsible execution.

The same idea is to be found in the New Testament parable of the talents, but more so, as Jesus says explicitly to his disciples "I do not call you servants; you are my friends." They are "God's fellow-workers" and "envoys plenipotentiary of Christ", who look after his work on earth.

They are all of that and can do all of that because Christ has "disclosed everything" to them as his friends ([John 15:15](#)). This is a pointer to the gift of the Spirit which is given to the disciples as a sign of the beginning of God's kingdom ([Acts 1:6-8](#)). God's Lordship and God's Spirit go together. In contrast to other kingdoms the reign of God simultaneously imparts an inspiration which also enables the subjects of the kingdom—or rather the emissaries plenipotentiary of the kingdom—to act at all times in accordance with the intentions of their king ([1 Cor 2:16](#)). This is why Paul can say "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" ([2 Cor 3:17](#)), and St. Augustine, "The service of God is perfect freedom."

God's reign in man begins with regeneration, a basic renewal and transformation of the individual, which imparts the Holy [p.222](#) Spirit, i.e., spontaneity, insight and power to do the good. This is far from the naivety both of the classicist and the modernist, who believe that the description of goodness alone will suffice. Far from all purely parenetic or legalistic demands, the kingdom of God sends the experience of renewal, the indicative before the imperative, to perform the new deed.

Both the Old and the New Testaments set out from the presupposition that mankind needs such a "new birth" in order to solve the riddle of history, i.e. that man often recognises what is good but nevertheless does not do it. So the prophet Jeremiah promised a new covenant from God with man in which the commandments, the instruction as to what is good, no longer encounter man from the outside as an alien demand but are implanted in his very heart to become his own attitude, given by the Spirit of God. The promise has been fulfilled ever since the first Pentecost, when the Spirit was poured out on the company of Jesus' disciples. By his Spirit the disciples of Jesus receive the mind of Jesus, the perfect man; and by the Spirit love is poured into their hearts ([Rom 5:5](#)). Thus the kingdom of God itself provides for its realization, the realization of humanity in the lives of those who open themselves to receive it.

### **(c) Critical Objections**

To be sure we must here heed the voice of criticism. For example one of the main theses of anarchist Bakunin is that the reign of God is often replaced by the reign of a human hierarchy which does not allow the fruits of humanity to ripen and which fruits it is indeed unable to create. Such a degeneration in the history of Christendom can always be identified as a consequence of forgetting the work of the Holy Spirit. The kingdom of God and the Spirit of God are so separated that neither the representatives nor the enemies of Christian doctrine can imagine that by his Spirit God gives both direction and power to reproduce Jesus' humanity without the mediation of a priestly caste. Yet the characteristic of the kingdom of God is that it grants the Spirit and, with it, grants the individual freedom

of movement adequate to every situation within the framework of the law of God that serves the conservation of God's creation. God's reign effects humanity through law and Spirit. p. 223

Another justifiable criticism will be directed against the obvious lack of teaching about the lordship of God in certain traditions of historical Christianity. The Lutheran Reformation hardly did much to foster the concept of the kingdom of God. This is also alien to some parts of evangelicalism where the message contains only an individualistic, eschatological soteriology. When one of the great poets of the period between the Reformation and pietism sang "When will I arrive at the place where I will embrace you for ever?" he tended to go straight against the perspective in Jesus' words "the kingdom of God has come upon you." In the former, the self is the subject and the theme; in the latter it is the kingdom. In the former, there is the abandonment of earth and humanity (notice the first person singular). In the latter, Jesus proclaims the struggle of the kingdom for the universe so that God might be Lord of heaven and earth.

## VI. CONCLUSION

If humanity under the lordship of God is thus distinguished from two of its major corruptions, we can then summarize the relation between humanism and the kingdom of God concerning the realization of true humanity. Both have the common theme of humanization of man. Both have their starting point in an awareness of the imperfection of man as he is. Both recognize, as a result of this, the necessity of ethics and so of the question "What should I do?" and, consequent upon that, the urgency of the deeper question "How should I be?"

In its search for humanity, humanism without God falls into the three cul-de-sacs of (1) the uncertainty concerning the ideal of humanity, (2) the lack of integration of the neighbour into one's activity, and (3) the lack of power to realize the goal. However, these cul-de-sacs and their solution are the explicit themes of the Bible; in Jesus is determined what true humanity is, and this is not just defined but tangibly demonstrated. Under the influence of the kingdom of God, the life of one's neighbour is not only guaranteed but is committed to especial care. And the reign of God imparts the power to do good which leaves behind the constant alternation on the way to humanity, of weak exhortation and equally powerless dictatorship. In the search for true humanity p. 224 the kingdom of God offers exactly what is lacking in humanism. This explains why the history of humanism secretly is a history of struggle with God.

It is necessary that humanism should again grasp the ideal of *humanitas* in its full meaning, including both *philanthropia* and *paideia*. The neighbour belongs to the basic pattern of human existence. It is necessary, too, that humanism, for the sake of our fellow-man, should turn from atheism and return to the commission of God, that it should put the free suzerainty of God in the place of the presumptuous sovereignty of man. "Almighty man" or Almighty God—this alternative is valid for humanism, too. Humanity, the goal of humanism, is only possible under the kingship of God.

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# Partnership in Mission

by C. RENE PADILLA

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ANY SURVEY of the expansion of Christianity in the twentieth century will have to take into account three historical facts of particular importance. First, that the modern missionary movement had, as its base, Western Christendom at a time when, as a result of the industrial revolution growing out of scientific and technological development, the West had become a political, economic and cultural power. Second, that missionaries were the carriers not only of Christianity, but also of values and perspectives typical of Western man and associated with modernity, including a naturalistic worldview. Finally, that missionary work contributed to the disruption of order in the traditional non-Western societies and brought a new desire for development, thus creating a revolutionary situation.

These facts are basic to understanding the role that Christianity has played in the modern search for national liberation and the challenge that the modern revolutionary mood poses to the Church today. In the closing chapter of his monumental history of Christianity in a Revolutionary Age, Kenneth S. Latourette raises the question, whether by giving rise (or at least contributing) to forces that created a revolutionary situation, Christianity has not worked against itself. *"If the revolution stemmed in any degree from Christianity,"* he contends, *"that religion could be said to be digging its own grave."* The call to the Church today is to rise to the demands of an age of liberation that its own missionary thrust has helped to usher in. And the basic claim I wish to substantiate in this paper is that this task must be faced as a global task. A task that can only be discharged as Christians everywhere around the world become concretely involved in a living partnership in mission. [p. 226](#)

In the first part I will attempt to show the contrast between this approach and other approaches; in the second part I will deal with its basis, and in the third part I will explore some ways in which it can be implemented today.

## I. TOWARD A NEW APPROACH IN MISSION

The first World Missionary Conference, held in Edinburgh in 1910, heralded the position the Church was to attain in the twentieth century. The conference took place at a time when a combination of forces was beginning to threaten to destroy Christianity in Western Europe, the continent that had served as the base of its expansion. Throughout the nineteenth century, the development of science and technology, followed by industrialization, urbanization and the disruption of traditional patterns of society had been producing a revolution that was accompanied by a growing secularization of life, with the abandonment of faith by millions of European Christians. Edinburgh marked the end of an epoch, but it also pointed towards a new age in which the world-wide Christian movement that had taken shape through missionary work was to come into its own. It pointed to the displacement of Christianity from its traditional center, which was entering a so-called post-Christian era, to the world beyond Europe.

Out of more than 1,200 representatives at Edinburgh, only seventeen came from the "younger churches" (eight from India, one from Burma, three from China, one from Korea

and four from Japan). Although the Church had by then become a global fellowship, it bore the imprint of an ecclesiastical colonialism that paralleled the political colonialism of the time. In line with the recommendations of the organizing committees, each participating missionary society invited (since the delegates represented missionary societies rather than churches) sent some of its “leading missionaries” and “if practicable, one or two natives”.

The Edinburgh Conference was a demonstration of the growing interest in missionary work among Christians of Western Europe and the United States and of the remarkable influence of the Student Volunteer Movement whose vision, summed up in the watchword, “The Evangelization of the World in this Generation”, p. 227 had helped an impressive number of students to see their responsibility regarding world missions. But it also threw into relief a problem that for many years ahead would remain unsolved at least for a large portion of the missionary movement, namely, the great resistance on the part of missionary societies to implementing the ideal of establishing truly indigenous churches (“self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating”, according to Henry Venn’s dictum).

Out of Edinburgh grew two movements that eventually resulted in the formation in 1948, of the World Council of Churches: Life and Work, and Faith and Order. At the initial meeting of Life and Work (Stockholm, 1925), despite its claim to be a “Universal Christian Conference”, only six “nationals” representing the “young churches” were present. The “world conference” at which Faith and Work was launched (Lausanne, 1927) was equally a Western gathering, with very few representatives from outside the West. The Anglo-American predominance was to be a persistent characteristic of “ecumenical” gatherings until the middle of the century. The World Missionary Conference had indeed marked a beginning, but there was a very steep climb ahead before the “sending churches” recognized the supranational character of the Church.

The “parity” between older and younger churches was brought to the fore as never before at the Second World Missionary Conference held at Jerusalem in 1928. At the next World Missionary Conference (Madras, 1938) the emergence of a world-wide Christian community was reflected by the presence of delegates from nearly fifty countries, many of them from non-Western areas. Madras also insisted on the close connection between indigenization and mission. But it was at the enlarged meeting of the International Missionary Council held at Whitby (Canada) in 1947, that the Church was uniquely confronted with the need to break down the distinction between “older and younger churches” and to face its global responsibility. Whitby’s emphasis on missionaries as “agents of the church universal”, whose responsibility was to be regarded on a par with that of their national colleagues, was a hallmark in missionary thinking.

Today not many would openly disagree with A. J. Boyd’s statement that p. 228

*‘... older churches and younger churches are no longer to be thought of as patrons and beneficiaries respectively, or even as senders and receivers, but as partners not in any merely contractual sense, but set by God in that relationship. They come together by God’s will, for the doing of God’s will; they are partners in obedience.’<sup>1</sup>*

In actual fact, however, Whitby’s call to “partnership in obedience” is still today as relevant as when it was first issued. Many of its recommendations have not yet been implemented by a number of missionary agencies which (thirty years later!) remain bound by tradition. Witness the growing numerical strength of American Protestant

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<sup>1</sup> *Christian Encounter* (Edinburgh: The Saint Andrews Press, 1961), p. 19.

missions (almost wholly dependent on American personnel, leadership and finances) after World War II, and the persistent separation of “foreign missions” and “local churches” around the world. In many cases missionary work continues to be done from a position of political and economic power and with the assumption of Western superiority with regard to cultures and race. Many Christian churches, institutions and movements in the Third World continue to live in a “colonial” situation, heavily dependent on foreign personnel and subjected to foreign control. Despite the progress made toward genuine independence, Christians in the “developing countries” are caught in a situation in which economic and cultural imperialism has hardly been broken, even though its outward appearance has changed. On the other hand, the mentality of colonial dependence lingers in the “younger churches” to such an extent that an observer feels entitled to say that “*the Church in Africa has been very missionary minded, but only in terms of receiving missionaries and depending on them.*” (John Mbiti). The missionary movement has been extremely slow to recognize the importance of real partnership in obedience and has fostered among the “younger churches” an attitude that will prove very difficult to change. As a result, even after the “Retreat of the West” in the Third World, Christianity is still commonly regarded as a Western religion and the Christian mission is still generally identified with a white face. Emilio Castro’s words written about Latin America are also true of Asia and Africa: [p. 229](#)

*“The most acute problem of the Protestant churches will be the nationalization of the church with its inherent ecclesiastical conflicts with the mission boards especially in the United States.*

This great reluctance by missionary societies to heed the call to partnership, even in the post-colonial situation, is sufficient to explain the “Call for a Moratorium” issued by the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the WCC at its assembly held at Bangkok in January, 1973. The recommendation was that mission agencies consider stopping sending funds and personnel to particular churches for a period of time, as “a possible strategy of mission in certain situations”. The debate that followed was characterized by more heat than light. The All-Africa Conference of Churches added heat by adopting the “Moratorium” at its meeting at Lusaka, in May, 1974, with the observation that,

*“... should the moratorium cause missionary agencies to crumble, the African church could have performed a service in redeeming God’s people in the Northern Hemisphere from a distorted view of the mission of the church in the world.”*

On the other hand, the International Congress on World Evangelization, held at Lausanne in August, 1974, added light by recognizing in its Convertant that

*“... a reduction of foreign missionaries may sometimes be necessary to facilitate the national church’s growth in self-reliance and to release resources for unevangelized areas.”*

After the Lausanne Congress, at which a number of critical issues had been brought up mainly by Third World speakers, it became increasingly clear that even the most traditional missionary agencies would no longer be able to avoid the issue of world partnership in mission. The conviction expressed in the Lausanne Covenant, that “a new missionary era has dawned” and that “a growing partnership of churches will develop and the universal character of Christ’s church will be more clearly exhibited”, would slowly gain ground.

At the end of 1976 a group of executives of the North American Foreign Missions Association and the International Foreign Missions Association (who together control one



third of all Protestant missionaries in Latin America) met in Quito, Ecuador, with representatives of the Church in Latin America in a church mission consultation. The frank discussion of such painful realities p. 230 as the “ecclesiological crisis, the phenomenon of dependence, and the too-frequent failure to reach true brotherly interdependence” that marked the meeting is an encouraging sign that change is slowly taking place in the relationship between the “younger churches” and missionary agencies. And the process is irreversible.

## II. THE BASIS OF PARTNERSHIP

All the churches, whatever their location, should regard themselves as partners in mission. Why? In a nutshell, because there is only one world, one Church, and one Gospel. Let us examine this affirmation in detail.

### One World

One of the most striking characteristics of today’s world is its unification. All the nations of the earth have been or are being drawn into a common civilization in such a way that for the first time it is possible to speak of a single world history. Gone are the days when the world could be viewed as a mosaic of self-contained national units. As the 1974 oil crisis showed, no country can adopt a policy in relation to its national resources without setting into motion a whole process affecting many nations. Even relatively unimportant decisions taken by a national government may result in unexpected changes influencing the lives of millions of persons in other nations.

In the jet age, the contacts between people from a great diversity of cultures have multiplied to such an extent that no-one living at the end of the nineteenth century could have imagined. Thousands of university students, business men, technicians and government officials live abroad for several years and return to their home countries with a new capacity to understand people from other cultures. And the Telestar and the radio give people everywhere the sense of living together.

The unification of the world, however, is far deeper than these factors would suggest at first sight. It has to do with the worldwide extension of a type of mentality which has taken shape as a result of the technological revolution in the West—the “Consumer mentality”. It is connected with the adoption of common values in the light of which industrial products (many of them trivial) become all-important in both developed and underdeveloped countries. p. 231 In a real sense, therefore, it is a direct consequence of Western science and technology. The World civilization into which all the nations of the earth are drawn is a consumer society heavily dependent upon Western affluence, and carried in the wings of international corporations, powerful controllers of the mass media. Having erected *homo consumens* as the model of the ideal life, it has spread everywhere as a secular messianism in which faith in science and technology has been combined with the idea of progress to promise a new world order—a secularized version of the Kingdom of God.

The most telling symbol of this single world civilization is the city. Industrialization and urbanization are related terms. They may be regarded as different aspects of the same phenomenon, namely, the Westernization of the world, the “modernization” of life everywhere. Man has become a city dweller to such an extent that in the year 2000 six out of every ten persons will live in urban centers. Even more significantly, already today, as Jacques Ellul has observed, “*the country (and soon this will be true even of the immense*



*Asian steppe) is only an annex of the city.”<sup>2</sup> Urban growth goes together with industrialization and, therefore, with the spread of the consumer mentality around the globe.*

Hardly anybody in the Third World would fail to recognize the superiority of Western technology which is at the basis of the present world civilization. Almost everybody would agree, however, that Western technology is something which no longer belongs exclusively to the West but which is to be shared by all humanity. It is debatable whether technology would in fact have been possible apart from Christian premises; but it is clear that, because of its ties with a politically powerful and economically wealthy minority, technology is far from benefiting “the disinherited of the earth”. Industrialization in the Third World is taking place by direct transfer from the West—with Western standards of technology and Western concepts of capital and conditions of employment. Applied to the underdeveloped countries, it has produced a small wealthy minority obsessed by what Josue de Castro has aptly described as “ostentatious consumerism”, and a large poverty-stricken p. 232 majority for whom the promised new world order is forever fading into the distant future.

In conclusion, technology has brought into existence a world civilization dominated by Western materialism, unified around the ideal of building a new world order with better standards of living for everyone, yet, totally unable to cope with the gross inequality between the rich and the poor. Transplanted into the underdeveloped countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, the consumer mentality, with all its values and ideals and ambitions and standards, has flourished in terms of societies where both rich and poor give absolute value to “things” but where the rich become richer and the poor poorer. The Western philosophy of life, which could well be summarized in the motto, “In Technology we trust”, has materialized in an unjust world system, in which the distribution of goods and services is made, not according to needs, but according to wealth.

Both the common acceptance of the value of the consumer society and the injustice which marks the system engendered by the spread of Western technology are the context of the Christian mission today. For people everywhere they pose questions regarding man’s ultimate destiny and the need of a world community in which science-based technology ceases to be a means of human exploitation and becomes a means of service to all. They represent a new situation that older and younger churches can only face as partners in mission. The common world civilization into which the nations of the earth are being drawn calls for the breaking down of the old distinction between the “homebase” and the “regions beyond”. The whole world—this consumer society with its “gospel” of progress which circles the globe—is the mission field. Regardless of its location, every Christian congregation has its mission field at its door step—and at the end of the earth.

### **One Church**

It is a fact of history that the modern missionary movement was at the start heavily dependent upon individual initiative. The churches were, on the whole, indifferent, sometimes even hostile, to the missionary enterprise. “Missions” thus grew as agencies totally separate from the churches. As time went on, many churches were encouraged to “support” missionaries, but p. 233 “missions” continued to be something entirely different from “churches”. As a result, for the largest number of Christians everywhere, missionary

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<sup>2</sup> *The Meaning of the City* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdsman, 1970), p. 147.

interest is something to be associated with a small circle of enthusiasts, with no claim on the totality of the Church. And now that Christianity has become a worldwide phenomenon, it is hardly possible to find another misconception about the Christian mission as commonly taken for granted as this one—that the world mission is an exclusive responsibility of the “sending churches” located in the West, and a task toward which the “receiving churches” have very little, or nothing, to contribute.

The great Church historian Kenneth S. Latourette regarded World War I as the beginning of a new stage in the revolutionary age and in the history of Christianity. Having reached its peak of world power, after 1914 Western Europe began to experience a decline that culminated in the liberation of all its colonies. Meanwhile, the process of secularization which has gained ground during the nineteenth century speeded up so greatly that it became doubtful whether Christianity would survive in that portion of humanity traditionally identified as Christendom. Paradoxically, in the non-Western countries, where in 1914 Christians were still a very small minority, the churches (particularly the Protestant churches) began to experience an unexpected vitality. Especially since World War II the growth of the Church outside Europe has been so impressive that one can safely state that never before in history has any religion spread so widely and rapidly as Christianity in the last few decades. The great new fact of the century is this exploding world-wide Christian movement, advancing mainly among the masses of the non-Western world.

It is very significant that the greatest growth of the Church in this century has taken place among animistic peoples and among the deprived classes in the cities. That Christianity should appeal to “primitive” (or almost “primitive”) people or to lower-income urbanites caught in the migrations from the rural areas to the cities should be no surprise to anyone familiar with the record of Christianity in the past! But one cannot easily discard the suspicion that contemporary mass movements to Christianity (like other religious movements that are flourishing) in the Third World are both a result of the impact of Western civilization upon traditional [p.234](#) societies, and a reaction against it. The revolution that the advance of the West with its secularism has brought to the value system and life style of millions in the rest of the world can hardly be exaggerated. To cope with this revolution many people are returning to religion, but not mainly to westernized Christianity, associated with colonial times, but to a resurgent ancient religion (sometimes championed by nationalistic political leaders who use it to create a new national identity) or to a “native” version of Christianity (sometimes strongly nationalistic and tolerant of ancient ideas and customs) that takes into account aspects of human life that the Western churches have left out. In Africa, for instance, the Independent churches are said to attract between 400,000 to 450,000 people a year from the traditional churches, both Roman Catholic and Protestant; in Latin America, Pentecostalism—the only Christian movement with real indigenous roots in this continent, according to some observers—is the least dependent upon foreign personnel and finances. If the survival of Christianity is not in doubt in the Third World, the survival of those churches founded by Western missionaries and mbedded in Western culture certainly is.

A common problem of the churches in the Third World is their “over-denominationalism”. In Africa alone approximately one hundred new “independent” groups are formed every year. The same trend is present in both Asia and Latin America, where denominational allegiance is one of the major hindrances to mission. When it is remembered that in 1900 there were sixty-one missions working in China, and that between 1900 and 1913 the number was increased to ninety-two, it becomes clear that the history of the Church in the Third World has been marked by imported splits and divisions from the beginning. With the passing of time the younger churches have in turn

produced their own fractures, often brought about by individualistic leaders with little or no concern for the unity of the body of Christ.

The fact remains that, despite its problems, the Christian Church is today a world-wide movement. As Stephen Neill has put it,

*“Christianity alone has acclimatized itself in every continent and in about every country. In many areas that hold may be precarious, and numbers may be small. Yet in country after country the Christian Church evinces the power of a dynamic p. 235 minority, but as the Church of the countries in which it dwells.”<sup>3</sup>*

That being the case, the Christian mission can no longer be regarded as the task of Western missions and specialists. The bearer of the Gospel is not that portion of the Church which happens to be located in the affluent West, but the whole Church. If the Church is missionary in its very nature, now that the Church is a world-wide phenomenon the home base for the Christian mission is everywhere. The question, is, how can the whole church participate in the Christian world mission in such a way that all men everywhere can recognize the local churches as genuine expressions of corporate Christian life, living communities in which all the barriers that divide mankind are transcended? How can the unity of the world-wide Church be concretely manifest, and how can the resources of older and younger churches be harmoniously combined for the sake of the Gospel?

Partnership in mission is not a special prerogative that the older churches may or may not grant the younger ones; it is an essential expression of the spiritual equality among all Christians in the body of Christ. If (as Emil Brunner has said) the Church exists by mission as fire exists by burning, and if the Church is one in Christ, it follows that partnership between older and younger churches is basic to mission. The Christian mission cannot be anything else than the mission of the whole Church to the whole world.

### **One Gospel**

The Christian mission is rooted in God's act in Jesus Christ. In a real sense, it is the continuation of that act, the carrying on of Christ's redemption purpose for the whole of mankind. At the heart of the Gospel is Jesus Christ as the incarnate Word of God, the Word that “became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth”. The Gospel has to do with a new reality which has dawned upon the world through the Person and work of Jesus Christ, the God-Man. It is news concerning the arrival of a new era in which God's promises in the Old Testament are fulfilled and his Holy Spirit is poured among men.

God's Spirit is a missionary Spirit, and the history of missions is from one perspective, the history of the way he has driven his p. 236 people to carry out the Gospel and, with it, the new reality to the ends of the earth. The missionary expansion of the Church can only be understood against the background of God's purpose to draw all nations of the earth into this new reality, a task for which the followers of Jesus Christ have been empowered by the Spirit. The Christian mission is in its essence Jesus' mission by the Church under the influence of the Holy Spirit. It is the means through which all the nations are given the alternative of receiving or rejecting the very purpose for which God created all things and which has been revealed in Jesus Christ. As Lesslie Newbigin has expressed it,

*“... the Christian mission is the clue to world history, ... but in the sense that it is the point at which the meaning of history is understood and at which men are required to make the final decisions about that meaning. It is, so to say, not the motor, but the blade, not the driving*

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<sup>3</sup> *A History of Christian Missions* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, Penguin Books, 1964), p. 559.

*force but the cutting edge. Christians go through history to bear witness to the real meaning of the things which happen in the world, so that men are compelled to make decisions for or against God.*"<sup>4</sup>

The world civilization brought into existence by the spread of technology has to be understood in the light of the new reality which has come in Jesus Christ. The new reality involves the revelation of man's ultimate destiny, the revelation of an absolute in relation to which everything else becomes of secondary importance. As the means through which Jesus' ministry is continued down through the centuries, the Christian mission precipitates a crisis—men everywhere must choose between the new reality and "this world" which is passing away, between God and Mammon.

The end of Western colonialism has brought the Church into a place where the real issues of the Christian mission can be seen in their true light. It can no longer be taken for granted that people in the Third World will accept Christianity because of its association with the political and economic and cultural power of the West. On the contrary, many will find in this association a big stumbling block. Consequently, the Christian mission today has to be carried on from a position of weakness. A new possibility [p. 237](#) has thus been created for the Gospel to be presented as a message centered on Jesus Christ rather than as the ideology of the West. Free from its entanglements with Europe and North America, the Christian mission can now be seen as motivated by the desire that Jesus Christ be acknowledged as the Lord of the universe and the Savior of all men.

Even today, however, the universal nature of the Gospel can be obscured, and is in fact often obscured, by the persistence of policies and patterns of missionary work which assume that the leadership of the Christian mission lies in the hands of Western strategies and specialists. Witness the schools of "world mission" based in the West, with no participation of faculty members from the Third World. Witness also the frequency with which an older church (or, more often, a missionary board) in the West maintains a one-way relationship with a younger church (which may or may not be regarded as independent). As long as this situation endures, partnership is no more than a myth.

A universal Gospel calls for a universal Church in which all Christians are effectively involved in world mission as equal members in the body of Christ. Partnership in mission is not merely a question of practical convenience but a necessary consequence of God's purpose for the Church and for the whole of mankind, revealed in the Gospel. When Christians fail to work as partners in mission, they also fail to concretely manifest the new reality which they proclaim in the Gospel. Because there is one World, one Church and one Gospel, the Christian mission cannot be anything else than mission in partnership. The fulfilment of Jesus' prayer, that his followers may all be one so that the world may believe in him, requires today a supranational Christian community bringing to a world unified by technocracy a Gospel centered in Jesus Christ, the Lord of all.

### **III. THE PRACTICE OF PARTNERSHIP**

If partnership in mission is to go beyond theory, it must be given concrete expression in the doing of theology, in the life of the Church as a world-wide community, and in evangelism and service. [P. 238](#)

#### **Partnership in Theological Reflection**

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<sup>4</sup> *Trinitarian Faith and Today's Mission* (Richmond, Virginia : John Knox Press, 1963), p. 370.

In the West it has often been assumed that Western theology is the theology for the whole world. Against this assumption, I spoke at the International Congress on World Evangelization held in Lausanne in August, 1974.

*"If the Church is really one," said I, "then there is no place for the assumption that one section of the Church has a monopoly on the interpretation of the Gospel and the definition of the Christian mission."*<sup>5</sup>

I continue to be convinced that theological cross-fertilization among Christians representing different cultural backgrounds is essential to mission. Western theologians, for instance, need Third World theologians to encourage them to adopt a critical attitude toward the consumer society and to show the relevance of Christian stewardship to Western overdevelopment. Third World theologians, on the other hand, need Western theologians to encourage them to use the tools of biblical scholarship and to look at the problems of today's Church from an historical perspective. If theology in the West tends to be speculative and academic, theology in the Third World tends to be time-bound and accommodated to cultural relativities. There is need for a cross-fertilization which will deliver Christian theology from its captivity to the West but will at the same time keep it from identifying the Gospel too closely with human aspirations and ideals that appeal to people in a particular situation.

The last few years have seen the emergence and development of so-called "liberation theology" which, beginning in Latin America, has rapidly spread in the affluent world, particularly in the United States. Paradoxically enough, a theology that claims to start from the life struggles and the sufferings of the poor, has become a consumer product. What is needed is not the commercialization of Third World theologians in the West, but new models of theological reflection in which Christians from different cultural backgrounds are able to wrestle together with those issues confronting the Church today and work on theological constructions that are both faithful to the biblical revelation and relevant to practical life in the modern world. A world unified by the consumer p. 239 mentality must be challenged by a theology rooted in the Gospel and concerned with a prophetic life style which calls into question the values and ideals of secular civilization. The liberation that both the underdeveloped Third World and the overdeveloped West urgently need is liberation from the myth of modernity, from a blind faith in progress by means of technology and economic growth, from slavery to a work system in which man's life consists in the abundance of his possessions. The task of technology is to show that the crisis of modern civilization on a world-wide scale is due to man's enslavement to the gods of the consumer society; that at its root it is a crisis regarding man's ultimate destiny, and that it points to the necessity of placing the totality of life under the lordship of Jesus Christ. If theology is to be truly relevant to man's needs, it cannot simply extrapolate the economic dimensions of the present crisis from the total human problem. Questions such as, what is man? what is the purpose of life? what is the meaning of history? demand an answer, and this answer is essential to any attempt to overcome the crisis and to create a new society. These are, therefore, questions to which theology should address itself so as to undergird the Church in its mission. The Church does not exist for the purpose of defending the existing order, but if it is to speak prophetically and to work for real change, it must go back to first principles.

### **Partnership in a World Community**

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<sup>5</sup> "Evangelism and the World", *Let the Earth Hear His Voice*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Minneapolis, Minnesota : World Wide Publications, 1975), p. 141".



The world has become a neighborhood, a gigantic global village where people share common values and ideals which reflect the consumer mentality characteristic of the affluent West. The city, with its powerful mechanisms of standardization of attitudes and habits, is turning humanity into a mass of people who measure happiness in terms of material possessions. And yet the unification brought about by the spread of the scientific and technological civilization is but a caricature of real human unity. Men and nations are still separated; there is inter-relatedness but not community.

The first task of the Church in this context is simply to be what God has intended it to be—a world community in which, the barriers that separate men are broken down and the basis is thus [p. 240](#) laid for a genuine partnership in mission. In other words, partnership in mission is impossible aside from a deepening experience of communion on a world-wide basis. Mission is inseparable from unity, and unity is far more than a question of structures; it has to do with willingness to rejoice with those who rejoice and to weep, with those who weep, it has to do with (in Tillich's words) "listening, giving and forgiving".

Now, how can Christians be united in mission as long as many of them (especially in the West) adopt an ostentatious life style, while the large majority of them (especially in the underdeveloped world) are unable to satisfy essential human needs? The poverty of the Third World places a question mark over the life style of people, and particularly of Christians in the West. And the proper response to it, to begin with, is a simple life style and a radical re-structuring of the economic relationships among Christians everywhere, based on the Biblical concept of stewardship. As Ronald Sider has put it,

*"... If a mere fraction of North American and European Christians would begin to apply Biblical principles on economic sharing among the worldwide people of God, the world would be utterly astounded."*<sup>6</sup>

It is high time for rich Christians to take seriously "evangelical poverty"—the poverty inspired in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ who, though he was rich, became poor for us ([2 Cor. 8:9](#)).

But life in community cannot be conceived of in terms of a situation in which one section of the Church is always on the giving end while another is always on the receiving end. Rather, it must be understood as a situation in which Christians everywhere are willing to share with one another out of what they have, able to see that the aim of giving is not that some may be eased and others burdened, but that "as a matter of equality" the abundance of those who have should supply the want of those who do not have, so that the abundance of the latter may supply the want of the former, "*that there may be equality*" ([2 Cor. 8:12, 13](#)). The possibility of reciprocal giving between churches is a basic premise without which no healthy relationship between older and younger churches is attainable. As D. Auletta says, [p. 241](#)

*"All the churches are poor in one way or another. All of them are involved in mission and are responsible for mission. All of them should be concerned for one another, help each other, share with one another their resources. All the churches should give and receive."*<sup>7</sup>

Giving and receiving cannot be maintained unless there is between the churches a mature relationship based on the Gospel. If the Church ceases to be a community in which

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<sup>6</sup> *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger: A Biblical Study* (Downers Grove, Ill. Inter-Varsity Press, 1977), p. 111.

<sup>7</sup> David Auletta, *Mision Nueva en un Mundo Nuevo* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Guadalupe), 1974, p. 87 (my translation).



people share a common meaning derived from the Gospel, sooner or later there is a return to the old ways of paternalism and dependence. The corrective for paternalism is not independence, but interdependence, and interdependence comes with a deeper understanding of the nature of unity in Christ and of the situation in which other members of the body of Christ live. In other words, if Christians are to take interdependence seriously they need to realize that they share a common life—the resurrection life—but they also need to create channels of communication which will allow them to see people of other cultures in different light.

In order to foster mutual giving and receiving among the churches nothing can take the place of Christians coming from other nations and interpreting to fellow-Christians across the world the needs and struggles of their own churches. All too often the knowledge that the churches in the West have of the situation of the churches in the non-Western world is limited to the reports sent by missionaries. Missionaries may also be the only source of information that the younger churches have to know the situation of the churches in the West. The time has come to develop ways of closing the gap between older and younger churches. There are already useful experiments that are being carried out for this purpose, but much more needs to be done to shape patterns of solidarity across political, economic, social and cultural barriers, and to stimulate the mutual sharing of gifts among the churches.

Of particular importance in connection with this aim are projects making it possible for young people from the West to live in a foreign country, in close contact with human needs, at least for a limited period. Perhaps nothing will do more to awaken the younger generation to the inequalities in the modern world and the urgency of partnership in mission than a first-hand experience of life among the least privileged. It is not surprising that the best suggestion that a North American professor was able to give to his Christian friends with regard to what could be done in the face of the problem he had seen in Latin America was as follows:

*“Maybe the best thing the young can do is just go there. Not to teach them what we think they must know, but to be taught by them what must be done and then just simply be the manpower, musclepower, brainpower that is needed to do it. And do it without pay: Just for shelter, water and some cornmeal. And if there is energy left, to listen, to comfort, to encourage, to lift up and to love in many ways. And on the basis of that finally to say that true shalom comes from the Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>8</sup>*

### **Partnership in Evangelism and Service**

In view of the affluence of the West and the poverty of the Third World, it is unavoidable to ask, ‘How can the material resources of the wealthier nations be used to help the poor, without allowing the “aggressive benevolence” of the West (in Max Warren’s words) or the ugly subservience of the Third World to raise its head?’ There is no easy answer to this question. Perhaps in no other area has the modern missionary movement more often been put to the test and found failing than in relation to the use of funds. The tensions created in this area throw into relief the weakness of the economic patterns which the missionary societies have adopted from the business world. Partnership calls for the internationalizing of funds so that these cease to be an instrument of manipulation by the Church of the West and become an instrument of service at the disposal of the worldwide Church. This internationalizing of funds does not presuppose their centralization. It presupposes confidence based on the recognition that no material giving is genuine

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<sup>8</sup> Hendrik Hart in a mimeographed letter dated July 20, 1975 and entitled: “Latin America: Report of a visit”.

Christian giving unless it is accompanied by the giving of the giver in response to and for the sake of the Gospel. Partnership can only take place in the context of a mutual commitment to God's call to mission.

As long as the Western missionary societies as such have at their disposal the vast economic resources of the West and the funds are given predominance over mutual commitment to mission, the paternalistic patterns that have characterized the relationship between the churches in the West and the Churches in the Third World will be perpetuated. Missions will continue to support their own institutions and to sponsor their own projects, often with a complete disregard for the desires of the local churches. The local churches will continue to be controlled through their purse strings. The dichotomy between Church and Mission which still persists from the past is in the end the last refuge of missionary imperialism.

John H. Yoder has rightly suggested that the best way for Western Christians to reconcile their duty to serve others with their economic power is by going overseas to serve as persons, but working for the local churches. "*The main resource we should export,*" he argues, "*is people: and the reason is that only people can legitimately have strings attached, just by being who they are. Yet you can't give a dollar without strings, without corrupting. But you can be there as a person, and neither of this has to happen.*"<sup>9</sup> The need today is for a new breed of missionaries who are willing to sharpen their technical tools and at the same time, to renounce the wealth of the West in order to work in real partnership with national Christians on a permanent basis, as those who have effectively become identified with the people they have come to serve. Nothing less than a radical application of the incarnation to missionary work is an adequate answer to human needs today.

Partnership in evangelism involves giving up patterns of mission heavily dependent upon a denominational approach. Here again the call is for radical change with regard to the way in which the Western missionary movement has operated in the past. In this respect the Mennonite Board of Missions has set an example in West Africa by seconding many of its personnel to other missions and churches, rather than concentrating on its own denominational church.<sup>10</sup>

Evangelism and service, word and deed, are inseparable. Both of them point to the new reality brought into the world by Jesus Christ. Partnership in mission, therefore, involves partnership in service. And the possibilities for service in the Third World are unlimited. The danger here, however, is to conceive of service in terms of a development patterned on the affluent West, as if the road to development were identical with the imposition of the consumer society on all the peoples of the earth. This concept of service is totally unrealistic—no economic resources are sufficient to meet a world market demand at the level of consumption to which the West has become accustomed. Furthermore, no development is true development if it concentrates on economics but fails to give adequate attention to the deeper questions concerning man and the ultimate meaning of human life. The Christian mission is concerned with the development of the whole man and of all men. It includes, therefore, the shaping of a new life style—"*a life style designed for permanence*"<sup>11</sup>—based on new methods of production and new patterns of consumption. The new breed of missionaries needed in the Third World today are not

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<sup>9</sup> "Radical Christianity: An Interview with John H. Yoder", *Right On*, (February, 1975), p. 12.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Edwin and Irene Weaver, *From Kuku Hill: Among Indigenous Churches in West Africa* (Elkhart, Indiana: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1975).

<sup>11</sup> E. F. Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful* (London: Abacus, 1975), p. 16.

devotees of western-styled progress; they are not people who isolate themselves in a “little West” with all the comforts of the consumer society in the midst of a poverty-stricken “mission field”. They are pilgrims on the way to “the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God” ([Heb. 11:10](#)), people whose life-style sets an example of Christian stewardship.

There is an urgent need today for models of mission fully adapted to a situation characterized by a yawning chasm between rich and poor. Their models of evangelism and service built on the affluence of the West condone this situation and condemn the indigenous churches to permanent dependence. In the long term, therefore, they are inimical to mission. The challenge both to Christians in the West and Christians in the underdeveloped countries is to create models of mission centered in a prophetic lifestyle, models which will point to Jesus Christ as the Lord over the totality of life, to the universality of the Church, and to the interdependence of men in the world.

Over twenty years ago Max Warren claimed that “partnership [p. 245](#) is an idea whose time has not yet full come”<sup>12</sup>. The question today is whether partnership will have to survive again for twenty years as an idea, or whether the Church is ready to put it into practice for the sake of the Gospel now—at last.

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## **The Place of the Cross in the Evangelistic Message**

*by* DR. J. B. A. KESSLER

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TWENTY-FIVE years ago the cross occupied a central place in the evangelistic message of the great majority of the Evangelical churches in Latin America, but the writer of this article has doubts about whether this is really so today. Not only is the cross missing from many evangelistic sermons, tracts and modern choruses, but the concepts which underlie the New Testament teaching on the cross seem to be receiving less and less attention. This change can be ascribed to three factors: first the emphasis placed by Liberation Theology on the Kingdom of God rather than on conversion; second the emphasis of the Charismatic movement on the Spirit and third the growing influence of secularism which finds the message of the Cross to be both offensive and inexplicable. Liberation theology has undoubtedly helped the churches to a deeper understanding of their duty towards the world and the Charismatic movement has given them a new appreciation of the spiritual gifts and resources at their disposal for this task, but the question remains whether the churches twenty-five years ago were wrong in giving the Cross such a central place, or

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<sup>12</sup> *Partnership: The Study of an Idea* (London; SGM Press Ltd., 1956), p. 11.

whether today these same churches are in danger of missing out an essential element from their message.

## THE TESTIMONY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

The difficulty the modern mind has with the cross is nothing new. In spite of the fact that our Lord explained to His disciples three times that “He had to go to Jerusalem and there to suffer much from the elders, chief priests and doctors of the law; to be put to death and to be raised on the third day” ([Matthew 16:21](#), [17:22–23](#), & [20:17–19](#)) “they understood nothing of all this; they did not grasp what He was talking about; its meaning was concealed from them” ([Luke 18:34](#)). It is very significant, therefore, that [p. 247](#) when they came to write the Gospels they not only gave a disproportionate amount of space to the crucifixion and the events immediately surrounding it but they gave the Cross a key place in our Lord’s own thoughts about His mission. The statement “The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many” ([Mark 10:45](#)) is paralleled by a similar passage in Matthew and is supported by the words recorded in [Luke 12:50](#) “I have a baptism to undergo and what constraint I am under until the ordeal is over” in which our Lord is undoubtedly referring to His crucifixion. In [John 12:27](#) our Lord says “Father save me from this hour. No, it was for this that I came to this hour. Father glorify thy Name” and the context (see [John 12:23–24](#)) makes it clear that the hour referred to could only be the Cross.

Paul in his evangelistic work struck the same wall of incomprehension “We proclaim Christ—yes, Christ nailed to the cross, and though this is a stumbling block to the Jews and folly to the Greeks” ... “I resolved that while I was with you I would think of nothing but Jesus Christ—Christ nailed to the cross” ([1 Corinthians 1:23](#) & [2:2](#)). With one exception, all of Paul’s evangelistic messages recorded in the Acts give an important place to the Cross. The exception is his discourse on the Areopagus (see [Acts 17:22–23](#)) and some commentators ascribe his determination on arriving in Corinth shortly afterwards to think of nothing but Jesus Christ—Christ nailed to the cross—to the relative failure of his preaching in Athens. Be that as it may when Paul gives a summary of the message he received and which it was his task to hand on he writes “First and foremost, I handed on to you the facts which had been imparted to me: that Christ died for our sins, in accordance with the Scriptures ...” ([1 Corinthians 15:3](#)).

A review of the Petrine and Johannean writings would lead to basically the same conclusion, namely, that together with the resurrection, the cross forms the core of the evangelistic message of the apostolic church. What excuse can there be then for not giving the cross a central place in today’s preaching? It is said that until fairly recently people were accustomed to thinking in sacrificial terms, but of late the language in which the message of the cross has traditionally been presented has become meaningless except to a group of insiders. The fact, alluded to above, that [p. 248](#) the message of the cross has always struck a barrier of incomprehension, weakens but does not invalidate this argument. The present day hesitancy in presenting the message of the cross is indeed partly due to problems of language. The fact, however, that the cross formed such a key element of the apostolic message should be an indication to us that something basic was at stake, and if this is so it must be possible to re-express it in terms which are understandable today.

## THE CROSS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

### 1. The Lamb in the Exodus story ([Exodus 12:21–27](#) & 46)

Both John (see [John 19:36](#)) and Paul (see [1 Corinthians 5:7-8](#)) indicate that there is a relation between the pascal lamb and our Lord in His death. Just as on that dread night, “not a house in Egypt was without its dead” ([Exodus 12:30](#)), but all the Israelites who had painted their doorposts with blood were safe, so at the cross, the world and its prince were judged ([John 12:31](#)), but every repentant sinner continues to be saved. In Egypt the distinction was between the Egyptian and the Israelite who might be living beside him, but at the cross the distinction is between the sinner who is forgiven and his sin which is condemned (see [Romans 8:3](#)).

## **2. The Bronze Serpent ([Numbers 21:4-9](#))**

Our Lord himself uses this strange story to illustrate His coming crucifixion (see [John 3:14-15](#)). The Israelites who had been bitten by snakes would have died long before being able to present a sacrifice for sin at the tabernacle in accordance with all the stipulations of the law and so the Lord granted them an emergency measure. All who looked to the serpent of bronze were healed of the snake poison and no doubt afterwards presented the required sacrifice. In the same way, because of our inability to repent adequately before the Lord, we should all have died, had not God provided His crucified Son as an emergency measure, so that all who look to Him in faith are healed and can bring forth due fruits of repentance.

## **3. The servant of God who feels himself abandoned ([Psalm 22:1](#))**

Jesus went to his “hour” in the belief that His Father would support him there (see [John 16:32](#)). Possibly His agony in Gethsemane was due to an intuition that even His Father was [p. 249](#) going to abandon Him. Be that as it may, our Lord quoted the bitter reproach of the Psalmist on the cross, showing that He had fallen under God’s judgment as had the rest of humanity.

## **4. The suffering servant of God ([53:4-10](#))**

This passage is quoted more often in the New Testament than any other from the Old Testament, and the Lord Himself applied it to His coming passion (see [Luke 22:37](#)). It is emphasized that the Servant is not suffering for his own sins, but that God was laying on Him the sins of us all, in order that the death of the Servant might be our healing and vindication. It is important to note that in the whole of the passage the writer is making a distinction between the Servant and the rest of the people, so as to make clear that the Servant was doing something for us which we would never have done for ourselves.

## **5. The New Covenant ([Jeremiah 31:31-34](#))**

Jeremiah prophesies a new birth which will consist of the Law being written on the will and of a personal knowledge of God. It is important to notice that this new knowledge and relation to God will come about as a result of the forgiveness of sins, “for I will forgive their wrongdoing and remember their sin no more”.

The testimony of the Old Testament can be summarized as follows; the sacrifices prescribed by the law could not assure forgiveness of sins unless these sacrifices were an expression of sincere repentance (see [Psalm 51:16&19](#)). However, the whole history of the Old Testament showed that man is not capable of producing sincere repentance. Through this pessimism however there sounds a note of hope, because God will cleanse His people and will then be able to put His Spirit in them (see [Ezekiel 36:25-27](#)).



## SOME ASPECTS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT TESTIMONY

### 1. The three Parables of losing and finding ([Luke 15:1-32](#))

At first sight the wonderful story of the Prodigal Son appears to contradict what has been said above. The son brings forth sincere repentance and the father forgives him without the need of any sacrifice. It needs to be remembered, however, that the story is of a son who knew the way home and that it was addressed to people who felt assured that they also knew the way home (see verse 2). Our Lord's disciples, who in this respect were more realistic, were extremely conscious of the fact that they did [p.250](#) not know the way home (see [John 6:68](#) & [14:5](#)). In the three parables our Lord challenged his listeners to repent, but those to whom these stories were directed failed to do so, and once again confirmed what had become apparent in the Old Testament, namely that without God's aid man can not truly repent.

Another important aspect of this teaching is the difference between the first two parables and the last one. In the first two parables the one who has lost something goes out to search for that which is missing, but in the third parable the father makes no move towards the distant country, in spite of the fact that he is aware of where his son is staying and what he is doing (see verse [30](#)). The reason is that had the father done so, the elder son with reason would have accused his father of unjust favouritism. In the same way God cannot pass over the sins of some (see [Isaiah 59:1-2](#)) because that would be an injustice to others, including Himself. The answer of the Gospel to this problem is to place all of us in the "distant country" so that God could show mercy to all mankind ([Romans 11:32](#) & [3:23-24](#)).

### 2. The Multiplication of the Bread and of the Fishes ([John 6:1-11](#) & [51-54](#))

The discourse our Lord gave after this miracle is related to the Holy Communion and in turn the Holy Communion is closely related to His death. This miracle must then illustrate some aspect of His passion. Just as the boy offered his lunch and our Lord broke it to the blessing of thousands, so in His turn our Lord offered Himself to His Father and was broken for the blessing of the whole world. To the modern mind it seems inconceivable that one could have given His life for the world, just as it is inconceivable that one lunch could have satisfied thousands. Many of the problems which arise for the modern mind in connection with the cross stem from the fact that we have always regarded the resurrection as a great miracle, but not realized that the cross is an equally great, if not greater, miracle. The fact that every illustration of the cross given in the Bible is in itself a miracle should have alerted us to this.

### 3. Paul's key passage on the cross ([2 Corinthians 5:15-15](#) & [21](#))

"Once we have reached the conclusion that one man died for all, and therefore all mankind has died" (verse [15](#)). In a few words Paul does not explain, but does state, the miracle that occurred at [p.251](#) the cross. God accepted the death of His Son given for all people as the death of all people. The consequence of sin was death, but as in God's eyes all people died with His Son on the cross the consequence of sin has been borne. Nowhere do the apostles try to explain this but they do proclaim it repeatedly. As someone looks to the crucified One with faith, a point of agreement, and therefore of reconciliation, is established between God and himself. With sin out of the way, in principle for all of mankind, God can with perfect justice pour out His grace on the sinner who has agreed with the solution God has put forward (see [Romans 3:35-36](#)). With this grace the sinner can in turn produce both the repentance and the obedience that the Gospel requires.



Paul then continues his argument with these words: “His purpose in dying for all was that men, while still in life, should cease to live for themselves, and should live for Him who for their sake died and was raised to life”. Liberation theology rightly emphasizes the need for those who confess Christ to allow themselves to be crucified with Christ in their identification with the poor, but Paul bases this need of allowing ourselves to be crucified with Christ on what God has already done for us at the cross. To urge people to crucify themselves with Christ prior to an acceptance of the miracle performed for us by God at the cross, is in effect asking them to produce the repentance God requires and, as the Old Testament has shown, this is something that is beyond us.

Finally in verse [21](#) Paul summarizes and repeats his argument: “Christ was innocent of sin and yet for our sake God made Him one with the sinfulness of men”. In the Old Testament sin has the triple meaning of missing the mark ([Numbers 14:40](#)), exceeding limits ([Genesis 20:6](#) and [Leviticus 4:2](#)) and rebellion ([Job 34:37](#) with [Isaiah 1:2 & 4](#)) and in our Lord’s passion we see these three elements. Even His disciples felt that He had failed in His mission and missed the mark. The Jewish leaders handed Him over to the Romans because they felt He had exceeded all limits by declaring Himself to be One with the Father, and the Romans executed Him as a rebel. The fact that the Father allowed His beloved Son to be identified with our sin to such an extent that His enemies and even His contemporaries thought that He had been executed as a sinner, proves both how serious sin is for God and the unbelievable depth of His love for us. [p. 252](#)

## **WHY THEN MUST WE PLACE THE CROSS AT THE CENTRE OF OUR MESSAGE?**

First, because our Lord said “I shall draw all men to myself when I am lifted up from the earth” ([John 12:32](#)). The world may be repelled by the cross, but it is also strongly attracted. A message without the cross is a message without one of the strongest drawing powers the gospel has.

Second, because the cross is the solution which God has set forth for sin. A message without the cross must degenerate into some system of salvation by works, which is the danger for Liberation theology and many other theologies as well.

Third, because without the cross there could be no Spirit in the New Testament sense (see [John 7:39](#)). The Holy Spirit without the cross becomes little more than a kind of magical force to help us out of our difficulties. This is a danger in certain parts of the Charismatic or Pentecostal movements.

Fourth, because as Luther pointed out, it is at the cross that God’s heart becomes visible as the God for others, full of love for His creation.

Fifth, because it is at the cross that God’s power is released and the accuser of the brethren is silenced ([Revelation 12:10-11](#)).

## **WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO PLACE THE CROSS AT THE CENTRE OF OUR MESSAGE?**

It certainly does not mean that every evangelistic message must contain an exposition of the theory of the atonement. The present reaction against the message of the cross is in part due to an overemphasis in the past on the mechanism of the atonement. It does mean that except in those cases where we know our listeners to have heard and understood it already, every evangelistic message will contain a clear statement of what God did at the cross in overcoming sin, the root cause of both our personal and our structural miseries.

Beyond that it means that in our approach both to our personal and to world problems, we shall take that which God did, and that which we could never have done for ourselves, as our starting point. The testimony to what God did, is doing and will yet do, will form a vital part of our programmes, because we know that there lie the vital springs of power. We shall not despise small and apparently insignificant things, because we know from the cross that God can use such things to revolutionize the status quo. We p. 253 shall not allow ourselves to be polarized or trapped into either/or situations, because we know from the cross that God can and has broken out of seemingly hopeless deadlocks with solutions that assuredly would never have occurred to man—to Him be the glory for ever and ever.

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# The Economic Gospel of Jesus

by VISHAL MANGALWADI

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## INTRODUCTION

KALICHARAN LIVES in a village 10 km. from Chhatarpur, M.P., India. He comes from the lowest caste—Basore. Traditionally his family wove baskets from bamboo stolen from the jungles, and earned [Re. 1](#) or Rs. 2 per day. But since the nationalisation of forests, he has had to buy bamboo poles at the rate of Rs. 75 per hundred from the Government. Since he did not have enough working capital he took loans from the money lenders to buy the bamboo in order to carry on the business. But it did not work. Often bamboo was not available at the Government store. Even when it was available the margin of profit was extremely small, not worth the labour. In frustration he gave up the business. Because he could not see his children starving, he used the working capital which he had borrowed, to feed his children. He had no land, no jewellery, no furniture, no utensils that he could sell to pay back the debt. When the interest kept on increasing and the abuse and harassment by the money lender became intolerable he quietly fled from his village to Delhi and started working as a labourer in the better off colonies. He promised his wife that he would save money and come back every six months to return the loan and to look after her and the children. Meanwhile she could work in the fields as a labourer when work was available, and at other times beg or borrow.

Kalicharan has been faithful in returning home twice a year. But the money that he brings back is barely enough to pay the interest of the money lenders. His wife and children continue to exist in hope. She does not complain about the fact that her p. 255 children cannot go to school (even though the education is free) or that they wear rags and have no soap with which to wash. She does not even complain that they eat only dry chapaties, made out of *kodon* and *basara* (a kind of grass seed) twice a day. But she does

feel irritated that even though her family has lived in the village for over a century, they still have no well from which she can draw drinking water whenever she wants to. She finds the abuse that the women of other castes hurl at her, when she goes to draw water, intolerable. But the only time she actually cursed her fate and cried about her poverty, was when her second son died of malaria, last year, simply because she could not buy medicine for him.

Poverty is hundreds of thousands of mothers crying in the villages of India because their infants and children die as they cannot buy medicine or proper food for them! But rich Christians, unlike their Master, don't know what poverty is. Therefore their Gospel often has no relevance for their hearers.

## THE TIMES OF CHRIST

The heavy taxes imposed on the Jews at the time of Christ had contributed to making the majority of them poor. The rich among them were naturally those who collaborated with the Romans in exploiting their brethren.<sup>1</sup> No wonder the Jews expected their coming Messiah to deliver them from their poverty. When Mary learnt that Salvation had come in her womb, in her delight she sang this Magnificat:

“He has shown strength with his arm,  
he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts,  
he has put down the mighty from their thrones,  
and exalted those of low degree,  
he has filled the hungry with good things,  
and the rich he has sent empty away.”

[\(Luke 1:51-53\)](#)

St. Paul says that the Son of God chose to become poor, so that we might become rich ([2 Cor. 8:9](#)). That Jesus was born to poor parents is obvious from the fact that his parents offered the sacrifices prescribed for the poor ([Luke 2:24](#); cf. [Lev. 12:2-8](#)). p. 256

As a lad and a young man Jesus lived close to poverty. He knew the indignity and oppression that poverty brings. As a Jew, Jesus knew that poverty was a moral issue.<sup>2</sup> It was the result of the sin of selfishness, laziness, injustice, oppression and exploitation. As is evident from his story of Lazarus and the rich man ([Luke 16:19-31](#)), Jesus accepted the contemporary Jewish identification of ‘the poor’ and ‘the pious’. In Old Testament thought, the terms ‘the poor’ and ‘the pious’ were often synonyms (e.g. [Psalm 14:5, 6](#)), and that is how Jesus used the term in this story. Also he used the word ‘rich’ as synonymous with ‘the oppressor’, because in that day exploitation was almost the only way to become rich.

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<sup>1</sup> R.E. Nixon, article on “Poverty” in *The New Bible Dictionary*, The Inter-Varsity Fellowship, London, 1965.

<sup>2</sup> “In the Old Testament, God’s concern with the poor consistently appears within the context of the justice of God and the working of justice among God’s people. Thus, biblically, words such as the poor, the needy, the oppressed, the sojourner, typically have moral content, relating to God’s requirement for justice. “This is not easily comprehended in today’s world because “the poor’ does not have such a moral content for us. It has a purely descriptive sense; one might say that for us it is a purely secular word. But what we must see is that poverty itself is of ethical significance—the poor is a moral category. In God’s world there is no human condition which escapes moral significance, and the poor, and the treatment they receive, are strong indicators of the faithfulness of God’s people.” H. A. Snyder, *The Problem of Wine Skins*, p. 39.

It is against this background that we should look at Christ's sermon at Nazareth in which he expounded his mission and gave validation of his claim to Messiahship. Jesus stood up and proclaimed:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor ..."  
([Luke 4:18](#))

The gospel Jesus preached was *good news to the poor*. The modern day gospel that promises only "pie in the sky" is not good news for the poor but often an opiate to help them live through their poverty passively.

How was Christ's Gospel good news to the poor?

I have pointed out the profound economic implications of six aspects of the work of Christ in an earlier article.<sup>3</sup> Here we shall focus on only one of his (greatly neglected) teachings, namely, *repentance*. [p. 257](#)

## ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS OF REPENTANCE

Martin Luther's dictum that salvation is by faith alone, was and is correct against the background in which it was formulated. However, its mis-use has become heresy. In the New Testament salvation is not by faith alone, but by repentance and faith.

The repentance which Jesus proclaimed was not being sorry for smoking, drinking, going to movies and reading novels, though that is all that most of our evangelists ask us to repent for. Like John the Baptist, Jesus' appeal for repentance struck at the roots of socio-economic and political evils.

John the Baptist gave the thundering call:

"Prepare the way of the Lord,  
make his paths straight.  
Every valley shall be filled,  
and every mountain and hill shall be brought low ..."  
([Luke 3:4-5](#))

The Jews asked him, "What does that mean? What exactly do you want us to do?" John replied, "He who has two coats, let him share with him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise" ([Luke 3:10-11](#)). The mountains of riches should be redistributed as an act of repentance. Riches by themselves are not sinful. In fact, in themselves they are the gift of God for mankind. But a time comes in society, because of the greed and selfishness of man, when wealth gets concentrated in a few hands; then the majority lives in indignity, harassment and want. In such a setting to be 'haves' and not to share is sin. To cling to your fundamental 'right to property' is not Christian capitalism but humanistic greed. God calls us to voluntarily 'share with him who has none'.

The Lord Jesus Christ carried on this preaching of John the Baptist. Let us consider Christ's encounter with the rich young ruler in [Luke 18](#). In response to his question as to how he could inherit eternal life, Jesus told him, "Go and sell that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven, and come, follow me".

Jesus was not asking this rich man merely to love God more than money, as most of the evangelical interpreters would suggest. Nor was he asking him merely to love the poor more than his money, as some Christians might think. Jesus was asking him [p. 258](#) to

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<sup>3</sup> "A Christian way to reconstruct the Indian economy", *TRACI/ETS. Journal*, May 1975, pp. 30-37.

repent. To give his money back to the people from whom it had come to him through unjust means. Of course it meant that he had to love God and people more than his money. For that is what true spirituality is all about. But we must not lose sight of the facts. Jesus was commanding him to repent and to make restitution. Jesus did not ask him to give his money for evangelism or to the temple. It had to be returned to its rightful owners—the poor.

This radical preaching failed to convert him; but Jesus did not belong to that school of thought which would put priority on adding souls to the kingdom rather than on calling sins of economic exploitation by their name and demanding repentance for these. I, for one, take comfort from the fact that Jesus failed in ‘winning this soul’. But ‘what is impossible with men is possible with God’ ([Luke 18:27](#)). And the next chapter of Luke illustrates this. In Chapter [19](#) is another ‘rich man’, i.e. a sinner, Zacchaeus. When the Saviour came into his home he stood up and said, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold” ([Luke 19:8](#)). Fantastic! Here was indeed good news to the poor.

It is often argued that Jesus did not ask Zacchaeus to make this restitution: Zacchaeus didn’t have to do it, he did it voluntarily. Nothing can be a more superficial reading of the Gospel according to Luke. Jesus had already demanded such repentance and restitution in [Luke 18:22](#); [16:5-7](#), [19-31](#) and [14:33](#), as did John the Baptist in [Luke 3:11](#).

Redistribution of wealth or economic justice, when it is part of repentance, is integral to salvation. A man who is guilty of economic sins cannot be saved if he does not thus repent. Giving such money to the poor is not “works of charity” to be done after one is saved. They are works (or fruits according to John the Baptist) of repentance to be produced before one can be saved. Salvation thus is very much by works of repentance and faith. This is not to imply that we earn our salvation by repentance. No, salvation is a free gift of God. But repentance and faith are the preconditions we have to fulfil before we can receive the gift of salvation.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR TODAY

Few of my readers may be guilty of direct, visible exploitation of [p. 259](#) the poor. But I reckon most of us are guilty of *direct but invisible* (because institutionalised) exploitation of the poor. How? One of our many ways is through using education as a passport to privilege.

In pre-war China it was estimated that it took the labours of 30 peasants to support one student in college for 1 year. So, if a student spends 5 years in college, it takes the labour of 150 peasants for one year. If he then uses this education to further accumulate wealth for himself, he is exploiting these peasants. He ought to go back from the university to serve them. Instead, he often uses his education to exploit them further.

In India it is estimated that it costs the state over one lakh rupees to make a child a doctor. Initially this amount may come from tax-payers, Security Press and foreign aid; eventually it comes from our primary producers in rural India. But how many doctors are there, even Christian doctors, who use this privilege either to amass wealth for themselves in Western countries or to further exploit the poor of India through the training they have received at the cost of poor people’s labour. These are the modern Zacchaeuses.

Jesus demanded a drastic redistribution of wealth because unjust distribution is one of the most important causes of poverty. A pamphlet jointly produced by the Canadian Council for International Co-operation, GATT FLY, and the United Nations Association in Canada asks: Why are 460 million people hungry? And answers,



After pondering this question for a long time and after studying mounds of books, articles and United Nations documents, GATT FLY has concluded that the most basic problem is *not* that there are too many people in the world ... *not* that there is any fundamental reason why the world cannot produce more food ... *not* that there is insufficiency of food aid ... Rather the basic problem is the mal-distribution of wealth that allows some people to command more than their fair share of food from the market while others starve.

“It is no accident that most of the poor nations today were at one time colonies of the developed countries. The colonial system set up an international division of labour under which the toil and resources of the poorer nations subsidise the prosperity of the affluent people”.

Much of western affluence today is the result of exploitation of labourers of the poor countries.

The above article goes on to say:

“It is no accident that most of the poor nations today were at one time colonies of the developed countries. The colonial system set up an international division of labour under which the toil and p. 260 resources of the poorer nations subsidise the prosperity of the affluent people.”

This ‘international division of labour’ continues to work for the advantage of the developed nations—because the export prices of the industrial goods produced by the developed countries continue to rise whereas the prices for the primary commodities produced by the third world countries continue to decline.

For example, the percentage change in prices 1950–1973 i.e. Canadian exports of zinc ore was 348.9 and percentage change in real purchasing power in terms of manufactured goods was 119.0. In the case of copper ore, the figures were 326.0 and 107.8 respectively. In comparison the percentages for coffee in the developing countries exports were 44.2 and -29.7 and for jute 20.7 and -41.1 respectively.

This trend cannot be changed by mere aid investment and loans, because these in reality contribute to the growing external debt of the poor countries. The external debt of the poor countries grew from 10 billion dollars in 1953 to \$80 billion in 1973. Latin America pays out \$4 for every single dollar it receives in investment. What is the alternative to this notion of development through investments, loans and aid?

The Gospel of Jesus Christ demands that these countries simply give back what they have taken from the poor. Many Western nations and churches are giving much for the development of the poorer nations. But often their attitude in giving is one of pride and pity, whereas they ought to give in a spirit of repentance and gratitude to those who have contributed to their affluence.

But for me (and our intellectuals) to condemn the “Western colonisers” and to go on exploiting my own brethren would be sheer hypocrisy. If a Christian University professor or railway employee were to say, “It is unjust for my colleagues to go on strike to demand higher salaries from society and it is unjust for me to receive a thousand rupees per month; I will therefore giveaway half of my income to the poor”, this country would indeed hear *His* Gospel ... the Good News to the poor.

*This might mean that we cut down our food budget. That we do not travel by taxi where we can go by auto-rickshaw. That we do not buy the 21st saree, until we give away the first 11. That we decorate our living room with baskets made by Kalicharan p. 261 and not with the latest furniture that has appeared in the market. That we use our education not as a passport to privilege but as training for service to the needy.*

## QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. Are works of repentance the sign of a previous attitude of repentance or the essence of the repentance necessary for salvation?
2. What redistribution of money is God calling *me* to?

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## The U.S.S.R.—The Church After Sixty Years of Persecution

by MICHAEL BOURDEAUX

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ABOUT SIXTY years after the Communist revolution in Russia—and that is sixty years too late—the Christian world seems to be just starting to take seriously the subjects of Communism on the one hand and of the Soviet Union and what it represents in the international power structure on the other. It may be that recognition of the importance of the subject is coming now, partly, as a panic reaction. You hear people say, “Well, Vietnam, Mozambique, Angola, Portugal, probably Italy will be the next and what then is the next country to become communist?” And the tendency is to react in fear and possibly even in hatred and put up the shutters. But there are other Christians who say: “God is failing us, our social system has had its day, and perhaps the new social justice is to be found in Communism or Marxism. Let’s learn from them while there is yet time.” Both attitudes I find to some extent inadequate.

Over the past twenty years I have had some experience of how one Communist society—the Soviet Union—works, and that has been very largely at first hand since I went to Moscow in 1959 as a member of the first-ever group of exchange students sent by the British Government. I stayed a whole year there and I have been back many times since. This experience is personal and limited, but at least it was of the heartland of Communism.

The years that have passed since I first went to Russia have deepened my absolute certainty that we have a basic and a dynamic lesson to learn from the Soviet Union. It is not a lesson from the Communist system as such; it is a lesson about Christianity in the world today. It is a lesson about the reality of Christ [p. 263](#) crucified in 1978, not a lesson of the triumph of Communism, but of the defeat of the Cross.

I believe that the Russian Christian is probably closer to the New Testament in spirit and in fact than you or I, because of the way in which he, the average Russian Christian, is suffering for his faith at this moment. Christians in the Soviet Union are already achieving a certain knowledge of the truth of the resurrection because they have themselves experienced the suffering, the crucifixion, many of them in the immediate past, some still in the present.

## FOUR PERIODS OF PERSECUTION

There have been, over the last sixty years, four major and many minor periods of persecution or confrontation of the church with the State. Let me summarise them and then go over them in detail:

1. Immediately after 1917 Lenin, the founder of the Soviet system, against Patriarch Tikhon—1917 to 1925. 2. Then Stalin, the man who solidified the system and turned it more or less into what it is today, against the then leader of the church, Metropolitan Sergius. That is the period 1927 to 1941. 3. Then a gap during which the church managed to find its feet again—followed by a new period of persecution urged on by Khrushchev and with the next patriarch, Alexei, in charge of the church. That was a short period, 1960 to 1964. 4. Then since 1970, yet another period of hardening persecution with Brezhnev in power in the Soviet Union and yet another patriarch, Pimen, as head of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Humanly speaking the church lost each of these battles—was defeated comprehensively—and yet the vanquished one is today winning the hearts of men more readily and more rapidly than at any time in the last hundred years.

The weakness of man can be the strength of the Gospel. I would like to begin by quoting a modern example of this before going back and considering the period more in historical perspective. Father Dimitri Dudko, one of the great and still-active priests of the Russian Orthodox Church, a member of a registered Orthodox Church—(let us at once do away with the myth that [p. 264](#) only the underground church is strong and winning souls for Christ in the Soviet Union today)—has been openly preaching the Christian Gospel in a church in Moscow and then, later, when he was banished to the countryside continued there, proclaiming Christ every day from his church, and also bringing a new depth into preaching in the Russian Orthodox Church. The Russian Church has not been outstanding in its history for its preaching; its liturgy has always taken first place.

This priest, Father Dudko, inaugurated a new type of sermon in the Russian Orthodox Church. Pieces of paper are passed down to the front and the priest sorts them and answers questions that have been put to him in writing. He had determined that he would talk about the subjects which were close to the hearts of those who wanted to listen to him.

So he began to draw to his church more and more young people. In Soviet terms that meant an ever-increasing conflict, for the very simple reason that the Soviet authorities are still extremely anxious that the church should not be able to have any influence with young people. I now quote the words of an eye-witness: "It was these questions and answers which made his sermons so attractive. I can remember very few details of his answers. In fact only two sequences remain in my mind. In the first Father Dimitri was talking about a small boy whom he knew, who had asked his mother why Christ had come into the world and died. His mother answered 'to save mankind'. 'What! Everybody, even bad people?' the child asked. 'Yes'. 'Then Jesus Christ must have been a very good person indeed'. This impressed the young boy who a few days later passed one of Moscow's many closed churches. He asked his mother why there was no cross on this church. She explained that the church had been closed. Then the child went up to the church and, to the consternation of passersby, he drew a large cross on the wall. And the next day, when his school teacher was explaining to the pupils that God did not exist and that this had now definitely been proved by the fact that when the cosmonauts went into orbit they had not seen God, the young child piped up in all his naivete: 'they were flying too low!'"

The account of this was written by an atheist, a young British student who went to Moscow—I suppose fifteen years after myself, but on the same exchange scheme and so

he was writing absolutely p. 265 what he experienced at the time without any prejudgement in a pro-Christian sense at all. His was purely an intellectual interest in reporting the scene. What did this all mean? he asked. Well to him as an atheist just this: “The immorality which I could see everywhere in Soviet society, its inhumanity and corruption, its lack of a moral code or credible ideals—meant that Christ’s teaching came through to those whom it was reaching, and they saw it as a shining contrast to that immorality. Christianity stressed the value of the individual, of humanity, of forgiveness, of gentleness, of love. It was this that appealed to the child in the example that Father Dimitri gave in his sermon. But for me, the British atheist, come to listen, Father Dimitri Dudko demonstrated that evening that the moral code of Christianity wasn’t just something that could be cast aside or superseded. It has survived for 2000 years precisely because it did stress certain qualities in personal relations between men which one does not find in Communism. The loss of these qualities is one of the most disturbing facts in modern Soviet life.”

This student’s account of the experience ends with the scene of the end of one of the Sundays when the secret police came to the church to arrest Father Dudko. They marched him off and interrogated him. But thank God, the priest was not completely prevented from exercising the priesthood and imprisoned; he was moved to another church, and continues to this day to carry on his special ministry.

There is a cutting edge, a diamond like quality in the Christian faith in Russia which has been arrived at in the same way as the diamond, which as you in South Africa know better than I, becomes what it is in a complicated chemical process with the physical pressures put on its constituent materials which after a long time form the gem out of very simple elements. The diamond of the Christian faith in Russia has been formed out of similarly simple elements from pressure over a period of time.

## I. THE CHURCH IN THE ERA OF LENIN

This pressure goes right back to the beginning, to 1917. Let me repeat the popular myth which Communists are anxious to spread about the Christian church in 1917. It is that the church was P.266 entirely backward, entirely corrupt, that it was due for sweeping away and deserved any suffering that came to it as it had done nothing for Russian society over the past hundred years or more.

I would be the first to admit that there was a great deal that was wrong with the official church in Russia before the revolution. Nevertheless it was not merely an upholder of the old system. It was very much more. There was a real spiritual calibre in the Russian church before the revolution, preserved essentially, not by the hierarchy and those who fawned around the court of the Tsars, but by those sages or elders, the *starsy* as they were called, who went out into the countryside and set themselves up in tiny remote hermitages or monasteries. They preserved the spiritual quality of the Orthodox Church in very difficult times, and people recognised this and came to visit them. You can read about that in the novels of Dostoyevsky or Tolstoi.

Secondly, the church was progressive in education, and it is not without significance that at the time of the Communist victory every single church school was taken away from the church. It was not given a chance even to run its own best institutions, and from that day to this the church and the whole process of education have been in two completely different worlds. The church has had no right whatsoever to establish formal classes in the Christian faith for young people at any level, except for just one concession made after the second world war when the Soviet regime once again allowed a very small number— at the time eight—theological seminaries to be re-introduced for training for the

priesthood. From the years 1917 to 1945 there were not even any theological seminaries let alone any Christian education in schools.

Thirdly, the Russian Orthodox Church had in fact been trying to reform itself since about 1905 and it was very well prepared to do this, but it could not carry through the process of reform because the revolution simply stepped in and disbanded the series of meetings which was going on at the very time. The revolution happened when the church was basically discussing its own affairs from top to bottom. The leadership of the church, which had wanted to carry out many reforms was instead carried off and imprisoned.

There was an immediate and a total clash between the Communists [p. 267](#) (or the Bolsheviks, as they were called) and the church leaders. The Communists immediately began to demand the total loyalty of everybody, and of course in this process of sweeping clean with a new broom, the church seemed to the Communists to stand as one of the main pillars of the old system, and therefore needed to be removed.

The reaction of the church leaders to the bloodshed which the church had to undergo was strong and outspoken—and their words were publicised. This perhaps did exacerbate the situation, but nevertheless these words were spoken in an extreme situation. The patriarch of Moscow, Patriarch Tikhon, who had just been elected in the great council that was taking place at the time of the revolution—he was very new in his job—did in fact first of all call upon Communists to stop the looting of churches, the imprisonment of church leaders and indeed to stop the bloodshed which happened when there was opposition by church people to the takeover of the Communist authorities. What he did when the bloodshed did not stop was to ex-communicate Communists and to forbid them to present themselves at the altar—I don't suppose they wanted to anyway—but what he said was: “by the authority given to us by God we forbid you Bolsheviks to present yourself for the sacraments of Christ and we pronounce an anathema on you”.

That became the official attitude of the church in this first big clash between Lenin and Tikhon. But Tikhon himself was imprisoned and was probably tortured. After a year or two he was released when he agreed to sign some rather milder statements. But he was so badly treated in prison that he died almost immediately afterwards, leaving the church without a leader in 1925. For many years no patriarch was permitted to be elected in his place.

## II. STALIN'S EFFORTS AT LIQUIDATING THE CHURCH

By this time the church had been so badly persecuted that its whole leadership was gone and it was beaten almost to its knees. Stalin came to power in about 1927 to find that the church was no longer the force that it had been ten years earlier. He immediately began to gather to himself all the reins of power; every lead from [P. 268](#) every organisation ended in his fists. He really established what became the present system, because it was he who inaugurated the rule of the country by the secret police. He was absolutely insistent that the reins of power rested in his own hands in every single way. It might be surprising that a new leader who had so much to do economically, with all the collectivisation of agriculture, and in industry, building it from very primitive sources, had time to bother with more ideological matters like the church. That he did this in itself is an indication of how important Christianity has seemed to Communism as a potential opponent ever since 1917. Indeed Stalin thought so much about the church that he inaugurated a whole new series of legislation. Lenin had started by taking the schools away from the church and had also expropriated all church buildings, and nationalised its property.



Stalin went much further and insisted that every single manifestation of Christianity had to be confined within an approved framework. He introduced in the legislation of 1929, what is called registration of the Christian church. Every religious body that wanted to exist legally from then on, could do so only by presenting a petition to the State and getting the State to licence it in an act of so-called registration. In the same period, according to the constitution that was promulgated, the church and the State were separated! That has been one of the great points in the Soviet constitution—separation of church and State—but when you look at the laws which are supposed to be subservient to the constitution, you will find that in fact they contradict it and this legislation that Stalin inaugurated really rendered the constitution nonsensical and unworkable.

The Church for its part showed a willingness, having been decapitated, and with all the best leaders in prison camps, to go even further in compromise. The next leader of the Russian Church, Metropolitan Sergius, stated during this time that the Russian Orthodox Christian must be “loyal to the Soviet state, whose joys and successes were its joys and successes, and whose tribulations were its tribulations”.

Even such a declaration of loyalty was not enough for Stalin—he not only went ahead with his legislation but, having introduced these laws, he then treated even the laws as though they did not exist. He refused to licence even a minimum Christian activity. [p. 269](#) The church was then at the gates of the period called the great purge. This meant that even what had survived of Christianity as an open institution was liquidated and the church, if it were to survive at all, had to become an underground church. This is the period during which it is quite legitimate to talk about the underground church in Russia, because in the 1930s the official church almost ceased to exist, as it is stated by one of the great more recent thinkers of the Russian Orthodox Church, a certain Boris Talantov. He was a mathematics teacher who had failed in his bid to become a priest. When he was young there were no theological seminaries, but he devoted himself to Christian writing which he circulated secretly in the wonderful process of what is called *Samizdat*—self-publishing. By the same process Solzhenitsyn, while he was still in the Soviet Union, circulated his novels from hand to hand in manuscript copies. The written word thus achieved something of the value that it had in the medieval monasteries when only a few people had access to it.

Boris Talantov wrote these words in the 1960s: “What did Metropolitan Sergius save by his compromise with the Soviet State? By the beginning of the second world war there were no more than five or perhaps ten churches remaining open per diocese out of many hundreds. The majority of priests and almost all the bishops, except for just the very few who co-operated with the authorities, were being tortured in the concentration camps. Thus the compromise made by the Metropolitan saved nothing except his own skin. He even lost authority in the eyes of the faithful, but he did acquire the goodwill of Stalin. The reopening of the churches which happened later, was caused by the faith of the people, and not by the compromise which the church leaders had undergone”. For writing these words, and much else about recent church history. Boris Talantov was imprisoned in the final wave of persecution in the late 1960’s, and actually died as a martyr in 1971.

The terrible period of the 1930s virtually saw the liquidation of the Russian Church.

## THE THAW DURING WORLD WAR II

Something wonderful now happened. Whenever tragedy strikes [p. 270](#) the human race there is nearly always something which shows the resilience of the spirit, to make up for what has happened, and the tragedy which hit the Soviet Union in the early 1940s was the invasion of that country by the Germans.

The Nazis invaded in 1941, thus bringing the Soviet Union forcibly into the war from which they had stood aside for two years—1939 to 1941—and indeed had annexed territory to the west as a *cordon sanitaire*. They reckoned they were going to keep out of the war, and they needed to because they were still very unprepared, and were very far from having built up their industry and their collectivised agriculture.

The country had suffered to the extent of literally millions upon millions of people being imprisoned and liquidated during the 1930s. It is still not recognised just how much suffering there had been in the 1930s. A fact which has etched itself upon the consciousness of the whole world is that perhaps six million people or so died in the Nazi concentration camps, but it has not become a universally known fact that at least double that number of people, died in the Soviet concentration camps in the period immediately preceding the Nazi epoch.

It has been one of the greatest achievements of Alexander Solzhenitsyn, with his utter integrity and determination, to demonstrate to the whole world what happened during that period of history. He has gone some way towards writing it up. But, of course, the one point which Solzhenitsyn has proved in his writings, for which the Soviets will never forgive him, is that it was not Stalin who started this off—it was Lenin.

Solzhenitsyn has traced all the institutionalising of terror back before Stalin into the Lenin period and this has been perhaps his most important single contribution to the writing of Soviet history. Of course it was very much less in Lenin's period than it was in Stalin's. Nevertheless Solzhenitsyn has clearly established this through the documents that he has published.

After this terrible period an even worse event overtook the Soviet Union—the German invasion. It was this period which, as well as shaking the country from top to bottom, led to acts of untold heroism in the eventual repulsion of the German troops from Soviet territory. At the same time there was one good aspect of the invasion. The Soviet regime allowed a concession to the [p. 271](#) Russian Church. Stalin seems to have felt that if he was going to have any chance of winning the war, he had to gather to himself all the potential forces, spiritual as well as physical, which could help him. As a realist he was aware that the Christian church, despite all the persecutions, still carried a very great deal of weight.

So quite a number of church leaders who had been imprisoned and survived were released. They were allowed to reopen the churches which still existed but had been closed down in the towns and villages, and the Christian church became one of the bastions of support in the war effort. It was a militant kind of Christianity, but it was effective and it did revitalise the spirit of Russia. I say of Russia, rather than of the Soviet Union, because it was a very Russian-centred patriotism. It was not a Ukrainian-centred patriotism or a Georgian or a Lithuanian-centred patriotism, it was a Russian patriotism. Let us not forget the element of Russian nationalism in all of this.

The Russian nationalist war effort was backed by the church and at the same time the church was itself given the possibility of reconstituting some of its institutional life including, incidentally, the re-establishment of a publication—the journal of the Moscow Patriarchate which was allowed to appear in small quantities. (The eight theological seminaries were re-opened during these years.)

This was the period of the first rebirth of the Russian Church and again, in my view, it is quite wrong to designate the leaders of Russian churches which came into the open at this time as people who had made a compromise with the Soviet State in order to survive. Criticism of the Russian Church at this time is unfair and unjustified. There were, of course, a certain number of leaders in the churches on whom the regime would lean and those leaders when leant upon would present the kind of statement that the Soviet authorities would like to quote in defence of their own policy. But at all other levels of the

church, the Christian gospel was once again heard, the liturgy was celebrated and the calibre of wonderful spirituality concentrated in the Russian Orthodox liturgy revitalised the church at this time and began to bring many people again to Jesus Christ.

Not even the compromise made by the State towards the church, however, had led to an emptying of all the prison camps. Far [p. 272](#) from it. They carried on functioning and only some Christians were released. Many others remained in prison right up to the time of Stalin's death in 1953. But during the mid-1950s, the prison camps did begin to close down and many more Christians were released. They came back to their native towns and villages, bringing with them the experience of a martyred church. These people, who had survived quite remarkably under inhuman conditions over a period of ten to fifteen years, had experienced the salvation, the saving grace, of the church in physically appalling conditions.

When they came back and rejoined their families and their people they were greeted as souls who had almost been resurrected from the dead, because in many cases there had been no contact over these 10 or 15 years, and people did not even know that their relatives had remained alive and yet here they were! Very rapidly they again began to fill positions of importance in local church life. They only had to be themselves in order to demonstrate the ongoing power of the Gospel. The church received immense strength during these years of the 1950s. When I first visited the Soviet Union (1959) the church was beginning to show the benefits of this revitalisation, and in the countryside or in the towns wherever one went, one found full congregations. One found active Christian bodies. It did seem to me at the time that there was an overwhelming preponderance of old people in the Russian churches. That was the situation twenty years ago—it is changed very much now.

### **III. THE RUSSIAN CHURCH IN THE TIME OF KHRUSHCHEV**

So great was the return to the Christian church during the 1950s that the new master of the Soviet Union, Nikita Sergeivitch Khrushchev, began to take fright at what he saw and to plan a new anti-religious campaign.

It was at this point that my personal history crossed the history of the Soviet Union, because I was in Moscow when the new purge hit the church. In fact, I was probably the first person to begin gathering the evidence about the renewed persecution, and, during [p. 273](#) the next 3 or 4 years (1960–1964) when it raged especially bitterly, I began to gather a great deal of evidence. But to try to publish it was another matter. There was a conspiracy of silence in the Western world at that time and it was not possible to publish information about the growing persecution of Christianity in the Soviet Union during that period. Many times I attempted to do so and failed: nevertheless I was gathering the information in growing frustration, knowing that the persecution was getting worse.

What did Khrushchev do to the church during this third period of confrontation? There was another patriarch on the throne of the Russian Orthodox Church at this time, Patriarch Alexei, who was, when elected, a very old and a very tired man. He had somehow survived persecution—we don't know exactly how or what happened to him, but he never seemed to be a particularly decisive figure. The church was actually being run in the late 1950s by a Metropolitan—Metropolitan Nikolai, who seemed to have reached some sort of concordat with the State—a live and let live position—but when Khrushchev began his new purge of the Christian church, Metropolitan Nikolai was removed from his office and replaced by a much younger man, somebody who was entirely Soviet educated and immediately seemed to be much more pliant towards the Communist authorities. His name was Nikodim and it was he who presented the new face of the Russian Church to

the world, although in the last year or two he was very seriously ill.<sup>1</sup> It was he who first negotiated the entrance of the Russian Orthodox Church into the World Council of Churches.

Metropolitan Nikodim believed that only a bland face presented to the world could save the church. He stated that there was no persecution and that the Russian church was allowed to organise its own affairs without interference from the Soviet State because “We have separation of church and state in the letter of our constitution”.

While this was going on the persecution of the church was growing daily worse. Theological seminaries were closing down, five of those eight seminaries which had been re-opened only a few years earlier, were directly closed down at the insistence of the State, leaving only three up to this day. From that day to this, theological [p. 274](#) training has been quite inadequate simply because of the lack of places in theological seminaries.

Monasteries had begun to flourish again after the Second World War and monasticism, as before the revolution, became again a very important feature in the life of the Russian Orthodox Church—not a refuge against persecution—not hiding from the world—far from it—but the concentration of spirituality which was the essence from which the rebirth of Christian life could and would take place. The monasteries began to be closed down again and their inmates were dispersed around the countryside and forced to take up manual jobs. Those who opposed this, especially the closure of the churches, were imprisoned.

There were reckoned to be about 20,000 Russian Orthodox churches open by this time. That shows how massive had been the re-opening of the churches during the period at the end of the war. But of those 20,000 Russian Orthodox churches something like two thirds were closed again during the Khrushchev period (1960–1964).

There was a massive opposition to this closure—people demonstrated outside them and physically formed rings around the churches, trying to stop the K.G.B. and the hooligans breaking through, in order to desecrate the buildings. But those who resisted were rounded up, thrown into lorries and into buses; they were taken off for interrogation and their ringleaders were imprisoned.

Thousands, possibly tens of thousands—we do not know precise statistics—of Christians were imprisoned during this period for their opposition to this wave of religious persecution.

Let me quote somebody who came to the defence of the church at that time. It is not widely realised that Alexander Solzhenitsyn, when he first became known as a great fighter for liberty—a leader of the human rights movement in the Soviet Union—spoke from a Christian standpoint. Ten years ago when he began doing this his Christian allegiance was widely questioned and many people did not even accept it. But many of us were aware that what Solzhenitsyn did, he did first and foremost as a Christian—as a believing and baptised member of the Orthodox Church but one who at the same time had a tremendous sympathy with members of other Christian traditions. [p. 275](#)

This is something that Alexander Solzhenitsyn wrote in the mid 1960s, while directly trying to defend the Christian Church against the wave of persecution I have described:

“When you travel the by-roads of Central Russia you begin to understand the secret of the peaceful Russian countryside. It is in the churches—they trip up the slopes, ascend the high hills, come down to the broad rivers like princesses in white and red, they lift their belltowers, graceful, shapely, all different. High over the mundane timber and thatch of the villages they nod to each other from afar—they beckon to each other and soar to

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<sup>1</sup> He died on 5 September, 1978.

the same heaven. Wherever you wander in the fields or the meadows you are not alone. From over the hayricks or a wall of trees—remember Central Russia is very flat—even above the curve of the earth's surface the head of some belltower will beckon you from the villages ... But when you get to the village you find that not the living but the dead were greeting you from afar. The crosses have been knocked off the roof long ago or twisted out of place. The dome has been stripped, there are gaping holes between the rusty ribs. Weeds grow on the roofs and in the cracks in the walls. The graveyard has been all churned up by agricultural machinery.

“Inside, the murals over the walls have been desecrated by the rain and obscene inscriptions scrawled all over them. In the porch there are barrels of lubricating oil and a tractor is turning in towards them. Or a lorry has backed into the church doorway to pick up some sacks—you see, the church was usually the only stone building in the village and so was taken over as a store for agricultural machinery. In another church there is the shudder of lathes, yet another is locked and silent, and in yet another there is a youth club meeting with its slogans on the walls, ‘Let us aim at high milk yields!’ or a ‘poem about peace’, or ‘a heroic deed’.

“People”, Solzhenitsyn says, “were always selfish and often unkind, but then the evening chimes used to ring out over the villages, fields and the woods, reminding men that they must abandon the trivial concerns of this world and give some time and thought to eternity.

“These chimes would raise people up, prevent them from sinking down on all fours. Our ancestors put all that was finest in themselves into these stones, into these belltowers”. Then Solzhenitsyn p.276 walks up to the church and prises open the door of the church in which a youth club is meeting. “Ram it in—give it a bash—don't be afraid—film show at six—and dancing at eight”.

The sense of outrage and shock which was felt by the Soviet people during this great wave of anti-religious persecution, expressed so well in that conclusion by Solzhenitsyn, was experienced not only by the old people who had been the bulwark of the Russian Church for generations—even Lenin had commented that the churches were filled only by old people: “give them a year or two and we shall not even need to persecute the church as they are all dying out anyway”. The old people had known suffering and then the rebirth of the church, they were all the more horrified when they were overwhelmed by the new campaign. But the moral indignation felt was also experienced by young people—for example, that child whom I quoted earlier in Father Dimitri Dudko's sermon.

Solzhenitsyn himself became the moral spokesman for a whole generation of young people. He himself was slightly older but was putting into words what other people felt but could not so adequately express.

If I were to summarise what happened during this period, I would have to say two things: 1. that young people who had been very far away from the church, even alien to it, came gradually, all over the Soviet Union, in growing numbers, to express an interest in the Christian faith. Why was it being singled out by Khrushchev for persecution? What is it about the Christian faith which made Communists persecute it? As an intellectual question they asked this, but they would come to find out about Christianity as a result of this curiosity. Sometimes they would come merely to jump on the bandwagon, they would come to mock, but very often, in many documented instances, they would stay to pray.

The Christian conversion of a growing number of young people over the last ten years or so has been, I think, one of the most remarkable events in the Christian history of the 20th century. It is an event which has not yet been fully reported and told—I think only in the literature from Keston College, in our journal *Religion in Communist Lands*, will you find a documented account of this rebirth of the church, which extends to all



denominations. Some young people, perhaps belonging to no denomination at all, will go to the Orthodox Church because they find that it embodies [p. 277](#) something of the richness, the beauty of tradition and history of Russia. They will go to it for perhaps aesthetic reasons initially. Others will come across the direct and open preaching of the Russian Baptists and they feel that here is a message that cuts right across the concepts which are being promulgated in the newspapers and on television, here is something quite different but expressed in such a forceful way, we will go and find out what this preaching is all about.

And yet others travelling, way out in the fringe lands of the Soviet Union, for example to Lithuania, find there an active Roman Catholic Church. I know of a number of young Moscow intellectuals, atheists, who went to Lithuania for their holidays and came back already having taken the first steps towards joining the Roman Catholic Church. It's right across the board, this revival of the Christian faith in Russia today, but it is affecting mainly the young people.

#### IV. THE RUSSIAN CHURCH TODAY

The other wonderful and remarkable phenomenon in Russian Christianity today is that what used to be called in the 1930s "The Church of Silence", has found its voice.

There is a growing number of people of all ages involved in this. People who are prepared not only to speak out in defence of their faith but to write about it as well. In this new Christian literature, we have discovered a very rich understanding of what the faith in Russia or in the Soviet Union today is all about.

This voice of the church (I can't even say the church in Russia because it affects the Republic of Georgia, Armenia, Lithuania and the Ukraine, all these non-independent republics of the Soviet Union), is being heard and Christians in those areas are expressing themselves with growing forcefulness. This again has been something which we at Keston College have been increasingly able to document.

After the fall of Khrushchev in 1964 persecution again slackened, 1964 to 1968 or 1969—these were years again when things were not really so bad for the church. They did not manage to reopen the seminaries or the churches or the monasteries but at least the terror was removed. [p. 278](#)

But when the new period of persecution broke on the church in about 1969, it was much more selective. It was not nationwide, although it did affect all parts of the country. It did not affect all congregations. What it did was to single out individual leaders who were seeking to express their voice as Christians, those people who were active in the national areas of, say, Lithuania or Georgia. An example would be the leaders of the Lithuanian movement for a free and independent Lithuanian Catholic Church (independent of Soviet power, not independent of the Vatican: they were very loyal to the Vatican—the most loyal of all Catholic people).

Those who spoke out and wrote about their own situation fully and at great length and sent their documents out of the Soviet Union, were the people who had to bear the brunt of the next period of persecution. And what were they asking for primarily? They were asking that the Soviet constitution should be implemented. They were saying that the Soviet laws which demand the registration of Christian groups and which implement Soviet control over Christian activities are not good enough and must be revised. They want to see the Christian having an independent right to govern his own church and to look after his own church affairs.

This continued; it was a voice that was more and more clearly heard in the churches of the Soviet Union and gradually, by sending the documents out, in the church in the

world at large. It is remarkable that it is not a political voice as such. They want to help build a new society—but within that society they want Christianity to be a vital element, possibly *the* vital element.

That is what the new voice is saying and it is a very exciting and challenging voice indeed. Christians want to see the Soviet constitution of separation of church and state implemented, so that they can learn to fulfil the role in Soviet society which they believe God is calling them to fulfil.

There is tremendous ground for optimism that the churches as a whole in Russia, the persecuted church and the official registered church, are really saying one and the same thing. I do not see a divide between them, I do not see a dichotomy of one betraying the Gospel and the other fulfilling it. This is all part of a myth in my view. I see different sectors of the Christian church making their own contribution towards this rebirth of the Christian church in the Soviet Union today; 60 years after the Soviet revolution, Communism p. 279 in a country where it has been tried over a period of 60 years seems to the younger intellectuals to be a god that failed—whereas the Christian church is providing evidence about a God who is active and is not failing the people in a country where the church has been so bitterly persecuted.

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# Theology and Healing

by JOHN GOLDINGAY

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THERE HAS long been a Christian involvement in healing, but in recent years healing has become a subject of much wider interest in the church at all levels.<sup>1</sup> My aim in this paper is to point to some aspects of the theological context in which a Christian concern for healing has to be set; specifically, in a definition of health, in an understanding of miracle, and in a theology of suffering.

## I. A THEOLOGY OF HEALTH

First, we can surely only understand both sickness and healing in the context of some defined concept of health. Now it happens that my wife is a doctor, so I asked her if she could give me a description of health such as the medical profession uses. Her first

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<sup>1</sup> I am grateful especially to my colleague Graham Dow for discussions which have clarified my thinking on this subject.

response was, 'You must be joking; people write *books* about that.' Medicine, after all, seemed very like theology. But she did offer me a definition of health accepted by the World Health Organization at its inauguration: 'Health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease and infirmity.'<sup>2</sup> It is from such health that ill-health is a deviation, and to such health that healing is a restoration.

The WHO definition has been described as so idealistic as to be comparable with the state of perfection 'such as was enjoyed perhaps by archangels and by Adam before the Fall.'<sup>3</sup> A theologian will be excused for responding, 'Exactly'. Although complete health or well-being is now enjoyed by no man, this is not an integral feature of the human condition. Man as first created enjoyed such well-being; it was through breaking his relationship with God that he lost it, and indeed became subject to the eventual dissolution of being itself at the end of the individual's life. [p. 281](#)

This insight draws attention to a modification which needs to be made to the WHO's definition, however. Man is not adequately defined until he is seen not merely as body and mind, and not merely in his relationship with other people and with the world (though it is good to be reminded of this aspect of well-being), but also in his relationship with God. It is in part precisely because the well-being of the whole man integrally includes his relationship with God that there is such a thing as a Christian concern with healing. The physical, mental, social, and spiritual aspects of man are intertwined with each other and interact with each other.

Fundamentally, this means that spiritual well-being is basic to well-being in its other aspects. It was when man went wrong in his relationship with God that the rest of his life began to go wrong. Malfunctioning in these other aspects of his life ultimately reflects his metaphysical problem. But once this malfunctioning has begun, loss of well-being can be experienced and explained at various levels, which interact dialectically with each other. For instance, I may cease to live the life of a man who is justified by faith; overwork; and get 'flu (spiritual affects psychological and physical). But then 'flu may make me depressed psychologically and spiritually (reverse movement).

There is a further, and more controversial, aspect to the experience and loss of well-being. Genesis describes man's first sin as a response to a suggestion from another creature, a snake. Later parts of the Bible see behind the snake the activity of a supernatural being. The 'ancient serpent ... is called the Devil and Satan' ([Rev. 12:9](#)). Indeed, all loss of well-being may be seen at this other level as demonic in origin. So dominant does the devil's power become over some individuals described in the Bible, that they may be described as totally under his control ('possessed by a devil' or 'demonized').

Well-being, and the loss of well-being, has to be seen in all these aspects. Well-being itself, however, also needs to be set in a wider context. It can be a rather static concept. A human being is not like a machine, which is designed to function in a certain way with consistency throughout its life. A person is essentially a dynamic, developing, changing entity. Well-being at 10 is not well-being at 30, 50, or 70, Even if total well-being could be achieved, it [p. 282](#) could never be achieved finally: there is always something new to enter into. Arguably, health is only a means to an end—namely growth. 'The whole body when each part is working properly (that is the means), makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love (that is the end)' ([Eph. 4:16](#)). To concentrate too much on sickness-health/well-

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<sup>2</sup> Quoted by A. Clare, *Psychiatry in Dissent* (Tavistock: London 1976) p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> A. J. Lewis, as quoted in Clare, *ibid.*

being suggests an inadequate model of man. If Adam before the fall knew complete well-being, this did not mean he was fully mature in any of the aspects of that well-being. He had to grow, in body and mind, in relationships with other people, with the world, and with God. His initial loss of well-being came about through his failure in a testing situation which could have led to growth, but did not.

So perhaps we need to expand our definition: God intends for man that state of complete physical, mental, social and spiritual well-being which is appropriate to each developing stage of a person's life. It is good to be concerned for healing; but the restoring of lost aspects of well-being should be only the launching pad for growth.<sup>4</sup>

## II. A THEOLOGY OF HEALING

Because of his love, his grace, and his positive purpose for the world, God does not abandon it to non-being. Within his activity in the world a distinction is often made between the operation of his 'common grace' and that of his 'special grace', and this distinction may be helpfully applied to healing. First, by his common grace God makes it possible for a holding operation to be effected on the results of human wilfulness. He provides various devices for making life East of Eden bearable (cf. [Gen. 4:15-22](#); [8:21-22](#)).

Human attempts to restore the well-being which man has lost may often be seen as such gifts of God's common grace. Certainly the Bible accepts in principle the treatment of physical maladies by physical means (e.g. [Exod. 21:19](#); [Luke 10:34](#); and Luke's own profession). It is clearly a serious weakness of such enterprises as medicine, psychiatry, and social work that they concern themselves with what a Christian knows to be temporary repair work on problems that go much deeper than the levels at which they are [p. 283](#) approached by those disciplines. It is possible that they do not even paper over the cracks very well.<sup>5</sup> We should not overvalue them, but nor should we undervalue them. I have several times been amazed at student essays on healing which make no reference to doctors or physical treatment. These latter are not everything, but they are something.

God's activity by his special grace is another matter altogether, however. He concerns himself with man's well-being in all its aspects. This is clear in his relationship with Israel, which affects the affairs of politics, society, and individual life, as well as what directly concerns her relationship with God (see the mixture in [Deut. 28](#)). It finds semantic expression in the Hebrew noun *shalom*, which can suggest well-being in all the aspects we have referred to above; and in the Greek verb *sozo*, which refers to making men whole both physically and spiritually. Jesus himself brings a ministry of healing to broken bodies, broken minds, broken spirits, and broken relationships. Paul sees the fruit of Christ's achievement, as it affects his own and future generations, as lying in his bringing peace between God and man, peace between Jew and Gentile, and peace between a man and himself. It consists both in the fact that 'your spirits are alive' now, and that God 'will give life to your mortal bodies also' ([Rom. 8:10-11](#)).

Final physical well-being thus belongs to the End. Indeed, of course, we do not even experience complete spiritual well-being before then. [Romans 8](#) does not eliminate [Romans 7](#): perhaps this would be impossible as long as the other aspects of man are not

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. B. Martin, *Healing for You* (Lutterworth: London 1965) p. 141.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. the critiques of medicine by I. Illich, *Medical Nemesis* (Calder: London 1974) and of psychiatry by R. D. Laing, e.g. *The Politics of Experience* (Penguin: Harmondsworth 1967) (but see the discussion in Clare, op. cit.).

yet restored. Nevertheless, the problem of our relationship with God is now solved in principle through Christ ('your spirits are alive'). This cannot but lead to a restoring of something of our lost well-being in other areas, even in this life. A man who comes to believe himself at peace with God will find peace with himself and with others. The metaphysical will have physical, psychological, and social consequences. There is an intrinsic, 'natural' process involved here, which a doctor should probably p. 284 be able to monitor. The only thing which as a doctor he will not be able to tell is whether the fountainhead of healing, peace with God, is real or illusory.

It is because the metaphysical, psychological, physical, and social are interlinked—in health, in sickness, and in healing—that the people of God has healing as part of its regular ministry. Yahweh is his people's healer ([Exod. 15:26](#)).<sup>6</sup> When someone has a skin disease, this has religious and social consequences (he is 'unclean' and forbidden social contact and admission to the sanctuary). When he finds healing, he offers sacrifice and is readmitted to the fellowship of the congregation ([Lev. 13-14](#)). It is unlikely that his healing was seen as anything other than the activity of the God who heals diseases ([Ps. 103:3](#)). This aspect of the character and activity of God, set alongside his general purpose that we should enjoy well-being at all levels of our lives, encourages us to be expectant of healing and of the restoration of lost well-being.

God heals, however, through means. Isaiah promised Hezekiah that he would be healed of an unnamed but potentially fatal illness. He also prescribed a fig poultice for physical treatment ([2 Kings 20:1-7](#))! Asa, on the other hand, is criticized for seeking help from doctors instead of seeking the Lord ([2 Chron. 16:12](#)); this is perhaps an indictment of recourse to physical medicine without asking the right spiritual questions.<sup>7</sup>

James' assumption that the appropriate response to illness is to involve the leaders of the congregation in prayer, confession, and physical treatment ([James 5:14-16](#)) fits this same pattern. Illness is again assumed to raise questions concerning other aspects of the well-being of the whole man. God is involved in all these aspects; yet the ministry included physical treatment (anointing p. 285 with oil surely had the latter as part of its significance, though it had other symbolic overtones).<sup>8</sup>

These various passages of the Bible indicate clear pointers as to a Christian response to illness. Along with other aspects of a loss of well-being, illness should naturally lead to inviting the congregation's leaders to look at the ill person in the round; to see what is wrong, to pray, and to offer whatever ministry seems to be needed. This will not rule out going to the doctor, but it will rule out going to the doctor without prayer—as if physical or psychological malfunctioning was unlikely to carry any implications with regard to one's relationship with God. There is a real danger of compartmentalizing human life here; there are certain aspects of life which are God's concern, and others which are not.

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<sup>6</sup> Strictly, in the context, the description provides the theological rationale for a concern with preventive medicine!

<sup>7</sup> Post-biblical Jewish attitudes were generally hostile to the medical profession. According to the Mishnah, 'the best among physicians is destined for Gehenna' (Kiddushin 4:14). (My wife suggests this is because they will be needed there, as they will not be in Paradise!). Rashi's explanation is that '(a) they soothed their patients and so kept them from seeking God; (b) they had many human lives on their conscience: (c) they neglected the poor' (J. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (SCM : London 1969) p. 306). Ben Sira's enthusiasm for doctors ([Ecclus. 38:15](#)) is exceptional and reflects Greek influence.

<sup>8</sup> See the discussion in J. B. Mayor, *The Epistle of St. James* (Macmillan: London 1892) in loc.



Rather, 'we use medicine along with prayer to heal ourselves physically, (and) what is helpful in psychology along with prayer to heal us of fear, guilt, or hurt'.<sup>9</sup>

Ministry to those who are ill will naturally begin by focusing on the physical or psychological disorders of which the person is conscious. But if it is right that these often have spiritual problems lying behind them, then ministry will naturally be concerned to go on to discern what spiritual factors are involved. The transition in [James 5](#) from talk of illness to talk of salvation may fit with this. The key gifts in such ministry, then, will include the discernment to perceive what is wrong at levels other than the physical or psychological. Ministry will then concentrate on the spiritual problems, in the conviction that healing here is the right route to healing at other levels. The application of spiritual resources to the spiritual problem may be expected to lead 'naturally', intrinsically, to the restoration of other aspects of well-being. On the other hand, given the dialectical interplay between loss and restoration of well-being at the various levels, sometimes the ministers may discern that behind a spiritual problem is a social or emotional or physical one (and behind that, another spiritual one!). p. 286

I think it is in this sense that there is a connection between the atonement and healing. 'He bore our sickness and carried our pain' ([Isa. 53:4](#))<sup>10</sup> because our physical pain and sickness is tied up with our spiritual needs, to which the atonement directly relates. The power of the cross brings healing because it deals with the broken relationship with God which in a general sense underlies the loss of well-being.<sup>11</sup>

But part of the wonder of this power of the cross is that it can effect its healing work without the person in need necessarily going consciously through the tracing of the links between physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. To go through this process can for many be an upbuilding experience. If for others, however, facing further pains in this way is more than can be coped with<sup>12</sup>, then this does not mean it is impossible for the cross to bring healing even to aspects of need that a person is not consciously aware of.

The cross also signifies the victory of Christ over Satan, and healing thus includes an end to the demonic aspect to the loss of well-being. In the ministry of Jesus and the apostles, physical or psychological symptoms often seemed to reflect the activity of the devil, and their ministry thus included the deliverance of such people from the control of the devil. This seems to be part of the process of conversion for such people. It is to be noted that the Bible does not seem to envisage that believers can come under the control of the devil. He can attack them from outside, and they are then to send him packing (e.g. James 4:7). But he is not described as gaining control of them in any way. This makes me hesitant to accept talk of the demonic oppression of believers if this implies coming under the control of the devil in some aspect of one's person against one's will.

### III. A THEOLOGY OF MIRACLES

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<sup>9</sup> D. and M. Linn, *Healing of Memories* (Paulist Press: New York 1974) p. 21. Cf. F. Maenutt, *Healing* (Ave Maria Press: Notre Dame, Indiana 1974) ch. 19.

<sup>10</sup> 'Sickness' and 'pain' (RSVmg), I think, rather than 'grief' and 'sorrow' (RSV). Cf. C. Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66* (SCM: London 1969) p. 254 (and [Matt. 8:17!](#)).

<sup>11</sup> It is perhaps as well to note that I do not mean to imply a one-to-one relationship between a particular man's sin and his loss of well-being. Job, and Jesus ([John 9:3](#); [Luke 13:1-5](#)) make clear that such a link cannot necessarily be found.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. M. Scanlan, *Inner Healing* (Paulist Press: New York 1974) pp. 47-8.

So far I have been considering the healing ministry assumed to [P. 287](#) be part of the regular life of the people of God in the Bible. I have made little reference to miraculous healing.

The notion of 'miracle' is difficult to define.<sup>13</sup> In a narrow sense the word is used to refer to events, or acts of God, which cannot be explained in terms of the 'natural'. But this can only lead to rather provisional decisions as to the occurrence of miracles, because we can only speak of what is at present inexplicable by natural laws. Theologically, furthermore, the definition may be questioned on the grounds that the Bible does not make a distinction between miracles and the rest of God's activity (and consequently does not lay the emphasis on the former which may be encouraged by setting apart those particular acts of God). The latter distinction easily becomes one between things God does and things that happen naturally, whereas the Bible sees all events as the activity of God.

The word miracle is also used in a broader sense to denote something extraordinary and amazing ('it was a miracle I escaped'), and this use is closer to the category of marvellous works or mighty deeds of God, which does appear in the Bible. These may or may not be miraculous in the narrow sense. They are no more God's acts than less spectacular events. What distinguishes them is that they are extra-ordinary and timely, and that they connect with God's fulfilment of his purpose for his people in salvation and judgement. It is in this sense that I shall use the word miracle in what follows.

As not all healing involves a miracle, so not all miracles are acts of healing. These take their place along with acts of deliverance from political oppression, provision of food in needy situations, and so on. Such events cluster in the ministry of Jesus, presumably because of his unique person and his unique role as the one through whom the reign of God breaks in. But they appear before him, in the lives of Moses and of prophets such as Elisha (for healing miracles, see [Num. 21:4-9](#); [2 Kings 5:1-14](#)). Jesus also commissions his disciples to heal, to raise the dead, and so on ([Matt. 9](#); [Mark 6:7-11](#); [Luke 9](#); [10](#)). He promises that they will do greater things than he has ([John 14:12](#)). The [p. 288](#) apostles bring healing to the lame man, judgement to Ananias and Sapphira, resurrection to Eutychus ([Acts 3](#); [50:20](#)). The question is: How far can we expect such miracles today? Does Jesus' commission of, and promise to, his disciples encourage us to expect miracles?

If it does, they will presumably remain exceptional. The extraordinary will still not be ordinary. In the biblical miracles, the distinction between this age and the age to come is overcome. But physical renewal and judgment still belong essentially to the last day (cf. [Rom. 8:11](#), [23](#)), and they are only occasionally anticipated in this age. For theological reasons, then, one would not expect the extraordinary to become ordinary.

Exegetically, this is supported by the use the gospels make of the miracle stories.<sup>14</sup> The major reason for their inclusion in the gospels is surely their significance in relation to the historical ministry of Jesus. They show he is the Messiah. They presumably also to some extent provide encouraging examples for future believers who follow on from their master and who share his authority. Yet when a specific lesson is taught on the basis of a miracle story, it does not usually seem to be that the believer is now to go and do as Jesus did. In the story of the healing of the centurion's servant, for instance, the emphasis in Luke is on the extraordinary faith of the gentile; in Matthew on the eschatological and not

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<sup>13</sup> See R. Swinburne, *The Concept of Miracle* (Macmillan: London 1970); and with reference to healing, Scanlan, pp. 5-9.

<sup>14</sup> I doubt if healing miracles are to be treated as a separate category from other miracles. Thus a hermeneutic of healing stories ought to be applicable to the stilling of the storm or the feeding of the thousands.

merely this-worldly importance of this kind of faith ([Matt. 8:5-13](#); <sup>15</sup> [Luke 7:1-10](#)). The similar story in John includes a warning *against* seeking miracles: true faith ought not to need them ([John 4:46-53](#)). Similarly, people should not be concerned so much for bread as for living bread ([John 6](#)). One of the first, and still very instructive, exercises in redaction criticism demonstrated how Matthew took the story of the miraculous stilling of the storm and applied it to the more general crisis situations in which the church found itself ([Matt. 8:18-27](#)).<sup>16</sup> One may perhaps compare p. 289 with this the fact that most references to medicine and healing in the Old Testament are metaphorical allusions to spiritual renewal (e.g. [Isa. 57:18-19](#)).

So due allowance has to be made for the indications in the Bible that miraculous healing will not be an everyday affair. But the gospels and epistles do suggest that miracles will sometimes happen, and that we should not on theological grounds be sceptical about the evidence that God is doing mighty deeds in the church today. Many of us need to be more expectant of such events than we have been or are by nature. A congregation ought to be looking for the 'release of the Spirit' in providing gifts of mighty works in its midst (cf. [1 Cor. 12:10](#)). We need to be of expectant faith, lest we prove too much like the widows of Israel or the villagers of Nazareth ([Luke 4:24-28](#)).

On the other hand, we are not called to be gullible. And we have to accept that we cannot programme the arrival of Elijah or Jesus. There is characteristically something unpredictable and unexpected about miracles. They do not happen according to rules, including the rule of prayer and faith. They happen out of God's sovereign freedom. In this sense, we cannot expect miracles. What we can do is go to Jesus and say 'They have no wine' or 'Lord, one whom you love is ill' ([John 2:3](#); [11:3](#)); and see what he will do. We can go to those to whom God seems to have given 'gifts of healing, or 'the working miracles' ([1 Cor. 12:9-10](#)), to see whether God will work through them in this situation for his glory.

It is an unsatisfactory situation that we cannot identify clear ground rules over this matter of miracles. Life would be simpler if we could say they do not happen, or that they do in certain precise situations, e.g. if we have enough faith. But the whole question seems to have more mystery about it than that. I suppose it is in fact only like prayer in a more general sense.

#### IV. A THEOLOGY OF SUFFERING

A Christian theology of healing therefore assumes that, because of what Christ has already achieved, we can now experience something of the restoration of well-being that belongs finally to the End. Christ makes it possible for the new age, for the kingdom, for heaven itself, to begin to be a reality now. P. 290

But this process is only *initiated*. Although we 'rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have received the reconciliation', we also and at the same time 'groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies ([Rom. 6:11](#); [8:23](#)). Although we have a real present experience of the presence and ministry of Christ, we also look in hope to a future consummation of our experience of that ministry. 'In this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope' ([Rom. 8:24](#)). It is integral to what it means to be a Christian that our experience is at the moment incomplete.

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<sup>15</sup> See my comments on this passage in *New Testament Interpretation* (cd. I. H. Marshall) (Paternoster; Exeter 1977).

<sup>16</sup> See G. Bornkamm's examination of this passage in G. Bornkamm, G. Barth, and H.J. Held, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* (SCM: London 1963) pp. 52-7.

Christianity has to keep hold of this tension between a reality and an incompleteness in our experience of Christ. It is easy to lose the tension, however. Christians have usually done this by yielding their conviction that Christ can do things now. They cease to expect, for instance, a healing ministry in the present. They find it very difficult *a priori* to believe that there can have been instances of the raising of the dead. But there is as great danger of mistake in expecting too much in the present; in expecting illness never to take its toll. It often does, because we live this side of the resurrection. There is no mystery about the fact that Christians experience cancer or depression (or for that matter divorce, unemployment, and road accidents), and eventually death itself. When healing does not occur, it is worth asking whether the right spiritual diagnosis has yet been made; whether some sin is preventing healing. But we must be wary of implying that the person who is ill is to be blamed for failing to be healed (on the grounds that he *must* be not facing up to some sin, or not showing the requisite faith). This was the mistake of Job's friends.<sup>17</sup>

One reason why God does leave us this side of the End, often forced to lie with pain and suffering, is that these experiences can fulfil a positive role in the growth which is God's concern for us. We have noted that growth is more important than healing, and that the importance of healing is that it can be a launching pad for growth. But suffering itself can provide this launching pad. p. 291 People grow by having to go through things. Paradoxically, indeed, 'the gift of healing enables me to bear additional suffering ... more confident that (God) will bring good from it as He has done in the past.'<sup>18</sup>

Indeed, John Hick<sup>19</sup> has argued that the main purpose of evil is to make the world an environment in which people may grow. Now in reaction against the view that everything unpleasant in the world is to be seen as the result of human sin, and specifically of the sin of Adam and Eve, he denies that the 'fall' had anything to do with the entry of suffering into the world. There was no 'fall', and suffering was always part of God's plan for the world. This is surely an over-reaction out of one over-simplified view into another. Human experience itself suggests that life is more complex than that: we ought to take seriously the assumption in the Bible that affliction is, at least in part, a result of human rebellion against God which has turned life into less than it was meant to be; *and* that man's experience of trouble is nevertheless used by God as a means of growth (cf. [Rom. 5: James 1](#)). It may be that there are even hints in the creation story that 'paradise' was less of a holiday camp than we sometimes picture it. Man was sent into the world to subdue it ([Gen. 1:28](#)): the word used is the one for subduing a lion, and it suggests at last that being man involves struggles and conflict. Even Jesus himself reached maturity through suffering ([Heb. 2:10](#)).

Ministering to others also customarily involves suffering, both in the development of ministering ability and in the exercise of ministry. Jeremiah and Paul both illustrate this truth. Luther found that doing theology involved affliction, trial, doubt, temptation, conflict; and believed that without this *Anfechtung* there could be no theological insight.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> This is not to deny that the hindrances may be real (Scanlan's observation, pp. 42-3, of how often unwillingness to forgive is a block to healing, is particularly striking), only to warn against an overemphasis or universalizing of this approach.

<sup>18</sup> Linn, p. 43.

<sup>19</sup> *Evil and the God of Love* (Macmillan: London 1966; revised edition due 1977). See also N. Pittenger, 'Suffering and love', *Expository Times* 85 (1973-4), pp. 19-22.

<sup>20</sup> E.g., in the latter part of the 'Preface to the Wittenberg edition of Luther's German writings' (*Luther's Works* 34 (Muhlenberg: Philadelphia 1960) pp. 286-7).

Here, of course, physical illness is not in mind,<sup>21</sup> but it can hardly be excluded from making its contribution, especially if we are prepared to see physical health p. 292 as only one of the interrelated aspects of total human well-being.

In his widely used book on *Healing*, Francis MacNutt suggests that Christian expectation of healing has been falsely inhibited by precisely the theology of suffering we have described above.<sup>22</sup> If so, we must again avoid swinging from one false extreme to another. A theology of healing has to have room for the strong possibility that God's highest will for this person is that he should continue to live with the handicap he presently experiences. 'A crippled friend calls day and night in a demanding tone that the world should wait on her. God yearns to heal such self-centredness. But I doubt if God yearns so to heal a fellow Jesuit whose blindness sensitizes him to hear twice as much ... Christ may keep him blind because he works through blindness.'<sup>23</sup>

But such an example raises far less problems than those where no fruit or growth can be seen. What, for instance, of children emotionally maimed for life by the terrible experiences of their childhood?

At least we may say that God has accepted an experience of human suffering himself. Astoundingly, his own power was revealed in the abject suffering of a servant ([Isa. 53:1](#)). He is 'the crucified God'.<sup>24</sup> If, as it often seems, suffering is the most striking and most appalling aspect of what it means to be human, then at least it is something God allows to happen to himself. It is not something he merely inflicts. There is comfort in Christ in part because we can relate our afflictions to his. Precisely in such experiences we are closest to what it means to be God; not furthest away from this. Precisely at this point God can be closest to us; not irrelevant because what we have to go through he has not.

The theology of the cross in relation to suffering needs more working out. But there will remain a mystery about suffering. We shall always need the book of Job to remind us that our desire to have all the answers will not be met this side of heaven (and not necessarily even then?); we have to learn to trust (as we can in the light of the cross and resurrection) even where we cannot understand. p. 293

Such a theology of suffering as we can outline includes accepting that God may leave us in suffering, because of what can be achieved through this; that God may give us the comfort of the crucified Christ *in* suffering rather than whisking us from suffering; and that final healing belongs to the resurrection day, when 'he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more' ([Rev. 21:4](#)). But it also includes the good news that in Christ there can be healing now: for the new Jerusalem is already 'coming down out of heaven from God' ([Rev. 21:3](#)). 'This is a future which interpenetrates and informs the present'; it already exists 'in the anticipatory experience of the church.'<sup>25</sup> Even now the leaves of the tree of life are for the healing of the nations (Rev. 22.2).

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<sup>21</sup> Unless John Osborne is right in the importance he attaches to the state of Luther's internal organs!

<sup>22</sup> MacNutt, ch 4-5.

<sup>23</sup> E 23 Linn, pp. 2-3

<sup>24</sup> A phrase, I think from Luther, which became the title of a book by J. Moltmann (SCM: London 1974).

<sup>25</sup> G. B. Caird, *A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine* (Black: London 1966) p 263. Cf. W. Hendriksen, *More than Conquerors* (Tyndale: London 1962) 197-8.



# Accreditation as Improvement of Theological Education

by MARVIN J. TAYLOR

THE ASSOCIATION of Theological Schools (USA) Long-Range Planning Committee has been studying the future of the Association across the past several years. Among the tasks which it undertook was an examination of member seminary expectations for the agency. Foremost among them, as is indicated in the ATS Constitution, is “to promote the improvement of theological education.” The primary means by which this is to be accomplished is accreditation. Hence it seems both appropriate and timely to discuss the interrelationship between the two.

Accreditation means many things to different persons. To a student choosing a school to attend it provides one indication of quality based on peer institution evaluation of a particular seminary. For a donor it provides some assurance that a potential donee is a responsible educational enterprise worthy of support. To a denomination considering candidate preordinands it gives evidence about the quality of education that a person has received. To an administration and faculty it indicates publicly the educational quality of their school as measured by the commonly accepted standards held by the entire national, international, or regional group of similar institutions. Accreditation is surely all of these—and more too. It is not just an achievement; it is also an opportunity.

## REVALIDATION FOR QUALITY CONTROL

Fortunately accreditation is not permanent. It requires revalidation from time to time. And this is both proper and useful. Perspectives about quality theological education are not static. One need but explore the successive bulletins published by ATS since it began accrediting activity in 1936 to appreciate the considerable dimensions of that change. The standards have gradually evolved as the experience of “quality control” has matured. Even the notion that accreditation is not permanent emerged from P. 295 the experiences of the Association with its member schools. From 1936 to 1966 “once accredited, always accredited” prevailed. But the Association came to realize that this assumption may have actually had a negative rather than a positive effect on quality. An institution strove mightily to pass muster with its peers, to be entered on the accredited list of member institutions. Then pressure for this achievement relaxed. No further demonstration was expected; no more reviews planned, unless a school fell on hard times in some dramatic way. The kinds of self-analysis appropriate for initial review were no longer mandated by the Association, and it was easy for a school to relax its former vigilance about such matters.

In 1966, on recommendation of the Commission on Accrediting, the Association adopted a policy of decennial review. Each institution would be expected to repeat the

accreditation process at least once every ten years. The commission just completed that second round of reviews for long-time accredited members during the past biennium and initiated the third round with the first few. In 1972 new Procedures were adopted which broadened the scope of accrediting activity, bringing under additional review (between decennial dates) any new degree program which an accredited member decided to propose. By curious coincidence this new accrediting expectation overlapped exactly with the burgeoning of D. Min. programs, and a large number of theological schools have received these “focused visits” since 1972. They are in no sense full institutional evaluations. Advance documentation is confined to the single new offering, but the entire institution has to prepare itself for this limited dialogue and demonstrate that its total resources are adequate not just for the additional effort but also for continuing without weakening the former programs. Since most institutions seem interested every few years in reassessing their offerings and often elect to augment them, accreditation has become a frequent occurrence rather than a rare experience.

These accrediting occasions are thus apparently inevitable for all ATS members which seek initial or continued inclusion in the official list of accredited schools. How does this relate to the improvement of theological education, the primary purpose for which ATS exists? [p. 296](#)

## **AN OPPORTUNITY FOR SELF-EXAMINATION**

The fact that an accrediting visit will take place is an opportunity in several different ways. It is an opportunity presented to the particular school of theology to re-examine what it is about in the conduct of its work. Useful self-studies require substantial investments of personal and institutional energy. They presume that a school will start from the beginning, exploring its basic goals and objectives, its understandings of ministry for which persons are being prepared, and the adequacy of its programs when measured in the light of these foundational presuppositions. It moves forward to resources, their adequacy in both quantity and deployment. And it leads finally to some serious, tough-minded attention to educational outcomes. How well do the graduates do in the ministries for which they have been prepared? Institutions which invest themselves seriously in engagement with these issues are inevitably the better for having done so. This would be true even if no accrediting visit were to occur.

But there is always the problem of motivation. Since possible loss of accreditation is seldom seriously considered at the time of a decennial visit, and faculties are usually already as busy as they think necessary, accreditation is often seen as an unnecessary and unwarranted external intrusion in the ongoing life of an institution whose credibility is not in question. “Why do we have to do all of this for them?” is an occasionally heard lament. And that is always a difficult question for a Commission on Accrediting or an ATS staff member to answer. It is certainly true that any respectable school of theology has already been examining one or more of these issues as it pursues its daily tasks. And the first step in preparing for an accrediting visit (unfortunately often overlooked) is to assemble all of the ongoing and recently completed studies, reports, and accomplishments and in their light to discover what remains to be done to complete the picture. But the problem of intrinsic motivation needs to be resolved. Unless the personnel of a theological school view the accrediting activity as an opportunity for the improvement of education in their school, there is little likelihood that such improvement can result. Genuine improvement cannot be forced externally; it can only be willed and brought about by internal commitment to making the process an [p. 297](#) occasion for improvement.

This fact places a special burden on the administration of the school. It receives all of the contacts with the accrediting agency. It interprets the meaning of ATS accredited membership to faculty, students, trustees, alumni, and other constituents. Hence the president and dean have a unique role to play in generating or engendering motivation of a positive kind. Without administrative support for the accrediting review process, it can seldom eventuate in an occasion for the improvement of theological education.

The scheduled accrediting visit is also an opportunity for ATS staff, the accrediting visitors, and the commission. And it is entirely possible for an institution to invest itself fully in the accrediting process and still be denied the maximum opportunity for improvement because of the failure of one or more of the external ingredients in the process. Staff must consult wisely in ways that are designed to be of maximum assistance to the particular institution. These legitimately vary from school to school, and staff must be sensitive to that fact and not be bound slavishly to standards or procedures which are not helpful. On behalf of the commission, staff must select visitors who command the respect of the institution and function as wise evaluator/consultants to the school being visited. These persons must exercise their function skillfully, preparing a report which not only speaks to the juridical issues of standards but also consultatively and helpfully to the seminary about the findings of their investigations. And finally the commission must read the report both in the light of the standards and the needs of the institution and take such actions as will serve both the best interests of the Association's concern for "quality control" and the individual school's commitment to improvement.

Institutions anticipating an accrediting review have a unique opportunity to use the occasion constructively. Every educational enterprise at any particular moment has a series of issues which are timely, even urgent for its life. The accrediting process can be the time for addressing these issues within the overall pattern of the seminary's purposes. When the issues have been carefully clarified and appropriately treated in self-studies, the visiting team can be selected to complement these concerns. This brings [p. 298](#) the accreditation process into sharp focus on the items of greatest importance, thus enhancing its intrinsic value.

When all of these things work together, accrediting can be an occasion for the improvement of theological education. But do not fail to note the multiple nature of the formula for success. Each ingredient is crucial, and its import should not be underestimated. The process of accreditation is an opportunity for self-analysis and peer/consultative evaluation and judgment which can significantly enhance the quality of ministerial education on a seminary campus. [p. 299](#)

## **Doing Church History at the Local Level**

*by* PATRICIA J. HARRISON

*Reprinted from Theological Education Today June 1978 with  
permission*

SOME EXCITING things are happenng in History today. Once the subject was equated with wars, treaties, events of great political and economic importance, and VIPs. Today it is

recognized that history can be written about almost anything. Historians want to know more about the life of ordinary people in days gone by. Social and intellectual history is coming into its own. We can read histories of costume, of toys, of music or child-rearing. Historians are interested nowadays in black and brown and yellow people, and in countries outside Europe and North America. Women, so long invisible in history books, are slowly finding their way back in. (High school history texts sometimes cover 1,000 years of history without mention of a single woman, unless perhaps a famous queen!)

Amid these changes, there is a new and unprecedented boom in local history. What happened in a small community 100 or 200 years ago is worth knowing, or it gives insight into everyday life in the past. It is probably a microcosm of life in thousands of other small communities of the time.

For those who teach Church History, these changes in the approach to history are important. Should we concentrate so much on the high-powered ecclesiastical and political studies of Europe, or would it be helpful to our students to know more about everyday Christian living in the past? About church growth and problems in lesser-known parts of the world and especially in our own area?

The study of history, among other things, seeks to provide *perspective*—an informed vantage point from which to assess present events. Historical perspective also demands the understanding of how history is done—that it is not simply a chronicle of cut-and-dried past events, but a *reconstruction*, which at best is only [p. 300](#) approximate. One of the best ways for students to learn this, is to spend at least a term doing local history.

Some areas are extremely rich in local church history; students could devote a considerable part of their course time to its study. Other areas provide few, if any, opportunities for such study, but make sure you investigate before deciding that this is the case. Even young children today do a lot of local history through their own investigations. Good modern schools are awake to the excellent learning potential of such studies. Are we?

## SOURCES OF LOCAL CHURCH HISTORY

If Christianity has been established in your region for some time, there will be many Churches with a history. There will probably be old manses, vicarages, halls or mission houses and stations with a story to tell. There will be old mission or parish magazines, reports, minutes, letters, and so on, housed locally or in denominational or mission headquarters. Early newspapers may have contained church reports, photographs and so on. (Students should learn to “read” old photographs for information.)

Cemeteries are often a rich source of local history too. You can make many intelligent guesses about early life by studying headstones. What, roughly, was the population of the area 100 or 200 years ago? What was the average life expectancy? Did many folk lose children in infancy, and if so, from what causes? Were there epidemics in the area? Who were the early clergy, missionaries, or first converts? Were their lives hard?

Local history studies integrate well with a study of church growth. As we seek to plot the growth of our own denomination over a period of time, our knowledge of the church at that time and of important local events helps us account for sharp rises or falls in church membership, baptisms or church attendance. Often fascinating puzzles are posed and unexpected discoveries are made as students seek to unravel them. Even quite sleepy little towns can yield unexpectedly interesting finds about the past. And from the past we can so often learn for the present.

Among our richest resources for local history are elderly people, who can still remember earlier times. Usually they love to tell an [p. 301](#) interested student about life as

they remember it. Elderly church members can share much information about Christianity as it used to be taught and lived in the area. In mission situations the elderly can often tell about the work of early missionaries, and their personalities. Sometimes they can remember what life was like before the Gospel came. Unless someone interviews these people and records or notes down their comments, their recollections will soon be lost forever. As students interview people, they learn how different points of view emerge, how the historian has to consider who said it, as well as what was said.

Local church history done in Europe will obviously be very different from that done in Latin America, or in the U.S. or Australia, but all can be worthwhile. In some countries students will have access to vast libraries, museums, numerous very old churches, documents, art galleries and so on. In other areas, they will study religion in the days of the frontier pioneers—how did the early padres visit their flock? What was church life like on the frontier?

In areas with younger Churches, students will be interested in life before the Gospel came, and in the first missionaries and their reception. They will learn about the first converts and the first Churches. It is good to study our own denomination, but also to discover what we can about the work of other missions.

Don't be too easily convinced that all that is worth knowing about the church history of your area has already been discovered. A little digging will often reveal surprising things. I recall one missionary in Africa whose research uncovered a great revival which had taken place on his station fifty years before. No one had known a thing about it!

## METHODS IN LOCAL CHURCH HISTORY

Students should first be coached in the methodology of the local historian, and then, with the teacher's help, should select individual, group or class projects for study. They should plan their objectives and methods, and a deadline should be set.

Local church history can be done by students at any educational level. Even those who cannot write very well can record interviews, copy gravestone inscriptions, make sketches or photographs, p.302 and (if equipment is available) photocopy documents, etc. More sophisticated students can delve into old documents and make copious notes from interviews; they will enjoy developing the skills of the detective historian, proving or disproving hypotheses.

Projects in local church history need to have some *use* planned for them upon completion, even though there is considerable satisfaction to be obtained purely in the doing.

The final outcome could be an article for a denominational paper, a booklet to be sold in local Churches, a radio program, a slide-tape set to be shown in surrounding congregations, a recorded talk, addresses to local church meetings or to a historical society, a dramatized presentation (which *could* also be filmed), a special evening pageant, a section of a TEE course, or a series of adult studies or Sunday School lessons for local use. In this way the findings are shared with others.

Some of my students in local church history have produced beautiful books of photographs explaining the history of a local church, and other interesting projects, such as those noted above. Often a local pastor is delighted to find someone sufficiently interested to explore the past, and proves most helpful.

In my own teaching of Church History, I have never felt such projects to be time-wasting luxuries. Rather, students learn by them some of the most fundamental concepts of what history is and how it is done. These lend deeper meaning to wider historical studies from books. In addition, students make important discoveries about the history of



the Gospel in their own area and share this information with local Christians. Such projects lend themselves very well to many TEE situations, and work from one centre can be shared with other centres.

## **BOOKS TO HELP WITH LOCAL CHURCH HISTORY STUDIES AND HISTORIOGRAPHY**

We don't know of any books specifically for those teaching Local *Church* History (if you do, please let us know). But the following books are written for those teaching general local history, and will be sure to furnish some helpful hints. There will be others available in different parts of the world, and local booksellers or museum curators may be able to suggest these. **P. 303**

David Dufty et al. (eds.) *Historians at Work*. Sydney: Hicks Smith & Sons, 1973.

Gilbert, Driscoll and Sutherland. *History Around Us*. Sydney: Hicks Smith & Sons, 1974.

The following short book should also prove useful:

Jane McCracken. *Oral History—Basic Techniques*. Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature Publications, 1974.

Advanced students doing Church History should read at least one good general text on Historiography during the course of their studies, and should have some opportunity to do research themselves, either in local church history or in the form of a library and document study. Two recommended books, the first dealing more with the theoretical and philosophical backgrounds to Historiography and the second with methods of research, are:

Gordon H. Clark. *Historiography Secular and Religious*. Nutley, NJ: The Craig Press, 1971.

Jacques Barzun & Henry F. Graff. *The Modern Researcher* (revised ed.) NY: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc. 1970. (a highly recommended classic in its field).

Also useful to advanced students and their teachers is:

Jean Key Gates. *Guide to the Use of Books and Libraries*. McGraw-Hill, 1974.

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## **Book Reviews**

### **FAITH AND CHURCH**

#### **Jesus Christ is Lord**

by the REV. DR. PETER TOON.

(Marshall Paperbacks. Pp. 154, £2.25).

Abstract of a review by GILBERT T. EVANS in *Foundations*, No. 1, November 1978.

The Introduction to Dr. Toon's book describes the complex and varied pressures and temptations in Western society which lead to an erosion of traditional sources and views of authority.

While aiming to offer a popular presentation of the theme, the author attempts to identify and analyse the strata of teaching found among the different writers of the Bible, related to Christ's Lordship.

The two main parts of Jesus' life are traced in "The exalted Jesus": His earthly human life from His humble birth to His crucifixion and His exalted humanity from His ascension on into the endless ages.

The concepts of Jesus as Messiah/King and Lord are studied with Old Testament predictions and the possibility of a relationship between Christ and the Suffering Servant is explored. Succeeding chapters deal with the Ascension and Jesus' Lordship of the nations, the Church, the Universe and all religions. The section on the Creeds is clear and helpful. "Jesus, my Lord", takes up the danger arising from isolationism and examines the centrality of love in the Christian faith.

As the author emphasises, the ontological Christ is a fact which the mind and eye of faith embrace, until the eschatological return of Christ in power and glory.

### **Unity and Diversity in the New Testament**

by JAMES D. C. DUNN.

(SCM Press 1977, Pp. 470, £12.50, ISBN 0 334 02404 8).

Abstract of a review by ROBIN NIXON in *The Churchman*, (Vol. 92, No. 4978.) p. 305

Dr. Dunn is dealing with what is one of the major problems of NT study today, The introductory chapter raises the very fundamental question 'Is "Orthodoxy" a Meaningful Concept?'

Dunn covers an enormous field: kerygma (ta), confessional formulae, tradition, the OT, ministry, worship, sacraments, spirit and experience, Christology, Jewish Hellenistic and apocalyptic Christianity, early catholicism and the authority of the NT. The book is well written and clearly laid out and must become a standard textbook in this field. There are obviously numerous places where the conclusions depend upon argumentation which is not given or which might be disputed, but Dunn is always worth reading. The basic unifying element he finds to be "the unity between the historical Jesus and the exalted Christ"; but because we can no longer doubt that there are many different expressions of Christianity within the NT, we must conclude that there was no single normative form of Christianity in the first century, though the NT marked out the limits of acceptable diversity. He makes a *cri de coeur* for mutual acceptance between 'conservatives' and 'liberals', though both may well be dissatisfied by his conclusions. The publisher's blurb lays most of the emphasis on diversity but the basic unity of the NT is in fact its most remarkable feature. As a starting point for wrestling with these questions there are few better books than this.

### **The Church**

by G C. BERKOUWER.

(Wm. B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids and Inter-Varsity Press, Leicester, 1976. Pp. 438, \$9.95, £4.95.)

Abstract of a review by RICHARD BAUCKMAN in *The Evangelical Quarterly*, (Vol. L, No. 3, July-September 1978.)

Berkouwer's reflection on the church centres on the affirmations of the Creeds that we believe in the church which is "one, holy, catholic and apostolic", and the book is divided into four sections devoted to these attributes of the church.

Berkouwer insists that the church of which the Creeds speak is the empirical church, the concrete historical reality of the church. The attributes do not refer to an “ideal” church, to some unseen “essence” of the church, to an “invisible” church, or even to the church in its future eschatological state, but to the church which p. 306 is now visible to the world. It is this that raises many of the problems of ecclesiology. How can these attributes be applied to the church which is so evidently divided, unholy and limited? How can the church claim these attributes except by culpable lack of humility and self-knowledge? Berkouwer’s treatment of this problem—and the major unifying theme of the work—is a plea for critical ecclesiology. In the face of the church’s contradiction of her attributes, Berkouwer is concerned that theology must not resort to interpretations which suppress the shocking character of such contradictions and serve to justify them. If Berkouwer is to be criticized it must be for his omissions. It is a pity that the theme of testing has not been more consistently joined to the (equally biblical) eschatological perspective on ecclesiology. It is also disappointing that Berkouwer has so very little to say of the local church and the dynamics of congregational life, where many would see the heart of ecclesiology, and with this goes an astonishing neglect of the charismatic dimension of the church.

### **The Conciliar-Evangelical Debate: The Crucial Documents 1964–1976**

ed. DONALD MCGAVRAN.

(William Carey Library, South Pasadena, California, 1977. Pp. 396, \$8.95, paperback.)

Abstract of a review by PAUL G. SCHROTENBOER in *The Westminster Theological Journal*, Spring 1979, No. 2.

The 40 documents on the debate between evangelicals and ecumenicals on church mission include 24 from the evangelical camp and 16 from the ecumenical side. The topics include the meaning of evangelism, service, and fellowship, the legitimacy of conversion as a goal of missions, church growth as mission strategy, and presence and proclamation as forms of mission.

The writers are generally articulate, well-known representatives of either the classical mission or the new mission. Oddly and regrettably the Lausanne Declaration, the Bangkok Report, and the Nairobi document, *Confessing Christ Today*, are missing from the list of documents. Nevertheless the book offers the readers the main lines of the ongoing debate. In part, the debate is a matter of semantics, namely, whether mission is to bring man into a redemptive relation with Jesus p. 307 Christ, or whether it takes in all the duties which Christians should do, for which they are sent.

In part, too, it is a matter of priorities, namely, whether evangelism or social service should rate on top. It is, however, such a choice of priorities that discloses loyalties which are not always mutually complementary. It is to the credit of McGavran that he has brought much of this under the scrutiny of the public and that he strongly defends a biblical view.

Yet, for all his close association with mission theology and mission strategy in this ecumenical age, he fails to take due account of the complexity of the ecumenical movement.

It is one thing to keep one’s priorities and loyalties straight. It is another thing to engage in the needed ongoing self-reformation that obedience in mission requires. The critical study of the Crucial Documents of the Great Debate in Mission should help us in both.

## **THEOLOGY AND CULTURE**

## **Christian Counter-Culture: The Message of the Sermon on the Mount**

by JOHN R. W. STOTT

(Inter Varsity Press, Leicester, 1977. Pp. 222. Paper, £2.35.)

Abstract of a review by F. F. BRUCE in *The Evangelical Quarterly*, (Vol. L, No. 3, July–September, 1978.)

When the Sermon on the Mount was first preached, no one could doubt that a counter-culture was being proclaimed, so thoroughly did the Preacher turn the accepted standards and values of the day upside down, congratulating those who would normally be pitied or despised and expressing sorrow for those who would normally be reckoned fortunate. John Stott has set himself to present the message of the Sermon to present-day readers in such a way that they may share something of the astonishment of its first hearers. Dr. Stott knows that the meaning of the Sermon can best be grasped by viewing it in its original context, but he knows too that, when this is done, it must be applied to our contemporary context, if we are to appreciate its relevance to our own lives. [p. 308](#)

## **The Worldly Evangelicals**

by RICHARD QUEBEDEAUX.

(Harper & Row, New York and San Francisco, 1978. Pp. XII, 189. \$6.95.)

Abstract of a review by WALDRON SCOTT in *Occasional Bulletin*, October, 1978.

The author of *The Young Evangelicals* and *The New Charismatics* has given us another lucid, stimulating, yet annoyingly ethnocentric survey of contemporary North American evangelicalism.

Quebedeaux's two-chapter introduction suggests the emergence of evangelicals as the likely new mainstream of American Protestantism and analyzes the effect of modern culture on the evangelical subculture.

In subsequent chapters the author describes the peculiar theological, ecclesiastical, evangelistic, and cultural "mix" of the evangelical right center establishment. He then juxtaposes this with a similar view of the younger evangelical left and radical left. He concludes with a discussion of a provocative question: Today's evangelicals, tomorrow's liberals?

There are brief references to Lausanne and the developmental concerns of organizations such as World Vision, and a one-page summary of liberation theology. Apart from these, Quebedeaux does not venture to describe evangelical missionary outreach or the relations of North American evangelicals with their Third World counterparts.

To those who would gain insight into the "in-house" dynamics of North American evangelicals, this book is recommended. Those who wish a better understanding of evangelicalism in the larger global context will have to look elsewhere.

## **Dynamic Religious Movements**

ed. DAVID J. HESSELGRAVE.

(Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1978. Pp. 326, \$9.95.)

Abstract of a review by DAVID J. BOSCH in *Missionalia*, (Vol. 6, No. 3, November 1978.)

This volume contains twelve case studies of rapidly growing religious movements around the world. Two of these are to be found in Africa. Marie-Louise Martin writes a helpful essay on Kimbanguism and South African born Phillip Steyne writes on the African Zionist movement. [p. 309](#)

One religious movement from Europe is investigated, viz. the New Apostolic Church. Three Far East Groups are included: the Philippine Iglesia ni Cristo, Moon Sun Myung's Unification Church, and Japan's Soka Gakkai. The Ahmadiya movement in the Middle East is discussed as an effort at Islamic renewal. North American based Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormonism are looked at. Two South American movements are included in the volume, namely the "Jesus Only" United Pentecostal Church and the Umbanda religion of Brazil. The twelfth Case study investigates Caodaism as a "Vietnamese socio-religious movement".

The twelve movements have only two things in common: they are, broadly speaking, religious movements and they all register extraordinary growth. The editor and contributors believe that the Christian mission has a lot to learn from these movements whether what they teach is acceptable or not. In a final chapter Hesselgrave therefore addresses himself to the question: "What causes religious movements to grow?" His comments here are very perceptive and should be carefully noted by the Church-in-mission. We therefore want to recommend this book wholeheartedly.

## **MISSION AND EVANGELISM**

### **Karl Barth's Theology of Mission**

by WALDRON SCOTT.

(World Evangelical Fellowship Theological Commission Monograph No. 1, Inter Varsity Press, Downers Grove, Paternoster Press, England, 1978. Pp. 47. \$1.95, £1.10.)

Reviewed by CHRISTOPHER SUGDEN.

This is a booklet one wishes had been written back to front. The final chapter makes the issues clear, but then forces us to spend time reading the book again to see how and why Scott selects what he does from Barth's writing. And what he selects is most relevant. A practical challenge to many evangelical attitudes to missions comes from simply putting Christ at the centre of theology, as Barth does. Scott does not discuss the extent to which Barth leans to Christomonism. He finds in the Christocentrism of Barth a basis for mission in the fact that Jesus Christ, the true [p. 310](#) witness, the supreme missionary, is already at work in the world, and we must be there because we are united with him in his ministry. If evangelicals took their motivation more from this fact, and less from the lostness of the heathen or the simple imperative of the Great Commission, there would be less anthropologically centred talk of winning the world, and more emphasis on faithfulness and suffering, *kerygma* and prayer. Scott questions the Church Growth school for neglecting the aspect of the quality of churches, and many evangelical missions for neglecting to teach as a first duty to their new churches the evangelism of those beyond their borders. If Christ the living word were more at the centre, would there be more reliance on the power of the written word, and less on the efficacy of modern methods? If we took Christ's solidarity with the world seriously, would we be less likely to isolate ourselves from sinners and approach them with a spiritually superior attitude?

Para-church organisations, missions to Jews and attitudes to other religions also come in for evaluation and discussion. Here is a book which in fact stirs up a hornet's nest of important issues of Christian obedience.

### **The Biblical Doctrine of Regeneration**

by HELMUT BURKHADT.

(World Evangelical Fellowship Theological Commission Booklet No. 2, Inter Varsity Press, Downers Grove, Paternoster Press, England, 1978. \$1.95, £1.10.)



Reviewed by CHRISTOPHER SUGDEN.

This booklet is a translation by O. R. Johnston of a monograph originally published in 1974. Its examination of the biblical material on regeneration and the new birth therefore does not extend to the questions discussed by John Stott in *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, on the relation between regeneration and conversion. Burkhardt emphasises the once-for-all event of regeneration, occurring at one point in time, but it does seem that the discussion has moved on with the appearance of Stott's book to ask whether the moment of conversion or the state of convertedness is more important.

This booklet is defensive in its stance, eager to rebut the criticism that a claim that one is now regenerate by an act of God leads p.311 necessarily to pharisaism and arrogance. It does not seek to relate the whole doctrine of regeneration to the purpose of God in bringing a new creation and what that means in terms of the reality of the new society witnessing to and enjoying the first fruits of a transformation of the whole personal, social and material reality. Burkhardt locates the reality of regeneration primarily to its fruits in what happens inside people and between them and God. His application of his teaching is in terms of the personal care that a preacher gives to his congregation. This is sad because the book had begun laying out the relevance of the theme of a new start, a new beginning, a new order, which is inherent in the doctrine to the search of many societies and ideologies for the renewal of the human race. Only when we have rooted our doctrine of regeneration in the reality of everyday, and spelt out the fruits of repentance and the fruits of regeneration can we avoid the separation of religion from the everyday concerns of life.

**Christian Mission to Muslims, the Record, Anglican and Reformed Approaches in India and the Near East, 1800–1938**

by LYLE L. VANDER WERFF.

(William Carey Library, South Pasadena, California, 1977. Pp. 366, paper, \$8.95.)

Abstract of a review by ROGER E. HEDLUND in *The Bulletin of Christian Institutes of Islamic Studies*, (Vol. II, No. 1–2, Jan–June, 1979.)

Here is an important but difficult book, important because of its subject, difficult due to the vast field covered.

Contending that we must learn from history, the author provides a systematic introduction to the work of many writers. The record brings to light the contributions of Scottish and American Presbyterians, the (Congregational) American Board and the (Anglican) Church Missionary Society. We learn of the origins of the Arabian Mission and the creative approaches of Gairdner and Zwemer in Cairo. The book surveys methods used, but especially notes the relationships with the already-existing Eastern churches. It is of interest that most of the pioneers conceived of their mission to a large extent in terms of revitalizing and energizing the ancient Eastern churches so that the latter might take up their missionary responsibility toward Islam. p. 312

The failure to evaluate is perhaps the major weakness of the book. Also some of the material, while valuable and interesting as background, does not seem essential to the present study and could have been deleted.

An exhaustive bibliography and several interesting appendices provide a valuable supplement to an important work. Over fifty pages of notes are a goldmine of information. An index, however, should have been added: this book needs one as a tool for getting at much valuable material.

**Theology and Mission**

ed. DAVID J. HESSELGRAVE.  
(Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1978. Pp. 338, \$7.95.)

Abstract of a review by DAVID J. BOSCH in *Missionalia*, (Vol. 6, No. 3, November 1978.)

This paperback contains the papers read at a consultation organised by the Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois, which addressed itself to six “crucial issues”: 1. the charismatic renewal movement; 2. contextualisation; 3. Roman Catholicism; 4. Church Growth theology; 5. dialogue with non-Christian religions; and 6. mission strategy and changing political situations. It is not quite clear why the first and third “issues” are included in a book on mission.

The book provides a good cross section of missiological thinking in a segment of contemporary evangelicalism, but it should not be regarded as representative of the whole range of present-day evangelicalism.

In the section on contextualisation, the contributors come the closest to breaking new ground. The Church Growth movement is mildly criticised but in essence subscribed to. The main point of criticism here seems to be that practice preceded theological reflection in the Church Growth School.

The Trinity Consultation is to be congratulated on its including a section on dialogue with non-Christian religions. Often this subject is simply omitted from evangelical curricula as though the issue has long ago been settled and needs no investigation. Here too, however, the present reviewer would have welcomed a more penetrating discussion.

“Radical evangelicals” (and ecumenicals, of course) will be least [p. 313](#) satisfied with the sixth section on mission strategy and politics. The Trinity Consultation can hardly be called a missiological milestone, but it has at least provided a forum for an exchange of ideas.

## ETHICS AND SOCIETY

### **Life in our Hands: A Study in Human Values**

by C. G. SCORER. (IVP 1978. Pp. 160, £1.95.)

Abstract of a review by REX GARDNER in *Churchman*, No. 1, 1979.

Scorer uses two basic key ideas: relationships and ‘the love of life’. This latter idea he introduces to hold together the tensions of personal freedom and the good of the community. He moves through love to respect, to reverence, to awe—‘God has given a special task to one particular life.’

He starts with marriage and displays it in all its high splendour. ‘Agreement to share life together is the essence of marriage’; its three aspects—companionship, coitus, pledged faithfulness—stand together. He has no time for serial polygamy: ‘We are guilty of attacking the very soul of childhood by encouraging easy divorce.’ Scorer is not blind to the tensions in marriage but, like Bonhoeffer, claims that it is marriage that supports love, not the other way round, quoting Thielicke to good effect.

Then follow sections on conception and contraception; the initiation of life; population control, human life as an ecological threat; induced abortion, the destruction of unborn life. Anyone wishing a sensible guide to these problems will find it here. The medical dilemma of whether to prescribe the pill for the unmarried teenager or wait for her to return requesting an abortion, is not glossed over.

Scorer’s chapter on euthanasia is outstanding. Despite its unambiguous stance—man is separated from God and in rebellion against him—the evangelistic element is low key.

This work is therefore recommended for personal reading and lending, but also for use among students.

### **Justice and Development in the Indian Context**

ed. THOMAS PAUL. (Pontifical Institute Publications, Alwaye, 1976. Pp. VIII–115. Rs. 8.00.)  
**p. 314**

Abstract of a review by DR. C. R. PAULUS in *Indian Theological Studies*, (Vol. XV, No. 4., December 1978.)

The book under review constitutes the second series of Father Zacharias Lectures. Of the 14 papers, one was contributed by a Marxian Philosopher, another by a Hindu Scholar and the rest by Christian Theologians.

The main thrust of most of the papers is development of the whole man, vindication of God's concern for humanity, commitment for a change of the existing social structures and participation in the struggle against the forces that dehumanize man. It is argued that the concept of theology should widen its perspective to encompass the different problems of development, justice and peace. The communist participant posed the question: Development and production—violent or non-violent? He advocates a violent revolution to bring about changes.

The Hindu approach to development underlines the importance of spirituality as the base for a good society and a change in the economic order.

The Christian viewpoint provides a new ethos to the development process. The role of the Church is to inculcate the teachings of the Gospel, to give witness in its life and in the life of the individual Christian and to promote love, justice and active involvement in liberation struggles.

## **PASTORAL MINISTRY**

### **The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah**

by LESLIE C. ALLEN.

(First published by Eerdmans, USA, 1976), Hodder and Stoughton 1978, Pp. 427, £5.95.

Abstract of a review by JOYCE BALDWIN in *Churchman*, No. 1, 1979.

In terms of the thorough research which the author has put into it this commentary would be hard to beat. The full introductory sections are not stereotyped, but deal with subjects appropriate to each work; in every case, however, there is particular attention to literary structure which in each of these books witnesses to remarkable **p. 315** care in composition. The theology of each author is also given a separate section.

In this translation of the text Allen has incorporated a number of insights from recent articles but without wholesale adoption of emendations. The commentary on the text is often memorable. After the manner of the prophets he slips in allusions which evoke whole scenes: 'God's Nuremberg trial' (p. 110), 'the Hiroshima blast of judgement', (p. 121). A concern with application is one of the most noteworthy features of the commentary. As an example I would take Allen's exposition of [Micah 3:5–8](#), where the prophet turns to 'colleagues of his who betrayed their calling', 'despicable renegades grovelling in the dirt for dishonest pennies!' All in all this is a commentary both for the scholar and for the preacher. To meet the needs of both is an unusual achievement.

### **The Christian Warfare: An Exposition of Ephesians [6:10–13](#)**

by D. MARTYN LLOYD-JONES.  
(The Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 1979. Pp. 373, £3.00).

Abstract of a review by F. F. BRUCE in *The Evangelical Quarterly*. (Vol. L, No. I. January–March 1978).

It is 322 years since William Gurnall gave us his exposition of the passage about the panoply of God in [Eph. 6:10–17](#) under the title, *The Christian in Complete Armour*. Dr. Lloyd-Jones, an abler expositor than Gurnall, but not nearly so prolix, has now given to a wider public studies in the first part of this passage which were first delivered orally in Westminster Chapel, London; they will be followed by a companion volume on *The Christian Armour*. What Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones has to say about assurance, true and false, in this volume is of the greatest helpfulness. And as for “the wiles of the devil”, he suggests that “belief in the personal devil and demon activities is the touchstone by which one can most easily test any profession of Christian faith today”.

### **The Church under Siege**

by M. A. SMITH  
(Inter Varsity Press, 1976, Pp. 227, £2.25.)

Abstract of a review by GEORGE CAREY in *Churchman*, No. 4, 1978.

Michael Smith is well known for his excellent book *From Christ to p. 316 Constantine*. This volume continues the story of the Christian church from Constantine to Charlemagne and does so in an interesting and comprehensive fashion. The author has made a conscious effort to make this subject of church history meaningful to the modern Christian: ‘Life in the Fourth Century’; ‘The Fading of the Old Order’; ‘Drop-outs and Communes’; etc. In short we have here a well-written and attractively-produced book, worthy of a wide circulation.

I find myself parting company from Michael Smith’s understanding of the value of church history. In the Introduction he sees the ultimate aim as making us ‘better fitted to serve Christ in our generation’. This is true, but only partly true. The period under question contains the four great councils of the church which still form the basis for Trinitarian and Christological dogma. It also produced some of the greatest theologians in Christian history. Tradition is not a source of revelation, but is an important witness to Christian truth, which is anchored very deeply in Patristic theology. The first five centuries are of crucial importance for the faith.

Second, while Michael Smith makes a real effort to introduce his readers to life at the time, I wish he had spent a whole chapter on Christian worship instead of the few pages here and there which rather haphazardly deal with it. In spite of these quibbles I commend Michael Smith’s book.

### **The Russians and their Church**

by NICOLAS ZERNOV  
(SPCK 1978, Pp. 192, £2.50.)

Abstract of a review by MICHAEL BOURDEAUX in *Churchman*, No. 4, 1978.

This revised and updated third edition of a book first published over thirty years ago is very welcome. It illustrates the continuing vigour of a great man, Dr. Nicolas Zernov, to whom virtually everyone in this country interested in the Russian Orthodox Church has owed a debt of gratitude for nearly half a century.

Dr. Zernov wrote this work as a stopgap, in view of the growing interest in the subject. It was intended as a general introduction for the non-specialist—and so it still is, even more valuable now that it has been updated to cover the main landmarks since the [p. 317](#) Revolution. It would have been so easy to let these final chapters overweight the book, but its proportions are beautifully preserved. If it is possible to cover 990 years of history in under 200 pages, this book does it.

The revised bibliography gives ample evidence of a vigorous growth of interest in the Russian Church, both the inspiring parts of the past and its persecuted present, so one still hopes this book will inspire someone to write the *magnum opus*.

## **THEOLOGICAL AND CHURCH EDUCATION**

### **Theological Perspectives on Church Growth**

ed. HARVIE M. CONN.

(Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1976. Pp. III, 154. \$4.95. Paperback.)

Abstract of a review by HORACE L. FENTON, JR. in *Occasional Bulletin*, Vol. 1, No. 3. July 1977.

Many a promising religious movement has lost its initial impetus because it lacked responsible, constructive criticism, or because of a failure to respond to such criticism. This book gives hope that the Church Growth phenomenon need not suffer such a fate.

Dr. Arthur Glasser, dean of the Fuller School of World Mission, presents a stimulating and spirited introduction to the Church Growth perspectives of Dr. McGavran. Committed to a Reformed theological position, Glasser does not hesitate to point out the limited growth that has characterized some Reformed groups who have been critical of McGavran's teaching.

Predictably, Reformed theologians who write some of these chapters, while expressing deep appreciation for the helpful contributions of the Church Growth movement, do not hesitate to take this emphasis to task for what they consider to be its theological shortcomings.

It is not essential to embrace either position totally, but certainly each side can profit greatly by listening carefully to the other.

Significant contributions to evangelical thought are made by the other writers, notably James I. Packer and Harvie Conn.

### **How can I get them to Listen?**

by JAMES ENGEL.

(Zondervan Publishing House, 1414 Lake Drive SE, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506, USA, 1977. \$4.95. ISBN 0-310-241715.) [p. 318](#)

Abstract of a review by PETER HERRMANN in *WACC Journal*, No. 4, 1978.

Anyone expecting an immediate answer to the question posed by the title of Dr. Engel's book will be disappointed by its contents. It is a manual of communications research, not techniques, and its real use comes several stages earlier in the communication process.

Dr. Engel sets out to show how research can help to achieve two-way communication and to equip the reader with sufficient technical knowledge to set up his own basic research projects.

Dr. Engel's book examines the main research options open and gives practical advice on sampling, questionnaire design, data analysis and interpretation, and report writing. Obviously there are omissions and inclusions one would like to debate with the author.



The vital question of cost appears to be ignored, as is the general organisation of any research (for instance the in-house versus agency argument).

Much heed should be taken of the author's final advice to study further, to gain experience under supervision, and most important of all, to call upon the qualified researchers of this world for assistance. But as a start this book goes a long way to putting the potential researcher on the right lines and is recommended reading to all those in Christian communication who presently only enjoy a one-way dialogue with their audience. [p. 319](#)

## **Journal Information**

### *Publications Referred to in This Issue*

#### **1. Action: World Association for Christian Communication Newsletter**

Published 10 times a year by the World Association for Christian Communication. Address: Action, 122 King's Road, London SW5, England. Rates: US \$5 a year, payable in any negotiable currency (includes airmail postage outside Europe).

#### **2. Bulletin of Christian Institute of Islamic Studies**

A quarterly published 4 times a year Address: Henry Martyn Institute of Islamic Studies, PO Box 153, Chirag Ali Lane, Station Road, Hyderabad-500 001, A.P., India. Rates: One year Rs. 7, \$3, £ .75.

#### **3. Churchman**

A quarterly Journal of Anglican Theology published by Church Society, 4 Wine Office Court, Fleet Street, London EC4A 3DA. Annual subscription £4.50 in UK, £5.50 overseas (prices include postage).

#### **4. Crux**

A quarterly journal of Christian Thought and Opinion published by the Faculty and Alumni of Regent College, Vancouver, BC, Canada. Address: Regent College, 2130 Westbrook Mall, Vancouver, BC, Canada, V6T 1W6 Rates: \$8 per year, \$18 for three years.

#### **5. Foundations**

A theological journal published in November and May by the British Evangelical Council. Address: Mr. Aubrey J. Roberts, 58 Woodstock Road North, St. Albans, Herts, England UK AL1 4QF Rates: Per issue .75p post free. [p. 320](#)

#### **6. Indian Theological Studies**

Address: St. Peter's Seminary, Malleswaram West P.O., Bangalore, 560055, India Rates: bulk Rs. 9.00, Rest of Asia and Africa \$3.50, Rest of world \$5.00.

#### **7. Journal of Evangelical Theological Society**

Published quarterly. Address: Mr. S. J. Kistemaker, Reformed Theological Seminary, 5422 Clinton Boulevard, Jackson, MS 39209 Rate: \$12 per year, \$3.00 per copy.

#### **8. Journal of Theology for Southern Africa**

A contribution to theological thought from within southern Africa, and a means to keep southern Africa informed of theological developments elsewhere. Published quarterly by

the South African Council of Churches. Address: Editor, Journal of Theology for Southern Africa, c/o Department of Religious Studies, University of Cape Town, Rondebosch 7700, Cape.

### **9. Missionalia**

Published three times a year by the South African Missiological Society. Address: Editor, Missionalia, 31, Fourteenth Street, Menlo Park, 0081 Pretoria. Rates: Southern Africa (including Zambia and Malawi) Rs. 5.00. Single copies Rs. 2.25. Elsewhere Rs. 6.00.

### **10. Occasional Bulletin of Missionary Research**

Published quarterly in January, April, July and October by Overseas Ministries Study Center, Ventnor, NJ, USA. Address: Circulation Department, PO Box 443, Fort Lee, NJ 07024. Rates: \$6 annually, \$12 for two years, \$18 for three years, postpaid worldwide. Individual copies are \$3.

### **11. The Other Side**

Address: Box 12236, Philadelphia PA 19144 Rates: \$11.50 for a one-year subscription (out of USA add \$2 and pay in US funds).

### **12. Theological Fraternity Bulletin**

Published by the Latin American Theological Fraternity, **p. 321** Casilla 25, Sucursal 24, Buenos Aires, C.F., Argentina.

### **13. Themelios**

Published three times a year by British Theological Students Fellowship and the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students. Address: Britain TSF, 38 De Montfort Street, Leicester LE17GP North American order: TSF, 233 Langdon, Madison, WI 53703. Others: 1 FES, 10 College Road Harrow, HA1 1BE, Middlesex, England. Rates: 1 year \$1.30, \$3 US, Sff. 7.50, DM. 7.00, f9.

### **14. TRACI-ETS Journal**

Published three times a year. Please address enquiries to: TRACI-ETS Journal, E-537 Greater Kailash II, New Delhi, 110 048, India.

### **15. Westminster Theological Journal**

Published by Westminster Theological Seminary twice annually. Address: Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia PA 19118. Rates: \$10 per year US, Canada, Mexico; Others, \$10.50 payable in \$. University and Seminary students rate: \$5. Reprints available: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 11 Fifth Avenue, NY, NY10003. Microfilm: University Microfilms, Inc. 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI-48106, U.S.A.