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living.*

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Editorial

Jesus said, “For where your treasure is there will your heart be also”. We might add, “and there will your theology be also”. All too often our theology is shaped by our economic preferences. As evangelicals we may sincerely seek to put our ambitions and thinking under the authority of Scripture and the Lordship of Christ, and begin our task of doing theology by beginning with the interpretation of the text rather than the context. But alas, the direction of our treasure colours the glasses through which we read our theology. Our national history, family heritage, education, economic status and the mass media all subtly influence our values and goals. Our experience of God doesn’t take place in a vacuum. Several of the articles in this issue show how secular materialism and relative religious and ethical values which now pervade every culture mould our theology. They either foster revolution or maintain the status quo in society. In each case, the centrality of evangelism is blurred. The reaffirmation of the trustworthiness of Scripture is but the first step to reformation.

We are also aware that we cannot separate the message of the Gospel from the life and work of the messenger. Our lifestyle amplifies or silences the words we speak. The message of the Cross began at Bethlehem. Only those who seek first the Kingdom of God will be able to share Christ’s perspective in all these other things and not lose the focus on the eternal destiny of mankind. [p. 8](#)

The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy

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The “Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy” was produced at a three day summit conference held in Chicago October 26–28 1978. The conference was sponsored by the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy and chaired by Dr James M. Boice, minister of Tenth Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, USA. The 284 evangelical scholars and pastors who participated in the conference offered this statement with the prayer that it might be used to the glory of God “towards a new reformation of the Church in its faith, life and mission”. They invite response to the Statement from those who see any reason to amend its affirmations in the light of Scripture itself.

*Recognising the crucial importance of the authority and interpretation of Scripture in the present era of theological and moral relativism and culturally contained hermeneutical practices the **Evangelical Review of Theology** would welcome correspondence, articles or*

reprints that will lead evangelicals to a fuller understanding of the doctrine of Scripture, a dogma which we recognise as fundamental to true Christian unity.

Issues raised by the Statement which need further explanation include the nature of propositional revelation, the legitimacy of historical criticism, the theological significance of literary sources, variants in the Gospels and free citations and the significance of cultural conditioning for hermeneutics. Further light is also needed on the functioning of divine causation on the words of Scripture and the precise use of the words, "inerrancy" and "infallibility".

If reaffirmation of Biblical inerrancy is to be an important factor in the reformation of the Church, must it not also be matched by a reaffirmation of the authority of Christ and the Scriptures in matters of personal and social ethics and in ecclesiastical discipline?

(Editor)

PREFACE

The authority of Scripture is a key issue for the Christian Church in this and every age. Those who profess faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior are called to show the reality of their discipleship by humbly and faithfully obeying God's written Word. To stray from Scripture in faith or conduct is disloyalty to our Master. Recognition of the total truth and trustworthiness of Holy Scripture is essential to a full grasp and adequate confession of its authority.

The following Statement affirms this inerrancy of Scripture [p. 9](#) afresh, making clear our understanding of it and warning against its denial. We are persuaded that to deny it is to set aside the witness of Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit and to refuse that submission to the claims of God's Word which marks true Christian faith. We see it as our timely duty to make this affirmation in the face of current lapses from the truth of inerrancy among our fellow Christians and misunderstanding of this doctrine in the world at large.

This statement consists of three parts: a Summary Statement, Articles of Affirmation and Denial, and an accompanying Exposition. It has been prepared in the course of a three-day consultation in Chicago. Those who have signed the Summary Statement and the Articles wish to affirm their own conviction as to the inerrancy of Scripture and to encourage and challenge one another and all Christians to growing appreciation and understanding of this doctrine. We acknowledge the limitations of a document prepared in a brief, intensive conference and do not propose that this Statement be given creedal weight. Yet we rejoice in the deepening of our own convictions through our discussions together, and we pray that the Statement we have signed may be used to the glory of our God toward a new reformation of the Church in its faith, life and mission.

We offer this Statement in a spirit, not of contention, but of humility and love, which we purpose by God's grace to maintain in any future dialogue arising out of what we have said. We gladly acknowledge that many who deny the inerrancy of Scripture do not display the consequences of this denial in the rest of their belief and behavior, and we are conscious that we who confess this doctrine often deny it in life by failing to bring our thoughts and deeds, our traditions and habits, into true subjection to the divine Word.

We invite response to this Statement from any who see reason to amend its affirmation about Scripture by the light of Scripture itself, under whose infallible authority we stand as we speak. We claim no personal infallibility for the witness we bear, and for any help which enables us to strengthen this testimony to God's Word we shall be grateful.

A SHORT STATEMENT

1. God, who is Himself Truth and speaks truth only, has inspired Holy Scripture in order thereby to reveal Himself to lost mankind **p. 10** through Jesus Christ as Creator and Lord, Redeemer and Judge. Holy Scripture is God's witness to Himself.
2. Holy Scripture, being God's own Word, written by men prepared and superintended by His Spirit, is of infallible divine authority in all matters upon which it touches: it is to be believed, as God's instruction, in all that it affirms; obeyed, as God's command, in all that it requires; embraced, as God's pledge, in all that it promises.
3. The Holy Spirit, Scripture's divine Author, both authenticates it to us by His inward witness and opens our minds to understand its meaning.
4. Being wholly and verbally God-given, Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching, no less in what it states about God's acts in creation and all events of world history, and about its own literary origins under God, than in its witness to God's saving grace in individual lives.
5. The authority of Scripture is inescapably impaired if this total divine inerrancy is in any way limited or disregarded, or made relative to a view of truth contrary to the Bible's own; and such lapses bring serious loss to both the individual and the Church.

ARTICLES OF AFFIRMATION AND DENIAL

Article 1

We affirm that the Holy Scriptures are to be received as the authoritative Word of God.

We deny that the Scriptures receive their authority from the Church, tradition, or any other human source.

Article 2

We affirm that the Scriptures are the supreme written norm by which God binds the conscience, and that the authority of the Church is subordinate to that of Scripture.

We deny that Church creeds, councils, or declarations have authority greater than or equal to the authority of the Bible.

Article 3

We affirm that the written Word in its entirety is revelation given by God.

We deny that the Bible is merely a witness to revelation, or only **p. 11** becomes revelation in encounter, or depends on the responses of men for its validity.

Article 4

We affirm that God who made mankind in His image has used language as a means of revelation.

We deny that human language is so limited by our creatureliness that it is rendered inadequate as a vehicle for divine revelation. We further deny that the corruption of human culture and language through sin has thwarted God's work of inspiration.

Article 5

We affirm that God's revelation in the Holy Scriptures was progressive.

We deny that later revelation, which may fulfill earlier revelation, ever corrects or contradicts it. We further deny that any normative revelation has been given since the completion of the New Testament writings.

Article 6

We affirm that the whole of Scripture and all its parts, down to the very words of the original, were given by divine inspiration.

We deny that the inspiration of Scripture can rightly be affirmed of the whole without the parts, or of some parts but not the whole.

Article 7

We affirm that inspiration was the work in which God by His Spirit, through human writers, gave us His Word. The origin of Scripture is divine. The mode of divine inspiration remains largely a mystery to us.

We deny that inspiration can be reduced to human insight, or to heightened states of consciousness of any kind.

Article 8

We affirm that God in His work of inspiration utilized the distinctive personalities and literary styles of the writers whom He had chosen and prepared.

We deny that God, in causing these writers to use the very words that He chose, overrode their personalities. [p. 12](#)

Article 9

We affirm that inspiration, though not conferring omniscience, guaranteed true and trustworthy utterance on all matters of which the Biblical authors were moved to speak and write.

We deny that the finitude or fallenness of these writers, by necessity or otherwise, introduced distortion or falsehood into God's Word.

Article 10

We affirm that inspiration, strictly speaking, applies only to the autographic text of Scripture, which in the providence of God can be ascertained from available manuscripts with great accuracy. We further affirm that copies and translations of Scripture are the Word of God to the extent that they faithfully represent the original.

We deny that any essential element of the Christian faith is affected by the absence of the autographs. We further deny that this absence renders the assertion of Biblical inerrancy invalid or irrelevant.

Article 11

We affirm that Scripture, having been given by divine inspiration, is infallible, so that, far from misleading us, it is true and reliable in all the matters it addresses.

We deny that it is possible for the Bible to be at the same time infallible and errant in its assertions. Infallibility and inerrancy may be distinguished, but not separated.

Article 12

We affirm that Scripture in its entirety is inerrant, being free from all falsehood, fraud, or deceit.

We deny that Biblical infallibility and inerrancy are limited to spiritual, religious, or redemptive themes, exclusive of assertions in the field of history and science. We further deny that scientific hypotheses about earth history may properly be used to overturn the teaching of Scripture on creation and the flood.

Article 13

We affirm the propriety of using inerrancy as a theological term with reference to the complete truthfulness of Scripture. [p. 13](#)

We deny that it is proper to evaluate Scripture according to standards of truth and error that are alien to its usage or purpose. We further deny that inerrancy is negated by Biblical phenomena such as a lack of modern technical precision, irregularities of grammar or spelling, observational descriptions of nature, the reporting of falsehoods, the use of hyperbole and round numbers, the topical arrangement of material, variant selections of material in parallel accounts, or the use of free citations.

Article 14

We affirm the unity and internal consistency of Scripture.

We deny that alleged errors and discrepancies that have not yet been resolved vitiate the truth claims of the Bible.

Article 15

We affirm that the doctrine of inerrancy is grounded in the teaching of the Bible about inspiration.

We deny that Jesus' teaching about Scripture may be dismissed by appeals to accommodation or to any natural limitation of His humanity.

Article 16

We affirm that the doctrine of inerrancy has been integral to the Church's faith throughout its history.

We deny that inerrancy is a doctrine invented by Scholastic Protestantism, or is a reactionary position postulated in response to negative higher criticism.

Article 17

We affirm that the Holy Spirit bears witness to the Scriptures, assuring believers of the truthfulness of God's written Word.

We deny that this witness of the Holy Spirit operates in isolation from or against Scripture.

Article 18

We affirm that the text of Scripture is to be interpreted by grammatico-historical exegesis, taking account of its literary forms and devices, and that Scripture is to interpret Scripture.

We deny the legitimacy of any treatment or quest for sources lying behind it that leads to relativizing, dehistoricizing, or discounting [p. 14](#) its teaching, or rejecting its claims to authorship.

Article 19

We affirm that a confession of the full authority, infallibility, and inerrancy of Scripture is vital to a sound understanding of the whole of the Christian faith. We further affirm that such confession should lead to increasing conformity to the image of Christ.

We deny that such confession is necessary for salvation. However, we further deny that inerrancy can be rejected without grave consequences, both to the individual and to the Church.

EXPOSITION

Our understanding of the doctrine in inerrancy must be set in the context of the broader teachings of the Scripture concerning itself. This Exposition gives an account of the outline of doctrine from which our summary statement and articles are drawn.

CREATION, REVELATION AND INSPIRATION

The Triune God, who formed all things by His creative utterances, and governs all things by His Word of decree, made mankind in his own image for a life of communion with Himself, on the model of the eternal fellowship of loving communication within the Godhead. As God's image-bearer, man was to hear God's Word addressed to him and to respond in the joy of adoring obedience. Over and above God's self-disclosure in the created order and the sequence of events within it, human beings from Adam on have received verbal messages from Him, either directly as stated in Scripture, or indirectly in the form of part or all Scripture itself.

When Adam fell, the Creator did not abandon mankind to final judgement but promised salvation and began to reveal Himself as Redeemer in a sequence of historical events centering on Abraham's family and culminating in the life, death, resurrection, present heavenly ministry, and promised return of Jesus Christ. Within this frame God has from time to time spoken specific words of judgement and mercy, promise and command, to sinful human beings so drawing them into a covenant relation of mutual commitment between Him and them in which He blesses them with gifts of grace and they bless Him in responsive adoration. Moses, whom God used as a mediator to carry His words to His people at the time of the Exodus, stands at the head of a long line [p. 15](#) of prophets in whose mouths and writings God put His words for delivery to Israel. God's purpose in this succession of messages was to maintain His covenant by causing His people to know His Name—that is, His nature—and His will both of precept and purpose in the present and for the future. This line of prophetic spokesmen from God came to completion with Jesus Christ, God's incarnate Word, who was Himself a prophet—more than a prophet, but not less—and in the apostles and prophets of the first Christian generation. When God's final and climatic message, His word to the world concerning Jesus Christ, had been spoken and elucidated by those in the apostolic circle, the sequence of revealed messages ceased. Henceforth the Church was to live and know God by what He had already said, and said for all time.

At Sinai God wrote the terms of His covenant on tablets of stone, as His enduring witness and for lasting accessibility, and throughout the period of prophetic and apostolic revelation He prompted men to write the messages given to and through them, along with celebratory records of His dealings with His people, plus moral reflections on covenant life and forms of praise and prayer for covenant mercy. The theological reality of inspiration in the producing of Biblical documents corresponds to that of spoken prophecies: although the human writers' personalities were expressed in what they wrote, the words were divinely constituted. Thus, what Scripture says, God says; its authority is His authority for He is its ultimate Author, having given it through the minds and words of chosen and prepared men who in freedom and faithfulness "spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" ([1 Pet. 1:21](#)). Holy Scripture must be acknowledged as the Word of God by virtue of its divine origin.

AUTHORITY: CHRIST AND THE BIBLE

Jesus Christ, the Son of God who is the Word made flesh, our Prophet, Priest, and King, is the ultimate Mediator of God's communication to man, as He is of all God's gifts of grace. The revelation He gave was more than verbal; He revealed the Father by His presence and His deeds as well. Yet His words were crucially important; for He was God, He spoke from the Father, and His words will judge all men at the last day.

As the prophesied Messiah, Jesus Christ is the central theme of Scripture. The Old Testament looked ahead to Him; the New Testament looks back to His first coming and On to His second. Canonical Scripture is the divinely inspired and therefore normative p. 16 witness to Christ. No hermeneutic, therefore, of which the historical Christ is not the focal point is acceptable. Holy Scripture must be treated as what it essentially is—the witness of the Father to the incarnate Son.

It appears that the Old Testament canon had been fixed by the time of Jesus. The New Testament canon is likewise now closed inasmuch as no new apostolic witness to the historical Christ can now be borne. No new revelation (as distinct from Spirit-given understanding of existing revelation) will be given until Christ comes again. The canon was created in principle by divine inspiration. The Church's part was to discern the canon which God had created, not to devise one of its own.

The word *canon*, signifying a rule or standard, is a pointer to authority, which means the right to rule and control. Authority in Christianity belongs to God in His revelation, which means, on the one hand, Jesus Christ, the living Word, and, on the other hand, Holy Scripture, the written Word. But the authority of Christ and that of Scripture are one. As our Prophet, Christ testified that Scripture cannot be broken. As our Priest and King, He devoted His earthly life to fulfilling the law and the prophets, even dying in obedience to the words of Messianic prophecy. Thus, as He saw Scripture attesting Him and His authority, so by His own submission to Scripture He attested its authority. As He bowed to His Father's instruction given in His Bible (our Old Testament), so He requires His disciples to do—not, however, in isolation but in conjunction with the apostolic witness to Himself which He undertook to inspire by His gift of the Holy Spirit. So Christians show themselves faithful servants of their Lord by bowing to the divine instruction given in the prophetic and apostolic writings which together make up our Bible.

By authenticating each other's authority, Christ and Scripture coalesce into a single fount of authority. The Biblically-interpreted Christ and the Christ-centered, Christ-proclaiming Bible are from this standpoint one. As from the fact of inspiration we infer that what Scripture says, God says, so from the revealed relation between Jesus Christ and Scripture we may equally declare that what Scripture says, Christ says.

INFALLIBILITY, INERRANCY, INTERPRETATION

Holy Scripture, as the inspired Word of God witnessing authoritatively to Jesus Christ, may properly be called *infallible* p. 17 and *inerrant*. These negative terms have a special value, for they explicitly safeguard crucial positive truths.

Infallible signifies the quality of neither misleading nor being misled and so safeguards in categorical terms the truth that Holy Scripture is a sure, safe, and reliable rule and guide in all matters.

Similarly, *inerrant* signifies the quality of being free from all falsehood or mistake and so safeguards the truth that Holy Scripture is entirely true and trustworthy in all its assertions.

We affirm that canonical Scripture should always be interpreted on the basis that it is infallible and inerrant. However, in determining what the God-taught writer is asserting in each passage, we must pay the most careful attention to its claims and character as a

human production. In inspiration, God utilized the culture and conventions of His penman's milieu, a milieu that God controls in His sovereign providence; it is misinterpretation to imagine otherwise.

So history must be treated as history, poetry as poetry, hyperbole and metaphor as hyperbole and metaphor, generalization and approximation as what they are, and so forth. Differences between literary conventions in Bible times and in ours must also be observed: since, for instance, non-chronological narration and imprecise citation were conventional and acceptable and violated no expectations in those days, we must not regard these things as faults when we find them in Bible writers. When total precision of a particular kind was not expected nor aimed at, it is no error not to have achieved it. Scripture is inerrant, not in the sense of being absolutely precise by modern standards, but in the sense of making good its claims and achieving that measure of focused truth at which its authors aimed.

The truthfulness of Scripture is not negated by the appearance in it of irregularities of grammar or spelling, phenomenal descriptions of nature, reports of false statements (*e.g.*, the lies of Satan), or seeming discrepancies between one passage and another. It is not right to set the so-called "phenomena" of Scripture against the teaching of Scripture about itself. Apparent inconsistencies should not be ignored. Solution of them, where this can be convincingly achieved, will encourage our faith, and where for the present no convincing solution is at hand we shall significantly honor God by trusting His assurance that His Word is true, despite these appearances, and by maintaining our confidence that one day they will be seen to have been illusions.

Inasmuch as all Scripture is the product of a single divine mind, [p. 18](#) interpretation must stay within the bounds of the analogy of Scripture and eschew hypotheses that would correct one Biblical passage by another, whether in the name of progressive revelation or of the imperfect enlightenment of the inspired writer's mind.

Although Holy Scripture is nowhere culture-bound in the sense that its teaching lacks universal validity, it is sometimes culturally conditioned by the customs and conventional views of a particular period, so that the application of its principles today calls for a different sort of action.

SKEPTICISM AND CRITICISM

Since the Renaissance, and more particularly since the Enlightenment, world views have been developed which involve skepticism about basic Christian tenets. Such are the agnosticism which denies that God is knowable, the rationalism which denies that He is incomprehensible, the idealism which denies that He is transcendent, and the existentialism which denies rationality in His relationships with us. When these un- and anti-Biblical principles seep into men's theologies at presuppositional level, as today they frequently do, faithful interpretation of Holy Scripture becomes impossible.

TRANSMISSION AND TRANSLATION

Since God has nowhere promised an inerrant transmission of Scripture, it is necessary to affirm that only the autographic text of the original documents was inspired and to maintain the need of textual criticism as a means of detecting any slips that may have crept into the text in the course of its transmission. The verdict of this science, however, is that the Hebrew and Greek text appear to be amazingly well preserved, so that we are amply justified in affirming with the Westminster Confession, a singular providence of

God in this matter and in declaring that the authority of Scripture is in no way jeopardized by the fact that the copies we possess are not entirely error-free.

Similarly, no translation is or can be perfect, and all translations are an additional step away from the *autographa*. Yet the verdict of linguistic science is that English-speaking Christians, at least, are exceedingly well served in these days with a host of excellent translations and have no cause for hesitating to conclude that the true Word of God is within their reach. Indeed, in view of the frequent p. 19 repetition in Scripture of the main matters with which it deals and also of the Holy Spirit's constant witness to and through the Word, no serious translation of Holy Scripture will so destroy its meaning as to render it unable to make its reader "wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" ([2 Tim. 3:15](#)).

INERRANCY AND AUTHORITY

In our affirmation of the authority of Scripture as involving its total truth, we are consciously standing with Christ and His apostles, indeed with the whole Bible and with the main stream of Church history from the first days until very recently. We are concerned at the casual, inadvertent, and seemingly thoughtless way in which a belief of such far-reaching importance has been given up by so many in our day.

We are conscious too that great and grave confusion results from ceasing to maintain the total truth of the Bible whose authority one professes to acknowledge. The result of taking this step is that the Bible which God gave loses its authority, and what has authority instead is a Bible reduced in content according to the demands of one's critical reasonings and in principle reducible still further once one has started. This means that at bottom independent reason now has authority, as opposed to Scriptural teaching. If this is not seen and if for the time being basic evangelical doctrines are still held, persons denying the full truth of Scripture may claim an evangelical identity while methodologically they have moved away from the evangelical principle of knowledge to an unstable subjectivism, and will find it hard not to move further.

We affirm that what Scripture says, God says. May He be glorified. Amen and Amen. p. 20

The Promise of Adolf Schlatter

W. Ward Gasque

Reprinted from Crux (June 1979) with permission

The work of Adolf Schlatter (1852–1938) is not well known in the English-speaking world, although he authored scores of books, including commentaries on every book in the New Testament and hundreds of essays, rivaling both Ferdinand Christian Baur and Rudolf Bultmann for bulk and erudition. Only one of his books and one essay have been translated into English.

In his day, Schlatter made a profound impression on the life of the church in Germany and German-speaking Switzerland. During my sabbatical year in Europe in 1975–76, I met a number of elderly German and Swiss pastors who had studied under Schlatter. It soon became clear that the sometimes North American impression of the German church as

totally controlled by very liberal theology is a caricature. There are many exceptions, and no one has outdone Schlatter in leading at least a segment of the church in a much more positive direction. His popular commentary on the New Testament, for example, still in print, is widely read by both lay people and pastors. His major commentaries have also been kept in print or recently reprinted.

ACADEMIC NEGLECT OF SCHLATTER

In the academic theological community, his impact has not been as profound as upon the church, for until very recently, his work had generally been neglected by academia. Possible reasons for this have been suggested:

(1) He was somewhat isolated, generally eschewing controversy, and refusing to get directly involved in the current heated debates, to stoop to name-calling or to become embroiled in polemics. Rather, he went about his scholarly research and taught in a quiet manner, attempting to offer a positive alternative to the radical theology of his day. Even in his writings, he is somewhat aloof from the controversies though the content often speaks very appropriately to key theological issues of the time.

(2) Schlatter was overshadowed by the developing dialectical theology of the 1920's and 30's, which divided into the two very diverse but extremely influential streams of German-speaking theology, one led by Karl Barth and the other by Rudolf Bultmann. In a sense, the dialectical theologians stole much of Schlatter's thunder since in some ways he is similar to Barth—at least manifesting some of the same theological concerns—but ultimately Schlatter was overshadowed by him. [p. 21](#)

(3) The school of Bultmann has dominated German academic theology in the past several decades, being generally hostile to the attempt to combine the most rigorous New Testament historical criticism with an equally profound commitment to the church's faith. Rather than separating between faith and history as the Bultmannians insisted, Schlatter sought to bring the two together very intimately.

(4) There may be a fourth reason. Various German writers have indicated that his style was quite difficult to understand. Personally, I find most German theologians difficult to understand! Someone whose mother-tongue is German would be better judge of whether Schlatter is any more difficult than normal.

RECENT INTEREST IN HIS WORK

There is, however, a good deal of evidence to suggest that this academic neglect of Schlatter is coming to an end. First, in 1972, Robert Morgan, a young British scholar, published a monograph entitled *The Nature of New Testament Theology*, which included two essays thought to sum up the key issues in the scholarly debate about the essence of New Testament—one by Wilhelm Wrede and the other by Schlatter. Morgan's introduction was a lengthy, programmatic essay bringing Schlatter's name to the attention of the English-speaking world and underlining his significance by including him with Wilhelm Wrede whose theological importance had been universally recognized.

Second, Peter Stuhlmacher of Tuebingen, the successor to Ernest Kaesemann one of the last of the influential generation of Bultmann disciples to hold a New Testament chair in Germany, has regularly drawn attention to the significance of Schlatter (See, for example, his *Historical Criticism and the Theological Interpretation of Scripture* 1977). More recently, in *New Testament Studies* (24 1978, 433–46) he contributed an essay on Adolf Schlatter's interpretation of scripture. Although one cannot simply push the clock back, repeating Schlatter's interpretation of Scripture, one can find a basic rapprochement

to the current hermeneutical impasse in which the historical-critical method seems to have broken down and become of very little value in the task of constructive theology.

This year Stuhlmacher has led his students in an in-depth seminar study of Schlatter's work. Doubtlessly there will result from this seminar many other papers, and possibly monographs, giving further indication of a revival of interest in Schlatter. [p. 22](#)

As for the English-speaking world, the time seems ripe for the translation of the more significant Schlatter commentaries. More importantly, some young aspiring biblical scholar or systematic theologian should write a major work on Schlatter, introducing him and his thoughts to English-speaking readers. Here is a Ph.D. thesis which is bound to find a publisher.

According to Stuhlmacher, Schlatter was "theologically the most important figure in the faculty of Protestant Theology at Tuebingen in the first third of this century." In the opinion of Morgan (who finds a greater spiritual kindship with Wrede than with Schlatter) he was "the greatest conservative of the generation before Bultmann ... perhaps the only 'conservative' New Testament scholar since Bengel who can be rated in the same class as Baur, Wrede, Bousset and Bultmann." Bishop Stephen Neil says: "There are certain writers of the past—Augustine, Calvin, Bengel, Westcott, Schlatter—to whom we shall always turn with gratitude for the timeless insights that are to be found in their writings." In view of these comments, it seems high time for the Christian community at large to wake up and take notice of Adolf Schlatter.

SCHLATTER'S LIFE

What about the man? Schlatter was born in St. Gallen, in German-speaking Switzerland in 1852. His father was a pharmacist and Baptist lay preacher. His mother remained a member of the local Reformed Church in Switzerland, though she was united with her husband in a common commitment to Christ and involvement in the revival movement of the time. This dual home background gave Schlatter an ecumenical attitude in his relationship with Christians and in his concern for the church. In school, he first was interested in natural science and philosophy. Through the influence of his sister, he decided to study theology but not without a great struggle for to him it represented a challenge to his own faith. Could he maintain a positive, evangelical faith while at the same time studying academic theology? Looking around him in many of the university settings of the day, it did not seem very likely. His sister managed to convince him that he might not lose his faith if he studied theology. It was this desire to go into theology that he later regarded as the time of his conversion to Christ.

From 1871 to 1875, Schlatter studied theology in the Universities [p. 23](#) of Basel and Tuebingen. From 1875 to 1880, he was a pastor. At the request of Swiss revival leaders, in 1880 he qualified himself as a lecturer in the Theological Faculty in Berne and taught there for eight years. He first taught Old Testament, then New Testament, and then Dogmatics. From the time of his work in Berne, he was attacked on two sides. On the one hand, some revivalist friends labelled certain of his views concerning the historical nature of the New Testament as too critical and really incompatible with his commitment to supernatural religion and to the Christ of faith. On the other hand, his liberal colleagues in the Berne Faculty of Theology thought he was what we would call today "an unreconstructed fundamentalist." This early battle on two fronts set the pattern for his future work. Besides pointing out the inadequacy of liberal theology, Schlatter constantly had to defend to fellow conservative Christians the idea of New Testament study as a historical discipline.

In 1888, Schlatter accepted a call to Greifswald, Germany, where he joined Hermann Cremer, Lutheran theologian and author of the New Testament theological dictionary that became the prototype of the later monumental project founded by Gerhard Kittel. In 1894, he took a newly established chair of theology at Berlin, a call attempted to appease church leaders outraged by Adolf Harnack's denials of basic Christian doctrine, for Harnack had publicly denied the truth of the Apostles' Creed. Schlatter lectured here for four years, but reading between the lines one senses he was unhappy at Berlin, having been placed in the awkward situation of championing orthodoxy in a university where this view was by no means popular.

In 1897, Schlatter was called to Tuebingen University to fill a similarly created chair, which he himself named "Chair of New Testament." It presumably was flexible; before accepting the job, he got the authorities to agree that he could teach Dogmatics as well as New Testament. He spent the rest of his academic life here in Tuebingen, becoming professor emeritus in 1922, though he continued to give lectures for eight more years since he did not have great confidence in his successor.

Schlatter's writings are voluminous. They include *inter alia*; A thorough-going examination of the concept of *Faith in the New Testament* (1885); a two volume *Theology of the New Testament* (which first appeared in 1909); major works on Christian dogma and Christian ethics; a history of the primitive church (E.T., *The Church in the New Testament Period*); elementary commentaries p. 24 on the whole New Testament (*Erlaevterungen zum Neuen Testament*); and a series of very learned commentaries on Matthew (1929), John (1930), Luke (1931), James (1932), Corinthian Epistles (1934), Mark (1935), Romans (1935), Timothy—Titus (1936), and I Peter (1937). His two greatest commentaries are his works on *Matthew* and *Romans*; (entitled *Gottes Gerichtigkeit*, "The Righteousness of God"). He also wrote many other historical, theological and devotional books and essays. Schlatter died on 19 May 1938, shortly after the end of his 86th year.

SCHLATTER'S THEOLOGY

When one considers Schlatter's interpretation of Scripture, one is impressed by the difference between him and many of his contemporary theologians. Schlatter makes an interesting comparison to B.F. Westcott and J.B. Lightfoot in nineteenth century England, who were successful in opposing the radical views of New Testament criticism then being expounded in Germany. (See my essay, "Nineteenth Century Roots of Contemporary New Testament Criticism," in *Scripture, Tradition and Interpretation*, ed, W.W. Gasque and W.S. LaSor 1978, 146–56.) In Schlatter's day the dominant tide of academic theology was certainly not orthodox or what we know as evangelical.

Schlatter stands in contrast to many of his contemporaries in a variety of ways. *First*, he was pre-eminently a "self-conscious Christian theologian" (Morgan, p. 27). He approached his study of the Bible as a theologian, a *Christian* theologian. For him, as Stuhlmacher points out, "his Christian faith, his biblical and historical work, and his theological effort towards an understanding of Christ and faith appropriate to the present day are quite inseparable." He was unwilling to agree that one should, or could, radically separate the biblical historian's work from that of the preacher, or the two from the theologian's. A temporary methodological distinction may be made between these three tasks: The basic, foundational work of biblical-historical is methodologically different from the task of systematic theology and from preaching in that you step back and look at the text, conscious of your own presuppositions and refusing to impose them upon the text; but it is only a temporary stepping back. Ultimately one must lead to the next;

historical criticism must lead ultimately to proclamation and theologizing upon the basis of the text, each p.25 informs the other in its responsibility. In a celebrated essay, Schlatter passionately rejected the methodological atheism of the historical criticism represented by Troeltsch and others of his day. The assumption of totally objective historical research is, he argued, false. Those who think they are most free from presuppositions in their biblical study are in fact the most determined by them. It is only when we recognize our own presuppositions that we are set free and are able to do a careful "objective" examination of the text. This does not mean, of course, that Schlatter suggested one should allow one's theological presuppositions to determine one's exegesis. That is, he did not simply look at the text and decide that it meant what he already believed it would mean. No, on the contrary, careful exegesis which is based on a historical observation should always provide the foundation for dogmatics. However, neither dogmatics nor historical exegesis are independent of one another; rather, they mutually inform one another.

Schlatter comes to the text as a Christian theologian. He is aware of his own presuppositions, yet he looks at the text objectively and historically to see what is really there, aware that his discoveries may cause a readjustment in his previous theological position. So he turns from the text back to his theology to revise it in the text's light and then again from his theology back to the text in an attempt to carefully examine it. Scripture and theology are thus organically inter-related. One does not determine the other totally; his theology in particular does not determine the historical exegesis but instead the result of his careful, historical examination of Scripture is the foundation for his developing theological system. As he works Schlatter is quite conscious of being a theologian with a definite faith commitment. He refuses to feign some sort of independent, objective approach that is quite apart from theology.

Second, Schlatter focused on the Bible as a whole. He was not a *Neutestamentler*, a New Testament specialist in a narrow sense; though he was in another sense. Even though his most important work was done on the New Testament, he did not ignore the Old Testament. Early in his life he wrote a Bible introduction which he constantly revised until his death. In his commentaries there is something strikingly different from other technical commentaries for there is only occasional, rather than detailed, reference to secondary literature. Instead, the pages are filled with appeals to the biblical text. He compares Scripture with Scripture, very p.26 carefully and thoroughly, observing parallels and showing how one passage illuminates another. He is essentially a biblical theologian and in both his theological work and his exegetical work he emphasizes the unity of Scriptures.

Schlatter recognized and gave due weight to the diversity of Scripture. He insisted on historical interpretation, and it is this historical dimension that lays adequate stress on the real theological diversity in Scripture. However, in spite of diversity among various writings and traditions, there is an over-riding unity, a common view of Christ which links the whole together. Therefore, Schlatter did not limit himself to biblical studies, he also moved into the areas of Christian ethics and systematic theology.

Third, Schlatter was one of the earliest German scholars to recognize the distinctive Jewish character of the New Testament, i.e. that the New Testament documents found their home in Palestinian Judaism and also, when Paul moved out into the Roman world, in the synagogue of the Hellenistic world. It is easy to discern a latent anti-Semitism in German theology from the Enlightenment onward, particularly behind some of the critical biblical work from the period immediately preceding Schlatter and continuing to the present. For example, we can see that F.C. Baur generally regards Judaic things in a very negative fashion. Also, Welhausen, the influential Old Testament critic, has recently been scorned for his not only implicit but very explicit anti-Semitism, running straight through his writings as well as his personal life. In my understanding, there is not a trace of this in

Schlatter. Quite the contrary, he stresses very positively the Jewish setting of the Gospels. He is perfectly at home not only in Josephus and inter-testamental literature but also in the Rabbinic writings, and he applies his research results to his New Testament study. Being at the beginning of his discipline he does not sift his materials as critically as more recent scholars do in terms of dating and the historical origin of Rabbinic ideas, but he is certainly moving in the right direction. He pioneered the approach, later taken up by Dahlman, Jaremas and a host of contemporary New Testament scholars, which fills out New Testament historical background and brings to bear on the text not only Old Testament material but also first-century and subsequent Jewish literature as it carried down traditions already present in Jesus' time.

Fourth, Schlatter placed primary emphasis on the biblical text [p. 27](#) rather than on hypotheses about it. He was very skeptical of "fantasies," as he called them, which sought to recreate the historical background on the basis of very little historical data and no very definite textual reference. This concern for the primacy of the text is clear in his historical/exegetical work and in his theologizing. He warned both conservative and liberal students of Scripture against attempting to force the biblical teaching into their own mould. On the one hand, the liberals attempted to rule out the basic message of the New Testament by definition and therefore were unable to hear its authentic voice because of this "methodological atheism". The orthodox, on the other hand, often appropriated Scripture's teaching too quickly into the confines of received theological categories without attempting serious historical study and careful exegesis. Schlatter was really arguing with both trying to gently nudge them into more positive direction. As a result, of course, he was misunderstood to some degree by both, yet he did have a profound influence on many conservatives. In liberal theology, he saw an antipathy to the fundamental ethos of the New Testament teaching. As a result rather than observing carefully what was in the text, the historical criticism had to develop fantastic hypotheses to explain away biblical data, such as the elaborate and unlikely theories to "explain" the doctrine of the resurrection. On the other hand, he saw conservatives frequently assuming they already understood the biblical text without having taken the pains to carefully consider it.

In his writings, Schlatter constantly calls the reader to look at "the facts" of scripture in terms of the historical connections. The fundamental obligation of the theologian-exegete is observation of the text, an obligation Schlatter contrasts to observation with "imagination" or "fantasy." An anecdote often told of Schlatter in connection with his appointment in Berlin is that he was asked by a churchman on the committee, "Herr Schlatter, do you stand on the Bible?" He responded, "Nein, I stand *under* the Bible." This anecdote characterized the perspective of Schlatter in regard to Scripture.

In contrast to the fundamentalists who stand, in a sense, *on* the Bible, Schlatter always gave primacy to the data of Scripture not prejudging but standing *under* the Bible, allowing it to shape his views. This was also in contrast to the liberals, who tended to stand *over* Scripture, judging it from the perspective of "modern" and "enlightened" thinking.

Fifth, Schlatter was conscious of doing this New Testament [p. 28](#) work in the context of the Church and, as an exegete, of being a servant of Jesus Christ. This does not mean he allowed the church or its dogmas to dictate the terms of his historical and exegetical work, much less to dictate the results. Rather, he realized he had a pastoral responsibility, that he was not an independent historian simply concerned with historical data, but a servant of Christ entrusted with sacred calling to study and teach the Word of God.

SCHLATTER'S PASTORAL CONCERN

His pastoral concern for his students is possibly his greatest legacy. He influenced these students not only in the classroom but also outside it by giving regular systematic InterVarsity-type Bible readings. Stuhlmacher writes, “With regard to Schlatter’s theological and pastoral work, it seems to me particularly worthy of note that to my knowledge he never brought his students, or his other hearers and readers, to contempt of their faith or their loyalty to the church. Rather, he continually encouraged them to abide by their faith and in their love for the church.” This does not mean he failed to raise questions. The reaction of some conservative brethren makes it clear that he often raised awkward questions. But he raised them from within the Christian community, and they were intended to strengthen one’s faith through looking at Scripture deeply and asking questions so as to hear the Word of God authentically. He had a profound understanding of the importance of both academic theology and the potential pastoral role of the academic theologian.

We see his pastoral concern also in his ministry to the laity. He never wrote exclusively for the world of scholarship, though he certainly wrote books that were quite technical. He always wrote with the ordinary believer in mind, and he wrote many articles and books primarily for the lay man or woman who was concerned with Scripture study. He was concerned to use his great learning in the service of Christ for the building up of Christ’s body.

Finally, his stance as a servant of Christ, studying Scripture in the context of the church, gave to his work a devotional quality, even in his most technical commentaries. Today, we tend to make a very strong dichotomy between the academic and the devotional. This has not been the Church’s historical view of theology until relatively modern times. Great theologians have not normally distinguished between their intellectual work and their spiritual [p. 29](#) work, between rigorous theology and devotion to God. That is as it should be, and certainly that is what one finds in the work of Adolf Schlatter.

A KEY TO BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

Was there a theological key to Schlatter’s biblical interpretation? Was it the Creed? A particular brand of Christianity—reformed theology, revival Christianity or pietism? Was it a doctrine of verbal inspiration or inerrancy? It was not any of these. Not that he did not affirm the Creed, or cannot be theologically pegged in some degree, or did not have a theory, or at least a doctrine, of inspiration. Rather, the focal point of his theology was simply the conviction that Jesus was “the Christ of God,” a phrase that he uses frequently, and that Christ himself is the heart of the New Testament, indeed, of the Bible. A very simple conviction: that Jesus is the Christ of God and that he is the heart of the Scripture. He was committed to the belief that Jesus was already in his earthly life Son of God and Messiah. This was not (as Wrede had argued) something assigned to him at a later date. The Jesus of the New Testament was not the product of the church’s faith but, rather, a historical given. To put it in other words, the church’s faith was the product of Jesus, who himself was the Christ of God. This conviction was not merely an inheritance from his pious parents or from a revivalistic faith. Rather, it was a conclusion he continued to hold because it did the best justice to the historical data of Scripture in the first-century setting. He did not, of course, hold this because he became a Christian through historical research. Rather, as a historian evidence for Jesus being the Christ, the reality of the resurrection validating that life, one sees in the pages of Holy Writ.

It is this, Schlatter was convinced, which gives the certainty that God is speaking to us in the Bible, not a theory of inspiration or detailed doctrinal statement. We see the reality

of God in the fact of Jesus. This principle was the centre and determining factor in Schlatter's approach to Scripture. Stuhlmacher has noted the end of the Bultmannian school's domination over contemporary New Testament scholarship as marking the end of an era. With the later Bultmannians, biblical research, which had lost its moorings in the church and its faith, tended to run aground. There are many signs today, however, of a new vitality in biblical studies. Particularly evident is the renewed concern for a theological [p. 30](#) understanding of Scripture and a return to Schlatter's view that Jesus was in fact the Christ of God and is himself the hermeneutical key to the New Testament. There are definite signs of this in other parts of the world.

In the past decade there has been a spate of writings from a variety of perspectives pointing to the current impasse in the historical-critical task. Historical criticism is supposed to give assured results, yet the results obtained are so very diverse, and there seems to be such a gap between the results of historical research and the church's faith. How can this be overcome? Stuhlmacher is representative of various scholars who seek to bridge this gap by taking cues from Schlatter. It may be that in rediscovering Adolf Schlatter, New Testament scholarship will begin to recover its true faith—faith in Jesus and faith in its true task, the service of the church through the elucidation of the text.

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Christianity as an African Religion

Byang H. Kato

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Religion is generally understood as man's effort to reach a being higher than himself. This effort is expressed through a variety of religious practices such as rituals, sacrifices and prayers. If this is our understanding of the use of the term in this context, Christianity cannot be called religion.

Christianity is a matter of personal relationship. God, a personal being on the one hand, and man, another personal being on the other, interact with each other. But the initiative starts with God. He first gives Himself to be known. Man, created by God also with the capacity to respond, does so in relation to his Maker and Sustainer. In this context, man finds answers to all that concerns him in God who has spoken.

We may, however, understand religion in the general sense of God speaking and man responding. Christianity may then be called religion. We must never forget the fact that the distinctive nature of Christianity is that it is a *revealed faith*. God has spoken decisively through His Word, the Bible, and through the person and works of His Son, Jesus Christ. "In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days He has spoken to us by a Son, whom He appointed the heir of all things, through whom also He created all things" ([Heb. 1:1, 2](#)).

The term "African" must be understood only in a loose and relative sense. It is estimated that there are nearly 1,000 ethnic groups or tribes in Africa. Then there are

other races such as Arabs, Caucasians (Europeans) and Asians who are also Africans. Differences between various people of Africa are real. But in the geographical sense, we can speak of people resident in Africa as Africans. In a more restrictive sense, we may bear in mind “black” Africans, the majority of whom have come from African Traditional Religions to Christianity. It is in this narrow sense that I want to speak. But again, not exclusively. Other Africans will be borne in mind and may be referred to if the need calls for us to do so.

The basic issue of this discussion is the relevance of Christianity to the African today. When I was in Malawi, I was told of a religious sect called Makolo (meaning ancestor worship). The preacher of Makolo lifted up the Koran and asked, “Whose book is this?” His listeners replied, “The Arab’s book.” He went on, “Whose religion is Islam?” The reply was, “It is the religion of the [p. 32](#) Arabs.” He did the same thing with Christianity. The conclusion drawn was that Christianity is the white man’s religion. The audience was invited to reject both religions as being foreign. Makolo, ancestor worship, was then declared the religion of the Africans. A similar call had been made by a Muslim head of state. He made the appeal that Africans should reject Christianity because of its Caucasian (European) connection. His call, of course, was not accepted. Is it a valid claim that Christianity is a white man’s religion in which the African should have no hand? In the following discussion, we shall seek to point out the answer to the contrary.

AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGIONS

The various ethnic African groups have their traditional religions as an answer to the reality of their existence. The primary question being raised today is that of the nature of these religions in relation to Christianity. The Apostle Paul categorically points out that the worship of pagan gods is a distortion of God’s revelation in nature ([Rom. 1:18–23](#)). Whatever rationalization we may try to make, the worship of gods in Africa is idolatry. This is not a denial of the universality of general revelation. God truly has not left Himself without a witness. His goodness to people irrespective of whether they are good or evil is the evidence of His witness to all people ([Acts 14:17](#)). His marvellous work of creation is a further pointer to His supreme power ([Psa. 19](#)). But the revelation has been distorted through the disobedience of the very first commandment. Man has not adhered to the one true God and Him alone as he has been commanded to do ([Ex. 20:3 Deut. 6:4](#)); rather he has set up his own gods.

The depravity evident in African Traditional Religions has come to all people of the earth. The Psalmist declares, “The Lord looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there are any that act wisely, that seek after God. They have all gone astray, they are all alike corrupt; there is none that does good, no not one” ([Psa. 14:2, 3](#)). The Apostle echoes this in the New Testament ([Rom. 3:10–18](#)). The worship of idolatry is as old as man from the fall. Adam’s effort to clothe himself instead of being clothed with God’s righteousness was the beginning of that search for answers away from God. The Philistines, the Babylonians, the Romans and the Greeks all indulged in idolatry. In modern times, no people are excluded. The Arabs were worshippers of many “Jinns” (spirits). The founder of Islam consecrated [p. 33](#) one of the rocks of pagan worship for Islamic worship. (The Muslims, however, believe that the rock, Ka’aba, descended from heaven.) Stonehenge in southern England is a living evidence of Druidism, which was the heathen worship of the early inhabitants of the United Kingdom. Human sacrifice was a part of Druid worship and was abolished in Roman days.

While pagan worship was a part of the religion of these respective peoples, they could change to other religions of their choice. Most Arabs have accepted Islam and are now

Muslims. Islam is now associated with Saudi Arabia as their religion. Thanks to the faithful witness of the Christian missionaries, the British people no longer claim Druidism as their religion. They are now Christians, and Christianity is legitimately recognized as the British religion. Why should this not be the case in Africa where at least one-third of all Africans are adherents of the Christian religion in one form or another?

In these challenging days there are many voices being heard both within and outside the church for relevancy. Some people call it the Africanization of Christianity. Despite the fact that 150 million out of the 360 million people of Africa call themselves “Christians”, there are still voices denying the fact that Christianity is an African religion. It is my conviction that Christianity is truly an African religion. What we need in today’s Africa is not a return to the old traditional religions, or even a borrowing of some of the pagan practices to add to Christianity. Our greatest need is to live up to the claims we make as Christians and promote the Christian message to all areas of life and everywhere possible as true ambassadors of Christ.

HISTORICAL RELATIONSHIP OF CHRISTIANITY AND AFRICA.

Although missionaries from Europe and North America brought the gospel to Black Africa in modern times, they are not the first messengers of the gospel to our continent. As a matter of fact, Christianity has closer ties with Africa than with European countries or North America.

God’s call to man for revealing His will to mankind first came to an Asian, Abraham. It was through his descendants, the Jews, that God gave the message of salvation. But this does not give the Jews any monopoly on the gospel. Nor does this make their culture in any way superior to other cultures. God was merely using them to fulfill His purpose for the redemption of the world. Jesus was born, brought up, died and rose again in Asia and not in [p. 34](#) any European country. I am not aware of any evidence that any of the writers of the books of the Bible was a European. Jesus Christ, the founder of Christianity, never walked in Europe. As a matter of fact, Christianity did not reach Europe until about 20 years after Christ’s death and resurrection. That was when Paul made the first convert in Europe—Lydia ([Acts 16:15](#)).

In contrast to this, the Bible presents historical facts on the relationship of Africa with Palestine, the land of the Bible. In the Old Testament, it was out of their bondage in Africa that God redeemed His people. Egypt is part of Africa. The Queen of Sheba who visited Solomon was from Ethiopia in Africa according to tradition. Moses, the head of the Israeli nation, was married to a girl who was possibly an African ([Num. 12:1](#)). It was an African who rescued Jeremiah from a pit when no one else would do it ([Jer. 38:7](#)). It was prophesied long ago of the tremendous impact of God’s work in Africa some day. Egypt and Ethiopia were spoken of representatively: “Envoys will come out of Egypt; Ethiopia will quickly stretch out her hands to God” ([Psa. 68:31](#)).

There is a geographical link between Africa and the Holy Land, a link which was separated only superficially by the Suez Canal in 1869. The New Testament too presents the direct link of Africa with the Holy Land. In fulfillment of a prophecy made seven hundred years earlier, Jesus Christ was brought to Africa as a baby for safety from wicked King Herod. God said, “I called my son out of Egypt” ([Matt. 2:15](#)). So the Saviour born in Asia, walked the soil of Africa. When Jesus was carrying His cross to the hill for crucifixion, He was so tired that He could not continue much longer. As God, He could do anything. But as man, He was limited in this instance. It was an African who carried the cross the rest of the way. Simon came from Cyrene in North Africa ([Matt. 27:32](#)). While it is true that Simon might have been a settler in the Jewish community of that North African city,

he was still from Africa. Henry Kissinger, America's former Secretary of State, is a European Jew in origin, yet no one would question the fact that he is an American.

On the day of Pentecost, Africa was represented. Settlers of Cyrene in North Africa went there when the Holy Spirit inaugurated the Christian Church ([Acts 2:10](#)). An African from Ethiopia was one of the first converts outside the Jewish circle ([Acts 8](#)). When the first missionary conference was held, an African was there. Mentioned among the faithful disciples in Antioch was Simeon, nicknamed the Niger ([Acts 13:1](#)). Niger, from [p. 35](#) which the river Niger and the countries of Niger and Nigeria are named, means black. It is obvious therefore that Simeon was a "black man" ([Acts 13:1](#)—Living Bible). Either he was a black man from Africa who had assumed a Jewish name, or he was a Jew in origin but had lived in Africa. There has also been a suggestion that he was from Southern Arabia.

During the first two hundred years of the existence of Christianity, North Africa and modern Turkey had the strongest churches. Admittedly, many of the Christians in North Africa were settlers from other parts of the Roman Empire. But they were still inhabitants of Africa. Africa in the first four centuries of our era produced outstanding theologians. St. Augustine of Hippo, born of a Tuareg mother, Monica, has more lasting influence on Christian theology than any other person since the Apostle Paul. His African practical mind can still be noted in both Roman Catholic and Protestant theologies. Cyprian, Athanasius, Arius and Origen were all outstanding African theologians. It was due to internal squabbles and lack of vision that Christianity was to spread out towards Western Europe including the British Isles. Converted Europe then later brought Christianity to black Africa. One may see the cycle of the spread of Christianity to Asia, Africa, Europe (America), Africa and the rest of the world. Perhaps the cycle will repeat itself before long when Africans and Asians will once again take the gospel back to Europe. Church attendance in Germany today is 2%, England 4% and Kenya 40%. To claim that Christianity is a white man's religion only because white missionaries brought the gospel two hundred years ago is not historically accurate. But this does not give an Asian or an African any monopoly on Christianity. God gave His revelation to the whole world. The invitation comes to all people of all cultures: "Turn to me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other" ([Isa. 45:22](#)). "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" ([Matt. 11:28](#)).

If anyone wants to reject Christianity, he must do so on other grounds and not on the excuse that it is a white man's religion. We are indebted to modern missionaries for bringing the gospel to Africa. But they are only messengers and they would fully identify themselves with the declarations of John the Baptist and of Paul: "He must increase but I must decrease" ([John 3:30](#)); "Let God be true, and every man a liar" ([Rom. 3:4](#)).

Africans have a right to change their religion from heathen worship to Christianity. Having done so, Christianity can become an [p. 36](#) African religion. This is what has happened.

Historically Christianity was thriving in Africa long before it reached North America and the British Isles where most of the Protestant missionaries come from. We can therefore rightly call Christianity an African religion.

THE NATURE OF CHRISTIANITY

Particularism and universalism are paradoxically both creatures of Christianity. Christianity is both exclusive and inclusive. It is particularistic right from its inception. When mankind lapsed into idolatry and all forms of godlessness, it pleased God to call a particular man, named Abraham, to reveal His will for mankind through him ([Gen. 12:1-3](#)). Through a particular line, Abraham—Jacob (Israel), His message of redemption would

reach all mankind. Through Abraham all mankind would be blessed. It is not bigotry nor is it nationalism or racism to speak of the God of Israel. Israel, from time to time, has become introspective and arrogant, thus failing in its mission to the world. Nevertheless, it was chosen by God to convey the message of salvation to the whole world.

Universalism in the sense of God's revelation for the redemption of all mankind, is just as much part of God's revelation as particularism in God's choice of Israel as a nation. Israel was to be a light to the Gentiles. The God of Israel extends His invitation to all people ([Isa. 45:22, 23](#)), "Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other. By myself I have sworn, from my mouth has gone forth in righteousness a word that shall not return to me. Every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear." Not only woman and children are subjects of interest in Luke, but Gentiles also. John the theologian interprets the life of Christ and His message in terms of His benefits to the world. He is the bread and water of life for whoever would come. God's love and provision is for the whole world ([John 3:16](#)), and this includes the African. Jesus Christ, the centre of Christianity is for the Africans.

In the rest of the New Testament, the universal nature of Christianity becomes evident both in doctrine and practice. When the Holy Spirit inaugurated the Church, Asians, Africans and Europeans were all there ([Acts 2:9-11](#)). They can all claim Christianity as their religion. In describing the composition of the Church as the body of Christ, Paul sees all men as members of that one body [p. 37 \(1 Cor. 12:13\)](#). In that body "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" ([Gal. 3:28](#)). No one racial class or sex group has a monopoly on the claims of Christ's Church. Christianity is an African religion to its African adherents, just as it is European to the European, American to the American or Asian to the Asian followers of Christ.

THE PRACTICE OF CHRISTIANITY

Christianity is truly an African religion and Africans should be made to feel so. Christian doctrine should be expressed in terms that Africans can understand, where such has not been the case. Practices that enhance the growth of the Church, the maturity and enjoyment of the African believer, should be promoted. Take for instance the formal prayers written in the 18th century. Both the language and concepts are not easy for today's English youth to understand, let alone African youth. Should not African clergymen revise this and recast it in language and concepts easily understood by the African youths? Perhaps greater involvement by the congregation in a church service would appeal more to Africans. This should be explored. Clothing and musical instruments are also to be considered. Whatever would reflect the glory of Christ in His Church in Africa and make the African feel that "this is my faith", should be promoted. If there are any alien beliefs and/or practices mingled with Christianity, the answer is not to throw away the baby with the bath water. It is not to erroneously call Christianity a white man's religion. Rather, we should purge biblical faith of those alien features and express the unchanging biblical faith in Africa for the Africans, since it is as much an African religion as it is a European religion.

MY RECOMMENDATIONS

(a) *Know the truth and defend it* with all at your disposal including your life's blood. The way ahead may not be easy, and Jesus Christ never promised us an easy road. Jesus says, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow

me” ([Mark 8:34](#)). The Word of God further says, “For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in Him but also suffer for His sake” ([Phil. 1:29](#)). Our Lord appeals to us “to contend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” ([Jude 3](#)). **p. 38**

(b) Discern the voices. Get your marching orders from the Word of God and not from men’s voices, be they from within or without the camp. “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are for God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world” ([I John 4:1](#)).

(c) Reject moratorium but promote self-reliance. Some advocates of moratorium today see the work of missionaries as a part of the system of colonial servitude. While we do agree that there have been some failures on the part of some missionaries to live up to the gospel of Christ, yet we cannot deny the fact that they came as truly the messengers of good tidings. The One who sent them said. “If the Son shall make you free, you will be free indeed” ([John 8:36](#)). We should therefore be thankful to God and His messengers.

The rejection of moratorium, however, should not mean that your church should now maintain a servile, begging attitude. Your priority should be to promote the training of nationals with missionaries helping as necessary, so that both black and white will move together as workers with Christ ([II Cor. 6:1](#)).

(d) Evangelize or perish. It would take your church only two or three generations to go out of existence if you do not evangelize. The youngest Christian in your church today is not likely to be around in another hundred years. The thing to bear in mind is that if Jesus Christ should come today, millions of people would go to a Christless eternity. This should motivate every Christian in Africa to say, “Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel” ([I Cor. 9:16](#)).

(e) Contextualize without compromise. Let Christianity truly find its home in Africa by adopting local hymnology, using native language, idiom and concepts to express the unchanging faith. But always let your primary goal be that Jesus Christ might have the foremost place. “So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” ([I Cor. 10:31](#)).

(f) Pray for and be prepared for revival. While we should all be thankful for the revivals of the past (as in East Africa for instance), dare we dwell on the blessings of the past? While we should rejoice over the victory of the gospel through the missionaries of the past and the earlier generation of African Christians, should we not plead with the Lord to provide us with more Joshuas and Timothys for today and tomorrow? God has promised, “Behold I will do a new thing” ([Isa. 43:19](#)). May it happen in our day even if it means some changes in our image and value structures. **p. 39**

(g) Become more missionary minded. Look beyond the borders of your country and further afield to the pagan strongholds on our continent, to the western world and its materialistic attractions. The world is the field. The church in Africa and elsewhere is the only agent for sowing the seed ([Matt. 13:38 Acts 1:8](#)). May the Lord help the members of His body, the church, as we lift up His banner of victory in Africa in particular and the world in general.

Dr. Byang H. Kato was General Secretary of the Association of Evangelicals of Africa and Madagascar (AEAM) until his untimely death in 1975. p. 40

Transcendental Meditation: Profile of a Westernized Eastern Religion

Joseph H. Hall

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Within the past decade, traditionally Protestant and Catholic America has faced an unprecedented challenge with the deluge of eastern religious cults. While these cults find some adult adherents, the most vulnerable age group are the white, educated, middle and upper middle-class youth. Both Professor Harvey Cox and the Gallup Polls indicate the seriousness of purpose of these cults as well as tell why they are growing.¹ Therefore, for the sake of both Christian adults and youth, full exposure of these cults is necessary.

The question must be asked, why are our youth so susceptible to eastern religious cults? Various answers have been given, ranging from dissatisfaction with a technological materialistic society to a drug-induced acceptance of these cults. Several key reasons are worth mentioning.

One is the proposed novelty of experiencing firsthand the ground of one's being. Each of these cults basically teaches that God and creation are one. Therefore, they are pantheistic to the core. Another reason for this wide acceptance is their claim to authority. Each of the cults has a master teacher who serves as the authority for the initiate. In a relativistic society such as that in which we now live, such devious authority meets with much acceptance. Finally, there does exist "community" within most of these eastern cults. Ostensibly, the leaders care for their members and are able thereby to draw others into their group by this apparent concern.

As Christians we must be alert to the wiles of the Devil in his trading on weak aspects of American Christianity. If we are honest we will confess that there is something lacking in many of our churches in the three areas of the Christian's relation to God, authority, and community. By building a strong Biblical basis for assurance of our relationship with God and fellow Christians we will provide the best remedy against eastern religions for ourselves and for our children.

The eastern religious cults are basically of two varieties, either of Hindu or of Buddhist origin. Examples of the newer Hindu variety are Transcendental Meditation, the Krishna Consciousness Movement and the Divine Light Mission. From the Sino-Japanese Buddhistic p. 41 legacy various types of Zen and Tibetan Buddhism such as Soka Gakkai and I Ching are gaining young American devotees. For our purpose Transcendental Meditation will serve as a model for the eastern religious cults.

Transcendental Meditation (hereafter TM) is one of the most successful of the contemporary eastern religions. Indeed, its success can hardly be overestimated. TM has by far the most American adherents, the largest exposure via the media, and the greatest influence with the federal, state, and local governments.² It has made great inroads on

¹ Harvey Cox, "Why Young Americans are Buying Oriental Religions," *Psychology Today* (July, 1977), pp. 36-42.

² John Weldon and Zola Levitt, *The Transcendental Explosion* (Irvine, Ca.: Harvest House, 1976), pp. 12-32. A New Jersey District Court Case (Fall, 1977) affirmed that TM is a religion. This will, if upheld by the Federal Supreme Court, certainly have negative implications for continued government support.

college campuses, having established meditation centers in over 1,000 colleges and universities.

Famous entertainment and sport celebrities are TM practitioners—Merv Griffin, Peggy Lee, Stevie Wonder, Joe Namath and Bill Walton, to mention a few.

Federal, state, and municipal governments have furthered the progress of TM through either monetary grants or free access to public property such as schools and libraries. TM has been taught as an officially sanctioned course in Dade County, Florida; Louisville, Kentucky; Eastchester, New York; Hartford, Connecticut; San Lorenzo, California; and until recently a number of New Jersey schools.³

Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, the founder of modern-day TM, has as one of his goals nothing less than total allegiance to TM during this present generation. Maharishi's "World Plan" lists seven goals, six of which are general and difficult to fault. However, the seventh states the following as a goal: "To achieve the spiritual goals of mankind in this generation."⁴ For the leaders of TM the realization of such spiritual goals means nothing less than a total embracing of TM.

TM'S HISTORY

TM finds its origin in the Hindu Scripture called Bhagavad Gita. The Hindu deity, Krishna, revealed the teaching to a nobleman P.42 warrior, Arjuna, as tradition has it about 5,000 years ago. TM was lost within 2,000 years only to be restored by a famous Hindu teacher, Shankara, around the ninth century A.D. The teaching endured for several centuries only to become obscured once again. In the previous generation the method was rediscovered by Swami Brahamananda Saraswati Jagaduru, now often referred to as Guru Dev (Divine Teacher) and worshipped by TM devotees.⁵ Guru Dev taught the principles of TM to Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. Maharishi therefore continues the Hindu teaching that is, by tradition, seven millennia old and fully revealed by supposed divine revelation to man in the Bhagavad Gita. The Bhagavad Gita is a philosophical dialogue probably written around the second or third century A.D.

After spending a couple of years in a Himalayan cave (after the death of Guru Dev in 1953) Maharishi began teaching TM to the people of India. Then he established the Spiritual Regeneration Movement (hereafter SRM) in 1958.

Believing the West to afford better opportunities, Maharishi travelled first to England where he successfully persuaded the Beatles to practice TM. Maharishi then proceeded to California where in 1959 he chartered the Spiritual Regeneration Movement. The incorporation papers clearly reveal the religious nature of TM:

The primary business ... is to promote the Spiritual Regeneration Movement ... and to offer to all persons ... a means and method of developing latent faculties, vital energies, spiritual growth, peace and happiness through a system of deep meditation⁶

The SRM was unabashedly chartered as a religious movement. Its founders and teachers freely used the words "God" and "religion" in its teaching. However, the

³ John E. Patton, *The Case Against TM in the Schools* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976), pp. 64–65.

⁴ Anonymous, *An Address to Governments*, p. 24, quoted in David Haddon, *TM Wants You* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976), p. 38.

⁵ Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, *On the Bhagavad Gita* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1974), pp. 10–17; Jack Forem, *Transcendental Meditation* (New York: Bantam Books, 1976), pp. 195–99.

⁶ Certificate of Incorporation of the Spiritual Regeneration Movement, quoted in Patton, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

movement made little headway for some nine years. Then significant changes were made in the framework of the TM movement. Various other organizations such as the Affiliated Organizational Conglomerate, the Student's International Movement, and the American Meditation Society were formed in the years 1967–1968. In 1972 Maharishi International University was formed on the site of the former Parson's College, Fairfield, Iowa. The public relations p. 43 materials, teachings and doctrines, moreover, showed a conscious effort to exclude terminology such as "God" and "religion". Instead such words as "science" and "creative intelligence" were used to replace these terms.

So important is this shift that now the theoretical foundation of TM is referred to as the "Science of Creative Intelligence," while the practical techniques are named TM. The reference has now become SCI/TM. The Spiritual Regeneration Movement has not been eliminated. It still exists for the deepening of the TM adherents in its foundational religious principles. However, for the uninitiated, the beck and call is to engage in a wholesale, scientific, non-religious program that will relieve stress and bring happiness. As one proceeds in the practice of TM, he is introduced to the theory of "creative intelligence," in reality a pantheistic religion.

PRACTICE OF TM

Popular materials today bill TM positively as a technique that is "simple, natural, easy, effortless, effective and fun."⁷ Negatively, TM is advertised as not "a religion, a diet, a life style, concentration, contemplation, or difficult."⁸ Moreover, the materials claim a scientific basis for TM and go into elaborate detail in their effort to prove TM a science.

These consumer materials are directed to a tension-filled, contemporary society to whom TM promises relief from these stresses by the simple, practical method of meditating twice daily in two twenty-minute sessions.⁹

Interested persons are directed to a local teaching center where they are given an introductory lecture on the nature and purpose of TM. If one is still interested he is invited back to a further lecture. The next step is a personal interview. The fourth step in the progress is very integral to the process of becoming an initiate into TM. This step includes personal instruction and the initiation ceremony.

The initiation ceremony involves elements that are directly related to the ancient Hindu practice of TM. Therefore, the elements of this ritual are central to the practice of TM. The initiate p. 44 is required to bring as an offering to this meeting three pieces of fresh, sweet fruit, several freshly-cut flowers and a clean white handkerchief. The initiation ceremony takes place in a small dimly-lit, incense-filled room containing for furniture an altar table and picture of Guru Dev. Upon entering, the initiate is asked to remove his shoes. The teacher proceeds to sing a hymn of praise, called Puja, in the Sanskrit language. This hymn of praise contains a recitation of various Hindu gods concluding with Guru Dev. During the hymn the offering is given to Guru Dev who is made the object of worship. This is the active part the initiate plays. But there is also a passive aspect he plays. The hymn of praise is viewed by the teachers of TM as a means of setting up a sympathetic relation with and revelation of Hindu deities to the initiate. Thus the

⁷ Denise Denniston and Peter McWilliams, *The TM Book* (Anderson, In.: Warner Books, 1975), back cover advertisement.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Forem, *op. cit.*, pp. 240ff.

initiate, unknown to himself, supposedly passively receives “benefits” from Hindu deities during the Puja.¹⁰

Following the recitation the initiate is given a Sanskrit word, called a mantra, the sound of which he is to meditate upon. TM proponents currently claim that mantras are sounds which have no meaning to the meditator but which is conducive to producing deep relaxation and refined awareness.¹¹ However, in his *Meditations* (published nearly ten years ago) Maharishi plainly teaches that mantras produce certain vibrations for each individual which not only link one up with all of creation but also with the “Source of all vibration,” who very obviously is Maharishi’s Hindu god Brahman.¹²

Linking mantras still further with Hindu religion, Maharishi views the hymns of the Hindu sacred Vedas as mantras about which he states:

“The entire knowledge of the mantras or hymns of the Vedas is devoted to man’s connection, to man’s communication with the higher beings in a different strata of creation.”¹³

Thus the purpose of the mantra in TM, given at the initiation ceremony, is nothing other than that of relating the initiate to a Hindu deity.

This purpose becomes even clearer when Maharishi speaks of meditation upon the mantra as [p. 45](#)

“A very good form of prayer. A most defined and more powerful form of prayer is this meditation which directly leads us to the fields of the Creator, to the sources of Creation, to the field of God.”¹⁴

The object of TM is to transcend the world of phenomena in which we live (Maya, or illusion, in Indian thinking) by going into our inner being. By faithfully spending twenty minutes twice daily meditating on the sound of one’s mantra one supposedly will experience a deeper level of consciousness as one proceeds. The object of “diving in” to a deeper consciousness level is to create a more harmonious vibration between oneself and the universe and ultimately between the person and god.

Maharishi teaches that there exist seven levels of consciousness. The first three are very obvious: sleeping, dreaming and waking. The fourth level Maharishi teaches is transcendental consciousness, that is, a state of deep rest in which one’s metabolism is greatly lowered. This is due to the fact that human consciousness has, according to Maharishi, realized its connection with Being and is at that moment in a state of bliss. Therefore, Maharishi can declare that “the essential nature of Being is absolute bliss consciousness,”¹⁵ and “transcendental consciousness is bliss consciousness.”¹⁶ Maharishi proudly claims that such teaching is found in the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita.¹⁷

¹⁰ Brooks Alexander, “Penetrating the Veil of Deception,” a taped lecture published by Spiritual Counterfeits, Inc.

¹¹ Forem, *op. cit.*, pp. 40.

¹² Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, *Meditations* (New York: Bantam Books, 1968), pp. 106–07.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 17–18.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

¹⁵ Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, *Transcendental Meditation*, p. 22.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 260.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

There exist yet three higher levels of consciousness in TM. They are cosmic consciousness, God-consciousness and unity-consciousness.

Cosmic consciousness is that level, according to Maharishi, in which one gains an awareness of both transcendental consciousness and ordinary waking consciousness simultaneously. Once gained it is said to be permanent and spontaneously maintained throughout waking, dreaming and sleeping consciousness.¹⁸

God-consciousness, the sixth state of consciousness, is said to follow cosmic consciousness and is a permanent awareness of the “Absolute” on the subjective level. It is a point at which the TM views all things, including himself, as overflowing with the p. 46 divine being. However, the tension between the relative and the absolute is never completely resolved.¹⁹ Yet it is certain that Maharishi’s pantheistic views disallows the existence of a personal God.

God-consciousness finds its fulfillment in unity-consciousness. This last state is said to be the finest level of relationship between relative existence and the absolute God. It is a point at which an individual becomes one with God, according to Maharishi.²⁰

The grand object of TM then, in summary, is unity and oneness with God. This is achieved by extended meditation and teaching, both of which enable one supposedly to delve down into the states of consciousness and finally to arrive at total awareness of one’s unity with God. This is done at least initially under the guise of the subject’s achieving a much needed “deep rest” and “relaxation”.

PRACTICAL EVALUATION

TM may be scored on both practical and theological grounds.

The first practical criticism is that the practice of TM can lead to occult spiritism. Maharishi is aware that TM can lead to encountering spirits in the spirit world.²¹ While, in fairness to Maharishi, he counsels to avoid spirits, the practice inevitably leads to spiritism. For example, the TM movement is now encouraging the practice of levitation, the raising of objects by spiritual movement.

While one cannot generalize the experience of one person, the citation of one former practitioner may be useful to show the dangers of spirit or demon possession through TM usage. Vail Hamilton, a Christian convert from TM tells of a mind-blowing experience when she was in what Maharishi describes as cosmic consciousness:

*Once, while in this state, I felt a spirit resting on my stomach while I was lying on my back. Immediately, I felt and saw a luminous part of my hand slip out of its denser fleshly covering. I probably would have come entirely out of my body if I hadn’t sensed a danger in it. Now that I think of it, if I had left, perhaps someone else would have come in.*²²

We are warned in Scripture to stay away from mediums, witches, p. 47 and occult experiences lest we encounter great damage and sin against God.

¹⁸ Anthony C. Campbell, *Seven States of Consciousness* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), p. 68.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 95–98.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 106–09.

²¹ Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, *Transcendental Meditation*, pp. 97ff.

²² Haddon, op. cit., p. 56.

THEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

In addition to the danger of spirit possession, there is the more basic criticism that TM teaches a false theology that is Hindu to the core. Space permits us to treat this topic, only briefly, in the following four areas: God, man, the world, and ethics.

While Maharishi feigns an attempt to present TM users with a personal God he cannot successfully sustain this position. He wrestles with what he calls the paradox between the absolute existence and the relative existence. In the final analysis Maharishi defines God as Being-which-encompasses-all-of-reality. Taking his cue from the Bhagavad Gita, Maharishi declares: "I am that eternal Being, thou art That and all this is That eternal Being in its essential nature."²³ The verdict is clear: TM teaches nothing less than pantheism.

But Maharishi is faced with the task of explaining how Being, which comprises everything and never changes, can include natural phenomena which are always changing. He answers this in a way that rivals the most prominent dialectical theologians of our day. God must create, says Maharishi, because of an inner urge. The purpose of creation is eudaemonistic, that of happiness. Therefore, the eternal Being, moved by this urge to create, spills out its being and forms the natural order, or the "gross level" or relative existence:

*The unity of Beingness, without undergoing any change in Itself, assumes the role of the multiplicity of creation, the diversity of the Being. The absolute assuming the role of relativity, or unity appearing as multiplicity is nothing else but the very nature of the absolute Being appearing in different manifestations. That is why, while the absolute is eternal in Its never-changing status, the relative diversity of creation is eternal in its ever-changing nature.*²⁴

Maharishi continues this dialectical nonsense by stating: "The reality of duality is unity. Even though different in their characteristics, the absolute Being and relative creation together form the one reality."²⁵

The natural order, says Maharishi, is relative and a "gross p. 48 level" of existence. It is really illusory (Maya), and real existence (Being) lies beyond.²⁶ Hence the necessity of descending the levels of consciousness. How markedly different from the Christian doctrine of creation which declares that the heavens and earth are revelatory of God's glory ([Psalms 8, 19](#))!

Man is viewed also as an emanation from God. Man's basic problem is not the Christian doctrine of sin. Rather, it is ignorance of his own divinity. Salvation or "self-realization," to use Maharishi's term, is the recognition of one's essential divinity and ultimately the unity in consciousness with the all-pervasive being of God.²⁷

Man's purpose in life is to enjoy the "bliss consciousness" essential to the nature of being and finally to enter a state of eternal liberation. This state is called Moksha or Nirvana. The only way for man to escape reincarnation and karma (the inexorable judgement upon man's action) is to have experienced this state of eternal liberation at

²³ Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, *Transcendental Meditation*, pp. 21–22.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 65–67.

death. In this experience the person would lose all individuality and become swallowed up in the Hindu god Brahman, the All.

The Christian must counter TM with the doctrine of man as created in the image of God. Man must be seen as ontologically separate from God, but created to know God and to live in fellowship with Him, now possible only through redemption in Christ.

Concerning Christ's redemptive work, Maharishi speaks of our Lord as only an exemplary teacher and his atoning work as futile: "I don't think Christ ever suffered or could suffer ... It is a pity that Christ is talked of in terms of suffering... Those who count upon suffering, it/*sic*/is a wrong interpretation of the life of Christ and the message of Christ..."²⁸

It is not correct to say that TM is completely without any ethics. Maharishi does indeed posit a pragmatic ethic for our everyday existence. However his ethic has no absolute right or wrong: "Certainly right and wrong are relative terms, and nothing in the field of relative existence could be said to be absolute right or wrong."²⁹

There exist, however, according to TM, certain relative standards p. 49 for right and wrong, namely, scriptures, and elderly and great men who teach us.

On the other hand, as one proceeds in the activity of TM and reaches the level of cosmic consciousness, the individual becomes his own standard of right and wrong: "In the state of cosmic consciousness ... the intellect could be taken to be an adequate standard for right and wrong."³⁰ Here Maharishi is faithful to the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita, which justify even killing if one is in the correct state of mind. Killing really does not matter according to Hindu thinking because whether one lives or dies is one and the same, due to karma and reincarnation. Should one die he will be reincarnated according to the judgement of karma, the inexorable judgement of reaping what one has sowed.

TM must be denounced for both its practice and its theology. It is a satanic, delusive religion operating under the guise of a scientific method of relaxation. Its god is not the holy, righteous Creator and redeemer God of the Bible. Rather, its god is the fabrication of man's mind. TM knows nothing of sin and therefore has no need of a savior. Ignorance on man's part in realizing his supposed oneness with God is defined as sin. How vastly different is this understanding of sin from the biblical depiction of sin as man's failure to obey and to conform to God's righteous law.

It should be quite obvious that the Christian can have no part in the dangerous, insidious teaching and practice of TM. Should one think that he can slough off the Hindu excrescences and simply use it as a system, much as Yoga physical exercises, let him beware. One cannot play with fire and fail to be burned. TM both in teaching and practice is Hindu to the core and is therefore *completely* incompatible with Christianity.

Let us find our rest, relaxation, and peace by continually coming to the fountain of peace, Jesus Christ, who has bidden us come to Himself. Let us meditate on God's goodness in saving us from our sins, and then let us translate meditation into obedience. It is in both knowing and doing the will of God that we shall find our peace. Finally, let us teach these great truths to our children and, by God's grace, save them from the clutches of one of the most insidious of the westernized Eastern religions. p. 50

²⁸ *Ibid.*, *Meditations*, pp. 123–24.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, *Transcendental Meditation*, p. 220.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

Maranatha: Advent in the Muslim World

S. von Sicard

Reprinted from Missiology: An International Review (July 1978) with permission

Professor von Sicard discusses some of the traditions associated with the signs of the last days in Islam and finds in the expectation of the returning Madhi and of Jesus, Spirit-given opportunities to invite Muslims to "consider Jesus". He calls the Church universal to traverse cultural barriers and help former Muslims witness to Jesus the Messiah through "Islamic churches".

THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Something is afoot in the Muslim World. In the last ten years or so Muslims have been listening to the Gospel message with unprecedented openness and interest. In 1966–1967 tens of thousands of Muslims turned to Christ in Indonesia. The reasons were social, political and religious. Above all, however, it would seem that it was the stand and witness of the Batak churches which contributed to this. Similar movements also took place in Ethiopia; and in Egypt the revival within the Coptic Church is finding a response among Muslims.¹

In 1974, one radio station reported a jump in response letters from Muslims from 12 to 70 per month. During the first six months of 1976 one Bible correspondence school enrolled 7,000 new students of whom 3,900 were reported to be Muslims. From Turkey and East Africa come reports of Muslims who have accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour.²

From West Africa comes news of the movement of the Fulani eastwards, and of the *Banu Isa* (the Jesus People)—large groups of Muslims who have been gathering at Bima Hill in the Gombe area of Bauchi State, Nigeria, to await the coming of "*Isa the Mahdi*", and who have requested the Evangelical Churches of West Africa to instruct them about *Isa* (Burns 1978:9; Hinds 1976:9ff.).³ A member of the Tijani order, in which mahdist expectations have been developed, is recorded to have said.

When the Mahdi comes he will finalise everything in this world. Signs of his coming are: there will be killing of many people without proper reason; p. 51 there will be drought. When that happens people will go towards the East. Bima Hill will be a starting place for the Mahdi (Hinds 1976:9).

The pronouncement must be seen against the background both of the civil war and unrest in Nigeria in the recent past, and also of the droughts and famines which have plagued the Sahel region. At a deeper level however the demographic facts and the oral traditions seem to be playing a decisive role.

¹ V. Tranholm-Mikkelsen, private communication, Salzburg, February 10, 1978.

² D. Schenck, private communication, Nairobi, February 8, 1978. See also Conn 1977:6 and Wilder 1977:302.

³ Also private communications with J. Hinds (Birmingham, January 4, 1978) and I. Shelley (Selly Oak Colleges, January 30, 1978).

Bima Hill is surrounded by villages of the Tera people, many of whom are Christians, but who themselves have no traditions about the hill. The Fulani however have traditions describing a flock of mysterious pigeons which circle the place, a noise of the neighing of horses and the appearance of a white flag glistening in the hills. The rock itself is huge and there is water on top; it may at times have served as refuge (*ibid*:9f.).

There does not seem to be an explanation of these stories although it lies near at hand to associate pigeons with the symbol of peace, well known in antiquity as much as it is today. Similarly the neighing of horses may well have been meant as a symbol of war. Both concepts are closely connected with the signs of the last days in Islam. The impression that this is the case is strengthened by the belief among the Fulanis that the Mahdi will come and open a door (*Kofa*) in the rock, through which those who are saved (*tsira*) will pass and be hidden at the time of the end of the world. This belief is undoubtedly connected with the fact that the original people used to hide in the deep caves of the rock when the Fulanis came to raid. There in the cool, dark interior of the caves there was also water to sustain the hideaways. However, in the olden days no one would enter the caves without first consulting the ancestors.

Although Muslim tradition may be unclear on the whole issue of the association of *Isa* and the restoration of Islam, there are sufficient traditions circulating to make this a lively issue for a growing number of Muslims. The expectation has been further enhanced of late through the meeting of the Islamic Foreign Ministers in Istanbul and Tripoli in 1976 and 1977 respectively. Among other things, they have announced preparatory plans for the celebration of the 14th centenary of the *hijra* which begins on November 20, 1979. The language of this material clearly strikes a note of expectation. Some examples will help to illustrate this. [p. 52](#)

*The celebrations will help to create among the Muslims the awareness that they have been ... a spiritual, moral and cultural force ... The celebrations will help to create among Muslims ... a sense of destiny which proclaims ... the re-emergence of Islam as a living, dynamic and growing civilization.*⁴

THE SIGNS OF THE "HOUR"

The spirit of such language ties in closely with the traditions about the signs of the "hour", or the last days, in Islam. If one reads on in the preparatory material for the Hijra Centenary with this in mind, one discovers plans for all Muslim leaders to gather for a visit to Mecca and Medina. All this reflects an apocalyptic mood. It is not just a cerebral fact, but a matter of living faith and conviction (*ibid*:2).

Muslim theology as it developed came to distinguish between lesser and greater signs of the last days. Some authorities reckon the former to number as many as 500. These signs include such things as the decline of faith among men, the promotion of the meanest persons to positions of authority, the growth of moral laxity etc. (Klein 1906:84f.). Muslims everywhere are, like Christians, concerned about these things and recognise them to be prevalent in society today.

In the context of the present mood, however, it is some of the so-called greater signs which tend to highlight the mood of expectation. At the top of the list is the belief that the *mahdi*, the directed or rightly guided one, will appear. He will come from Medina and go to Mecca where he will be made *imam*. He will be a great conqueror and will make the *ummah* a mighty nation. He will break crosses and kill swine. Among the Shi'ah the *mahdi*

⁴ The Muslim Institute for Research and Planning. The Hijra Centenary Year. K. Siddiqui, Hijra Centenary Programme. May 1976 and 1977.

has already appeared in the person of Abu'l-Qasim, the 12th imam, who went into *satr* (concealment) in A.H. 255 (A.D. 869), and who will appear again at the end of the world (*ibid*:85).

Another important sign is the appearance of Anti-Christ, *al-Masih* 'l-Dajjal (literally "the impostor Messiah"). He is said to be one-eyed and marked on his forehead with the letters KFR which stand for *kafir* (infidel). He will appear between Iraq and Syria, or near Medina, riding on an ass followed by 70,000 Jews. He will rule for 40 days, laying waste all places, but will not be able to enter Mecca, Medina or Jerusalem. He will be slain by Jesus at the gate of Lydda (*ibid*; Wensinck 1965:227).

The most important of the signs in this context however is the [p. 53](#) expectation that Jesus will descend either near the white minaret to the east of the mosque at Damascus, or on a hill in the holy land called Afiq. He will have a spear in his hand with which he will slay Anti-Christ. He will then enter the mosque: according to one tradition, in Damascus for the afternoon prayer; according to another, in Jerusalem for the morning prayer. The *imam* will make way for him to lead the prayer. In one version, he accepts; in another, he declines. Both versions emphasize that he performs the prayer according to the rites of the law of Muhammad. He will then go out to kill the swine, break the cross (*sic*), destroy chapels and churches and kill the Christians, except those who believe in him. He will then marry a wife, have children, die after 40 years and be buried at Medina. Under him there will be great security and prosperity. Lions and camels, bears and sheep will live in peace and a child will play with serpents unhurt.⁵

These traditions go back to surah 43:61, "Verily he shall be a sign of the last hour." Also 4:1 57, "There shall not be one of the people of the book but shall believe in him before his death."

The theme occurs again and again in Islamic history. Ibn Khaldun in his Introduction to History wrote,

It has been accepted by all Muslims in every age that at the end of time a man from the family of the Prophet will without fail make his appearance, one who will strengthen Islam and make justice triumph. Muslims will follow him and he will gain dominion over the Muslim realm. He will be called the Mahdi and he will be one of the signs of the Day of Judgement. After the Mahdi, Jesus will descend together with the Mahdi, and help him kill the Anti-Christ (Ibn Khaldun 1958: 156).

From this material it is obvious that the interrelation between the *Mahdi* and Jesus is not clear. It is however interesting that among the Hanafis, who are found mainly in the East but also in Egypt and North Africa, there is a belief that Jesus will be the viceregent of God on earth in the last days to the exclusion of the *Mahdi* whom they do not expect (Wensinck 1965:244). In view of the fact that Hanafi theology was the earliest to develop, and hence may well incorporate the original teachings of Islam, this viewpoint may be an important aspect of the present expectations. [p. 54](#)

THE SIGN OF THE SPIRIT

This being the situation, there is a need for Christians to be even more sensitive and aware of the situation. It may well be that God in his inscrutable wisdom and grace is calling the Church to prepare itself to engage in a meeting with Muslims in which the Christians

⁵ Tafsiru 'l-Baidawi to surah 43:61. Al-Tha'ali, I. Qisasu 'l-Anbiya', 1951 edition, p. 334f. See also Klein 1906:85, and cf. Wensinck 1960:112f. (*Isa*).

overriding concern must be to respond to this apocalyptic mood by inviting them to “consider Jesus.”

Muslims, standing on the threshold of a new century, are being called to consider the past “because it helps to guide the future development of the *ummah*.” Inherent in this is a call to repentance for failing to make Islam what the Almighty intends it to be, and a call to re-commitment to the fulness of his word. This, at the same time it would seem, is a call to all Christians to direct the seeking to him who was, who is and ever shall be. Now is the time. Let the Church venture great things for God and expect great things from him.

But in doing that the Church must beware not to dim the vision or quench the expectation, blinded by its own traditions developed in various places at different times in history. Jesus will not be seen or understood by the Indonesian Muslim if he is presented through American Sankey and Moody hymns. The Arab Muslim will not consider Jesus if he is presented in electronic language. The Nigerian Muslim will not perceive him if he comes in Anglo-Saxon fashion.

THE CALL TO THE CHURCH

The call to the Church is to “let God be God”; to allow him to reveal himself in such forms that men everywhere may acknowledge him as Lord and Saviour. How can this be done? How can the Church become an instrument?

One way is to be sensitive to the traditions associated with the expectancy. Within the above related traditions among the Fulani there is the potential of speaking about “the rock of salvation” ([Ps 89:26](#), [95:1](#)) and to develop this, pointing to Jesus ([I Co 10:4](#)). One could pick up the “gnashing of teeth” ([Mt 8:12](#), [13:42](#), [22:13](#) etc.) inherent in the symbolism of the “neighing.”

But the situation created by the “signs” points beyond this to four important considerations.

(1) It calls on the Church to enable those whom God has called unto himself from within Islam to bear witness in a meaningful way to their former co-religionists. They have not only the experience, [p. 55](#) but the whole background it takes to present the Messiah whom they have found. The Church instead of considering them weak vessels must trust that the Spirit will use these men and women in the present climate.

(2) It calls the Church to enable former Muslims to develop their own “islamic church” by an acceptance of Islam as a cultural expression and a social system—just as so many expressions of the German or Anglo-Saxon or American culture have become unquestioned parts of the Church. This means “allowing” each part of the Muslim world to be *itself*, and express its faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour in a form meaningful to itself and those it is called to reach (Wilder 1977:31 3ff.).

(3) It calls the Church to enable cross-continental exchanges by Christians from various parts of the world. This, in turn, will demonstrate to Muslims that even from areas they think solidly Muslim there are Christians who can speak to them in an idiom which conveys meaning—and offers them a valid opportunity to consider Jesus, the Messiah. This has unwittingly been experienced through government recruitment schemes in Northern Nigeria (and other places) when teachers seconded from India and Pakistan turned out to be Christians, rather than Muslims. Again, however, the Church is called upon to *enable* such people to witness—to undergird and support their efforts—not to estrange them because they are not within the framework or jurisdiction of the Church (Conn 1977:10).

(4) It calls the Church to motivate, prepare and encourage the large number of Christians from all over the world who are employed throughout the Muslim world to

witness to their risen Lord and Master in word and deed. The opportunities which present themselves in everyday life, in all walks of life, should be placed in his service. In another era the reformers, when faced with the Muslim in Eastern Europe, sought to prepare their people going into battle as soldiers to use the opportunities they might have if they were prisoners (*Luther's Works* vol. 53:571f.). Today, in various parts of the Arab world alone there are thousands of people, particularly from the West, employed by governments and private companies. Among these a not inconsiderable number are committed Christians who, without compromising their position as technical advisers, experts or employees, have many opportunities in the way they carry out their work, in personal relationships and during their spare time to bear witness to Christ (Conn 1977:3). p. 56

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Assistance Programs Require Partnership

Vinay Samuel and Charles Corwin

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permission*

In this article a national Asian Church leader and a former western missionary together call for better cross-cultural research and greater sensitivity to historical and psychodynamic

factors that will alleviate the humiliating role playing and paternalism that mar many compassionate relief and development programmes.

The authors explore patterns of partnership in initiating, deciding and implementing programmes that will help minimise the tensions of donor-receptor and para-Church conflicts. Only such partnerships can liberate both donor and receptor.

Many national churches in the Third World are on the eve of establishing their credibility in society and government. Their leaders are being brought into councils on planning and development. Upon this scene emerges another principal—the national church of the West, willing to share its resources, eager to carry out the cultural and evangelistic mandates laid upon it. Yet often this well-intentioned church behaves in ways reminiscent of actual receptors of aid in the Third World—oblivious of the historical process and the psychodynamics of a donor-receptor relationship.

Such behaviour can undermine long term efforts for establishing credibility by the Third World national church and frustrate long-range goals for self-sufficiency desired by the Western church. The thesis of this article is that the crucial credibility and self-sufficiency of the Third World evangelical church can be enhanced by its counterpart in the West, if both churches work together on the principle of partnership in the initiation, decision-making and implementation of assistance programs.

PARTNERSHIP IN INITIATION

Initiation for famine relief of Jerusalem Christians came from Jerusalem church leaders. They raised the issue while Paul visited them on another errand. Then and there Paul determined to remember the poor ([Gal. 2:10](#)), organized an aid program among **P. 58** daughter churches, and finally delivered that aid in person to the Jerusalem church. The vicissitudes of life had precipitated a demeaning role-reversal for the mother church; it had become the receptor culture. As representative of the donor culture, Paul was sensitive to the explosive psycho-dynamics going on during that process. So he asked prayer before aid was actually delivered, that he “might find acceptance with God’s people” ([Rom. 15:31](#)). He didn’t presume his motives were apparent.

The evangelical church of the West must be equally sensitive to the fragile donor-receptor relationship. Mere influence does not qualify for the donor’s role. Western churches must first invite Third World leaders to visit them as equals, coming as communicators not supplicants. If their spiritual gifts and maturity were considered important for the full development of Western churches, Third World church leaders would be invited more to Western pulpits. On such occasions the conditions and needs of both national churches could be freely aired.

It is both humiliating and power-dwarfing for Third World church leaders to always appear to Western churches in the garb of receptor not donor. Humiliating, because when a national comes seeking help for his projects, he must verbally or nonverbally also communicate his spiritual impoverishment and need *vis-a-vis* the donor culture if he is to be heard at all. Powerdwarfing, because he cannot come as spiritual equal while requesting material aid. In a partnership the spiritual maturity and gifts of both national churches are accepted. Does the Third World church approach the West bearing no gift of enabling the Western church to fulfill its mission?

In an atmosphere of free expression and sharing, there will be an open agenda. Together those churches can determine who will be donor, who will be receptor. If, for example, a Third World church by mutual decision is designated the receptor church for future assistance programs, national leaders from that church are best qualified to specify real needs. They will be able to recruit national Christians with skill and integrity to

implement programs. Also, these leaders will have a vested interest in the program's success and completion.

It can be frustrating for enthusiastic potential donor churches to wait for the national church of another culture to send representatives before initiating assistance programs. But by refusing to wait, they retard progress toward credibility desired by the national church of the Third World. p. 59

When a donor culture unilaterally initiates an assistance program, it unwittingly creates a parent-child relationship with the receptor culture, with inherent propensities to paternalism. Actually, a parent-child relationship between the donor-receptor cultures is easier. The parent can freely dominate, the child can happily manipulate. Each knows his role; there are no ambiguities. But a sense of responsibility and integrity will not grow in the child. Rather, he will develop techniques for getting around the parent, using him and stressing dependency. In an adult-adult relationship neither can dominate or manipulate. The relationship requires much more of both; this is partnership.

PARTNERSHIP IN DECISION-MAKING

Once needs are carefully articulated, the donor-receptor relationship can be established. It is not enough, however, that a council of trained experts in the donor culture evaluate needs, prioritize them and decide in isolation on a course of action. For joint decision-making leads to power-sharing. The penchant for donor cultures to share resources but not power begins at this decision-making stage.

Partnership in decision-making also minimizes misunderstandings as the program unfolds on the field. Often donor cultures have genuine needs as well—the need for broad participation by their constituencies, the on-going training of donor-culture youth on the field—and these needs are inbedded in decisions handed down to the receptor culture. But because national church leaders from the receptor culture are not present when these decisions are made, they become mystified and even scandalized to behold so much of the accumulated “assistance for world mission” recycled back to the donor culture.

Aid candidates, like refugees huddled on a raft, await rescue by some benefactor. When the good ship “concern” appears on the horizon, expectations are raised, preparations to board begun. But a shout comes over the megaphone from the rescuers, “Welcome aboard—if you can keep the ship moving.” That is, the criterion for aid program by the donor culture is that the program must have within it sufficient appeal value to (1) motivate potential donors, and (2) generate enough surplus to keep the ship going until another raft is found. To avoid the disenchantment and cynicism such decision-making engenders, the donor culture must be researched as thoroughly as the receptor culture.

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PARTNERSHIP IN IMPLEMENTATION

After initiative is taken by both cultures in response to real needs, joint decisions are made that set goals and priorities. Next implementation begins by mobilizing available people. Who is best qualified to screen them? Often representatives from the donor culture visit the field, interview, and select such leaders themselves. They find the relationship most comfortable with nationals in the receptor culture who affirm their values, psychology and communicational vehicles.

So, bewildered national leaders stand helplessly by as those one-step removed from their culture are chosen to represent them. It is like *Catch 22*: to identify with your people you must leave them and identify with strangers. In getting the ears and attention of the

donor culture, progressive nationals must become encultured into orientations and thought patterns of the donor culture.

Often such nationals have recently studied in the donor culture and have not yet established credibility in the receptor culture. They may be in culture-shock during the “re-entry” period, facing unanticipated resistance from the very ones who sent them abroad. The arrival of an enthusiastic representative from the donor culture comes as deliverance from such malaise. The bond is struck. From it emerges, quasi Western-Third World church organization, identified with neither the receptor culture nor the donor-culture. It becomes a fiefdom wherein nepotism is rife, local answerability non-existent, credibility within the receptor culture zero.

This proliferation of para-church organizations in the Third World, answerable only to church leaders in the donor culture, is evidence of the lack of partnership in implementation. Leaders of these para-church organizations usually found Christ within the national church, were trained by it, then grew restive within its structure. So, the avenue of para-church activity is taken to circumvent church structures. But a crisis of credibility inevitably comes, especially during the transfer of leadership from founder to successor. It is then that the donor culture realizes how few respected national leaders will assume leadership, simply because of the par-church organization’s abysmal credibility within the receptor culture.

Uchimura Kanzo, one of Japan’s most famous Christians, observed this phenomenon as far back as 1904. He wrote: [p. 61](#)

These are they who by studied imitation of pious language and manners have won the confidence of the missionary captains, and are to all outward appearances perfect samples of Christian docility, and are the best possible help whenever uncomplaining obedience is the first thing to be desired.... Imagine such—licensed, surpliced, and adulated, even as the choicest trophies of Christian missions and given chairs of presidency of Christian colleges, or head secretaryships of the YMCA and their portraits engraven on the first pages of missionary reviews, and their piety lauded ... but the whole edifice rested on such goes to crash, be it a church, a mission school or any other work, and the poor captain stands in awe as to the mysterious ways of Providence (Uchimura, 1904:112).

Also in the implementation phase, there must be partnership in the display of Christ’s compassion. During crisis relief, everyone is thankful for assistance. Few questions are asked by the receptor culture. The donor culture rushing in with foreign trucks, foreign faces and foreign labels presents no problem for dazed disaster victims. However, in the post-crisis period, when relief gives away to development and the church takes up the task of evangelism, the local populace does not recognize the faces of national Christians. Subconsciously, it is saying, “The compassion of the donor culture I know, but who are you?” Partnership maximizes visibility of the local Christians and minimizes resistance to their evangelism.

CONCLUSIONS

Partnership between donor and receptor in initiating, deciding and implementing assistance programs establishes the church’s credibility and self-sufficiency in receptor cultures. It liberates both donor and receptor.

The donor will be liberated from concealing his own needs and weaknesses. He can learn and receive from the receptor culture while serving it. The receptor will be liberated from feelings of inferiority and given boldness to share his gifts. Partnership frees donor and receptor together for evaluating, then redirecting such assistance whenever it mutes Jesus Christ, ministering law and promise through his body, the church.

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The Money Barrier Between Sending and Receiving Churches

Harvie M. Conn

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The 1971 Green Lake Conference was convened to identify points of tension in church-mission relations and to develop guidelines to assist the mission boards in charting future paths. Before adjournment, fifteen areas of tension had to be isolated and discussed; seven were explicitly related to financial questions.¹

Complicating the transition to national leadership was the reluctance of the home church to donate money for distribution by national leaders, deepening in some cases into a resentment on the part of the home church. On the "home" front the local church agonized over the missions' competition for financial resources.² On the field, there were the traditional problems of shifting from subsidy to indigenous responsibility, lack of trust toward nationals in distribution of funds, conflicts over funds for institutions versus funds for evangelism, the discrepancy between the living standards of missionaries and national workers.

From Green Lake's Affirmation came a consensus, confessing tendencies towards paternalism, authoritarianism, and lack of trust, a recognition of missions' slowness in building scriptural bridges of unity and fellowship. Mission societies were urged to evaluate their relations with home and overseas churches through fellowship and consultation, to foster reciprocal ministry on the basis of mutual love, acceptance and oneness in Christ.³

Has this affirmation been implemented since Green Lake '71? Arni Shareski, responding to that question before the Annual EFMA Missions Executives Retreat in 1975, saw Green Lake's "most significant benefit" as "the extent to which many delegates were

¹ Vergil Gerber, ed. *Missions in Creative Tension* (South Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1971), pp. 347-350.

² Gordan MacDonald, "Closing Gaps Between Missions and Home Churches." *Church Mission Tensions Today*. C. Peter Wagner, ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972), pp. 53-72.

³ Gerber, *op. cit.*, p. 383.

persuaded their own organizations needed overhauling.”⁴ In amplifying that, he noted that “the larger and p. 63 older organizations reported few changes,” and that the “value of GL ’71 to any group was fairly well determined by the extent to which the delegates were persuaded their mission needed restructuring.”⁵

AREAS OF FINANCIAL TENSION

Richard Oestreicher of the Far Eastern Gospel Crusade lists as one of “four big challenges missions will face in the next decade.” that of the challenge of increased economic pressure. Runaway international inflation, administrative costs, the donor’s own pressures, slow growth in income are calling for “home” cooperation as never before, and honest self-analysis.⁶

None of this is encouraging to me. And it is not encouraging for the same reasons behind my initial disillusionment with Green Lake.⁷ The “hidden curriculum” at Green Lake, which was to some degree recognized there, was that between “sending church,” defined in terms of North American and “receiving church” defined in terms of an overseas national church.⁸

DOUBLE FUNDING STANDARD

Behind it lies the classic evangelical support for “self-support,” one of the key platforms of the indigenous methodology formulated in the nineteenth century by Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson. It is my contention that behind this formulation is the hidden curriculum that assumes a double standard for funding, built on an invisible distinction between “sending church” and “receiving church.” This is further complicated by the fact that the largest financial supporter for foreign missions has been the North American church—a church that for over 100 years has never been a substantially “receiving” church. As long as this distinction remains operative and this historical reality unquestioned, the methods of financing missions, now presumably to be imitated by third world missions, will work against the deepest desires of Green Lake, the forging of fellowship, mutual love, acceptance and oneness in Christ.

Increasingly, discussions are pressing us to recognize this p. 64 method of financing missions as determinative in the building of world church fellowship. Concern for financial viability is being raised by the third world church. The 1974 study by Herbert Zorn, supported by the Theological Education Fund of the WCC, raises questions in this same area from the third world.⁹ A 1974 study of inherited missionary forms patterning the Christian ministry in India touches on questions of financing in its concern with what

⁴ Anni Shareski, “Missions in Creative Tension.” *Reports of the Annual Mission Executives Retreat, Sept. 19–Oct. 2 1975* (Washington D.C.: Evangelical Foreign Missions Association, 1975), p. 29.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁶ Wade Coggins and E. L. Frizen eds., *Evangelical Missions Tomorrow* (South Pasadena: William Carey Library 1977), p. 98.

⁷ Harvie M. Conn, “Church-Mission Relationships.” *Theological Perspectives on Church Growth* (Nutley, N. J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1976), pp. 106–108.

⁸ Wagner, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

⁹ Herbert Zorn, *Viability in Context*. Bromley, Kent: Theological Education Fund, 1974.

is called “a dependence upon paid church workers.”¹⁰ More directly related to the problem are the growing number of mission agencies operating in the United States, who define their “primary task” in terms of the “support of nationals.” The eleventh edition of the *Mission Handbook* lists 93 agencies under such a classification.¹¹

There are those who are now questioning in print the reluctance of the western churches to support national pastors.¹² But even studies such as these operate without questioning the presumption that financing for the expansion of world evangelism lies basically in the hands of those with the most money, in this case, Christians in the United States. He who pays the piper still plays the tune. Only now he is asked to pay the Indian, Nigerian or Argentinian piper as well as the North American songster.

The most serious questioning of this pattern has come in connection with the moratorium debates. Not without reason has the call for moratorium been directed also against missionary dollars as well as personnel. Behind the anger of some third world churchmen over the disparity that western economic advantages make between missionary and national is the deeper question reflected in the words of a leader of one African church. “What is the justification for such discrimination except that the missionary is paid by his church in the West and the African is paid by his congregation?”¹³
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Even mission agencies sensitive to the questions behind moratorium have trouble answering that question. And it is not simply because “most church members at home continue to think of mission in terms of missionaries ...”, true as that is.¹⁴ It is also because they assume that support for missions must come from the “sending” church. So, even such agencies often are forced to examine their financial support of missionary and national institutions in the face of reducing “home” support and do it in a unilateral way. The sending piper continues to call the tune.

SOME SUGGESTIONS

Where shall we start? Some suggest the creation and cultivation of economic projects, helping into “being thousands of companies owned and operated by national believers.”¹⁵ That suggestion, part of mission history in the past,¹⁶ is an exciting and valuable one.

¹⁰ James A. Bergquist and P.K. Manickam, *The Crisis of Dependency in Third World Ministries* (Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1974), pp. 55ff.

¹¹ Edward R. Dayton, ed., *11th Edition, Mission Handbook: North American Protestant Ministries Overseas* (Monrovia: MARC, 1976), p. 422. The classification, however, is vague since many of the boards listed under the category are also involved in sending North American missionaries and are also listed under other “primary task” categories.

¹² Kenneth G. Donald, “What’s Wrong with Foreign Money for National Pastors?” *Evangelical Missions quarterly*, Vol. 13 No. 1 (January 1977), 19–25.

¹³ Paul A. Hopkins, *What Next in Mission?* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977), pp. 11–12.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹⁵ Coggins and Frizen, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

¹⁶ William Danker, *Profit for the Lord*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971.

Still others call for repentance because of our style of life in America. On the mission “frontier” (assumed to be outside of North America), we are wisely reminded, “where the manner of life constitutes a bar to full fellowship, manner of life must be altered ...”¹⁸

To all these, I would add an idea equally or perhaps more foundational than any of the above. It flows from the affirmation of the apostle Paul that he had the right to ask “for remuneration from those among whom he had sown spiritual things. (Thus, not from the church which had sent him out). He said also, ‘the Lord ordained that they which preached the gospel should live of the gospel’ ([1 Cor. 9:14](#)).”¹⁹ Putting it another way, Is not the Pauline pattern one of support for the ministry (whether expatriate or national) from the church in which he labors? What’s wrong with foreign (receiving church) money for foreign (sending church) missionaries? [p. 66](#) Can we recover the Pauline concept of economic participation in the ministry as “fellowship in the gospel” ([Phil. 1:5](#)) by asking *only* for “foreign money for national pastors” and not also ask for “national money for foreign pastors”?

TWO BIBLICAL SUPPORTS

Firm ground for this principle can be drawn from two Pauline sources: the New Testament account of the collection project that Paul organized among his Gentile churches for the indigent Christian community in Jerusalem, and his own reflections on his right to apostolic remuneration.

That right of apostolic remuneration Paul grounded in several areas—the analogy of wages paid those in wordly affairs ([1 Cor. 9:7](#)), Old Testament legislation ([9:8](#)), and the command of Christ, directing that those who proclaim the gospel get their living from the gospel ([9:14](#)). At Corinth, however, he chose not to exercise that “right” ([9:18](#)), “robbing other churches” by taking wages from them to serve the Corinthians without charge ([2 Cor. 11:7-8](#)).

The principle he put aside at Corinth is not simply the right to remuneration. It is the right of remuneration from those among whom he was sowing spiritual things. His reference to the contributions of other churches to his ministry there as “pillaging” or “robbing” reinforces that implication. He had accepted the gifts of other brethren at a time when he was not actually ministering in their midst. His assumption was that “while these other churches could reasonably have been asked to maintain Paul when he was ministering to *them*, it was not incumbent upon them to pay his expenses when working at Corinth.”²⁰

This does not mean that Paul’s custom, when preaching or teaching in a place, was not to accept any gifts at the hands of the local people. “The fact that Paul did not make use of his right in the gospel for various reasons is no reason for us to ignore the rule, unless very peculiar circumstances should necessitate exceptions. Our obligation is not simply to follow the example of Paul, but it is to hold to the principle he established.”²¹

Next, regarding the collection taken of Gentile converts for the [p. 67](#) benefit of Jewish believers in Jerusalem, it could conceivably be argued that the collection was of such a

¹⁸ Hopkins, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

¹⁹ Bavinck, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

²⁰ R.V.G. Tasker, *The Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians. An introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publ. Comp., 1958), p. 151.

²¹ Bavinck, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

unique character that we can hardly use it to establish a principle for church-mission relations. Even admitting the eschatological significance of the collection, as does Keith F. Nickle,²² it might be argued that such a biblical-theological perspective was unique to the epoch of redemptive history prior to the closing of the canon, focusing, as we believe it does, on questions of the validity of the Pauline apostleship and the promised union of Jew and Gentile in one body of Christ.

Both these qualifications of usage must be admitted and should preserve us from making too strong applications from the collection to the more narrow question I deal with in this article. At the same time, these reservations should not lead us to an understanding of the collection as of such a unique character that it can yield no wider principles.

Paul's animated discussion of the enthusiastic response of the Macedonians produced one sentence ([2 Cor. 8:4](#)), heaped with theologically significant terms—grace, fellowship, ministry, saints. The collection combats any tension or suspicious relationship that might conceivably intrude into the fellowship of the one new man that Christ had constructed from Jew and Gentile.

So too, Paul's rich allusions to the sharing of the Philippian church in his own ministry flow from the bond of love it conveys ([Phil. 4:1, 5-18](#)). In fact, it was that same bond of love that often deterred Paul from making use of his right of remuneration, "that we may cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ" ([1 Cor. 9:12](#)).

A final element needs to be mentioned here. "Because the collection was to testify in Jerusalem to the genuineness of the incorporation of the Gentiles into the people of God, it was essential for Paul that their participation in the collection be of their own free will. Only then would the gift exemplify their Christian love and concern for the Jerusalem Christians motivated by the love of Christ for them. Just as Paul had voluntarily agreed to initiate the project, so were they voluntarily to fulfill it."²³

The value of the Macedonians' participation lay in their enthusiastic, spontaneous, sincere ([2 Cor. 8:2](#)) response ([8:5](#)). This was a direct result of and witness to their commitment to Christ. p. 68 The self-giving love of Christ was to be the controlling motivation for the response of the Corinthian Christians ([2 Cor. 8:9](#)).

One does not read in any of this a controlling factor of *sending* in contrast to *receiving* church. On an artificial level, if it did exist, it would be a case of the *receiving* church contributing to the *sending* church. But that, to my mind, is to impose an historical form on the deeper biblical-theological dimensions of the meaning of the collection. In the context of my proposal, however, the data place before us questions whose force seems difficult to escape.

QUESTIONS TO FACE

Has the accepted pattern of missionary support not made it impossible for North American churches to share in the fellowship of receiving as well as giving? Has the accepted pattern of missionary support not made it impossible for North American churches to taste the joyful expression of Christian charity from the world body of Christ? Have we not succeeded in impoverishing ourselves and our brothers in Christ by closing biblical channels for us all to express, through our gifts, the unity of the new man into which Christ has brought us all, the display of Christian love?

²² Keith F. Nickle, *The Collection*. Studies in Biblical Theology No. 48. Naperville; Alec R. Allenson. Inc., 1966.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

Putting it even more dramatically, has a cultural pattern made it impossible for brothers to love one another, to fellowship in the gospel? Could it be that, hidden behind missions' present methodology, still lurks an incipient paternalism that is not yet aware of the riches of "Macedonia's" gifts?

Ultimately, I have no illusions that, economically, a shift in policy, at this point may end financial crunch. Paul's comptroller would not have seen the gift of the Macedonians in his ledger account as very substantial giving. But, in terms of what it may mean for the relationships of the world church, the gift may be significant indeed. It might mean a singular concrete expression of the fellowship in love, the fostering of reciprocal ministry that Green Lake '71 urgently wanted. It might mean a new pressure on the old structures mission boards have so much difficulty in discarding, the mission scaffolding they keep saying is only temporary, but never seems to go down.

It might mean a new degree of self-examination as to the disparity between missionary life style and national life style. It would be increasingly hard to open salary checks from the little church across the street from the missionary's compound in the p. 69 living room of a house twice as big as the church building. It might mean a new inquiry into the meaning of the Pauline identification with the poor as a confirmation of apostolic ministry. Is the missionary's calling to that same apostolic message confirmed in that same way? The pressures of the initiative of free love in Christ freely shared impose hard questions and no easy answers.

(abridged)

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Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger

Ronald J. Sider

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This article is a synopsis of Ronald Sider's book, Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger. David Watson in the foreword of the British edition says, "I profoundly believe that this book contains the most vital challenge which faces the Church of today. It is one of the most searching and disquieting books I have ever read".

CHRISTIANS in the industrialized nations face an agonizing choice. By the lifestyles we live, the church buildings we construct and the politicians we elect, we demonstrate clearly that we are on the side of the rich. The Bible makes it painfully clear that God is on the side of the poor. We must choose. It is impossible to worship both God and mammon. Of course, the choice will be painful, but that should not surprise us. Long ago Jesus warned that it would be easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom. Or, as C.S. Lewis put it:

*All things (e.g. a camel's journey through
A needle's eye) are possible, it's true*

*But picture how the camel feels squeezed out
In one long bloody thread from tail to snout.*

A WORLD OF INCREASING HUNGER

That we are the rich in a hungry world is distressingly clear. Last year the United States National Academy of Science published a study which noted that “750 million people in the poorest nations live in extreme poverty with annual incomes of less than \$75.” The report went on to say that there were hundreds of millions more in desperate poverty in middle-income, developing countries. In 1974, the United Nations reported that “at least 462 million are actually starving.” That figure represents more than two starving people for every man, woman and child in the United States. There are at least that many who are malnourished because they do not have enough protein even though they have a minimally adequate calorie intake. A good estimate would suggest **P. 71** that one billion of our sisters and brothers alive today are starving or seriously malnourished.

How does our situation compare with theirs? After massive comparison of living standards around the world an economist at the University of Pennsylvania has recently reported that the average person in the United States is fourteen times as rich as the average person in India. We consume five times as much grain as the average person in Asia. Our energy consumption is so high that the 210 million persons in the United States consume as much energy on air conditioners alone as the more than 800 million Chinese use on everything.

Most astonishing of all is the fact that we still think we are poor. In October, 1977, *Newsweek* did a story on the “Middle Class Poor” pointing out that millions of Americans think they can barely survive on the \$15,000, \$18,000 or even \$25,000 they make each year. If the 750 million people who earn less than \$75 per year were to read that story (they will not, of course, because they are illiterate and the magazine would cost them a week’s supply of food), they would be both perplexed and angry. North Americans are an incredibly wealthy aristocracy in a poor world where the poorest billion are starving and malnourished.

Moreover, we have contributed to their poverty. The industrialized nations have carefully shaped the patterns of international trade for their own economic advantage. For instance, the United States charges the highest tariffs on processed and manufactured goods from poor countries. The less manufacturing and processing done by the poor country, the lower the tariff we charge. The reason for this is simple. Processing and manufacturing interests in this country, both labor and business, want us to buy cheap raw materials and profit from processing them here. But the result, unfortunately, is to deprive poor countries of millions of extra jobs and billions of extra dollars in export earnings.

Another example is what we call “voluntary” quotas on manufactured goods from poor countries. They have become more common recently. We threaten new tariff barriers unless they “voluntarily” put restrictions on what they send to us.

Third and even more serious is the fact that for decades the prices of primary products sold by developing countries to rich nations have been declining relative to the prices of manufactured products and other high technology items that poor countries have to buy from us. Example: The government of Tanzania **p. 72** reports that one tractor cost five tons of sisal (used to make rope) in 1963. In 1970 essentially the same tractor cost twice as much, ten tons of sisal.

We also contribute to the poverty of the poorer nations by our inordinate consumption of nonrenewable natural resources. Is it just for 5 percent of the world’s

people (living in the United States) to consume 33 percent of the world's limited, nonrenewable natural resources every year? If the supply were unlimited and others could enjoy the same benefits, then the situation would be different. But that is not the case. International development specialist Lester Brown, confesses, "It has long been part of conventional wisdom within the international development community that the two billion people living in the poor countries could not aspire to the life style enjoyed by the average North American because there was not (enough) iron ore, petroleum and protein in the world to provide it." Knowing that, it is just not right for us to demand an ever-expanding economy from our legislators in Washington every year.

Finally, food consumption. Our eating patterns may seem like private parts of our lives, but in fact they are interlocked with very complex international economic patterns. Every year the United States imports more food from poor countries than we export to hungry lands. The United States alone imports about twice as much fish, primarily in the form of feed for livestock, as do all the poor countries combined. Two-thirds of the total world catch of tuna comes to the United States, and we feed one-third of that to cats.

Cowboys and beef cattle are part of our national self-identity. "Surely our beef at least is grown at home," we think. But it is not. The United States is the world's largest importer of beef. Imported beef comes not just from Australia and New Zealand but also from many poor countries in Latin America. The Mexican border is the scene of the world's largest transfer of meat. We import about a million cattle from Mexico every year. And that is half as much as Mexico has left for itself totally.

Again, it is not merely that we consume beef which hungry Mexicans need. Our demand for beef also encourages unjust structures in many places. Take the case of the little country of Honduras in Central America. Honduras is a poor country where one-third of the people earn less than \$30 a year. In spite of widespread poverty that little country exports 35 million pounds of beef to the United States annually. Moreover, that beef is [p. 73](#) grown by a tiny wealthy elite of about 670 families. They represent three-tenths of one percent of the total population of Honduras, but they own over 25 percent of all the good land. In the past few years there has been an intense struggle going on in Honduras. The peasants want more land. The powerful Honduran Cattle Farmers Federation, which represents the wealthy farmers, does not want to give them land. A group of cattle farmers recently attacked a peasant training center and killed a number of people, including several priests. Do we want to be a part of that kind of injustice?

The infant mortality rate in Honduras is six times that of the United States. Probably 60 percent of the children in Honduras die before they reach the age of five. Three-quarters of them die from malnutrition. Who is responsible for those dying children? The wealthy Hondurans who want to protect their affluence? The American companies and the United States government who work closely with the Honduran elite? You and I who eat the beef that hungry Honduran children need?

We dare not make the simplistic assumption that if we merely stopped eating beef, hungry Mexicans or Hondurans promptly would have their share. Complex economic and political changes here and abroad are essential. But what I am trying to say is that our eating patterns are interlocked with destructive social and economic structures that leave millions hungry and starving. You and I are implicated in this sin, for we all profit from this kind of structural injustice.

BIBLE TEACHING ON THE OPPRESSION OF THE POOR

What should be our response to such a situation? For biblical people the answer is clear. Unless we want to fall into theological liberalism and allow our attitude toward the poor

and oppressed to be shaped by our affluent neighbors rather than Scripture, we will look to God's revelation for our sense of direction.

Two central biblical themes relate to our problem:

1. *God is on the side of the poor and works in history to bring justice to the oppressed.*
2. *Participating in institutionalized evil or structural sin is just as sinful as personal sinful acts like lying or committing adultery.*

First, God is on the side of the poor. Think about the pivotal points of revelation history: the Exodus, the destruction of Israel, the Incarnation. At the crucial moments when God displayed his [p. 74](#) mighty acts in history to reveal his nature and will, God also intervened to liberate the poor and the oppressed. God displayed his power at the Exodus in order to free oppressed slaves. When he called Moses at the burning bush God said his intention was to end suffering and injustice: "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians" ([Ex. 3:7](#)). The God of the Bible cares when people enslave and oppress others, and at the Exodus he acted to end economic oppression and bring freedom.

The same was true of the destruction of Israel and Judah. The explosive message of the prophets is that God destroyed Israel not just because of idolatry but also because of their economic exploitation of the poor.

There is also the Incarnation. Jesus defines his mission like this: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" ([Luke 4:18, 19](#)). After reading those words he informed his audience that scripture was fulfilled in himself. The mission of God in the flesh was to free the oppressed and heal the blind. (It was also to preach the gospel, though that is not our immediate subject in this article.)

The poor are the only group specifically singled out as recipients of Jesus' gospel. Certainly the gospel was for everyone. But Jesus was concerned that the poor especially should realize that his good news was for them. Moreover, Jesus' actual ministry corresponded to his words. He healed the sick and blind; he fed the hungry; he warned his followers in the strongest possible terms that those who do not feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and visit the prisoners will experience damnation.

At the supreme moment of history, then, when God himself took on human flesh, we see the God of Israel still at work liberating the oppressed and summoning his people to do the same.

The second element of the biblical teaching that God is on the side of the poor is that the Bible says that God acts in history to exalt the poor and cast down the rich. Mary's Magnificat puts it bluntly: "My soul praises the Lord... He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled [p. 75](#) the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty" ([Luke 1:46, 52, 53](#)). James says: "Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming upon you" ([James 5:11](#)).

IS GOD A MARXIST?

Why does Scripture declare that God regularly reverses the good fortunes of the rich? Is God a Marxist? Is God engaged in class warfare? I do not think so. Actually our texts never say that God *loves* the poor more than the rich. They say rather that God lifts up the poor and disadvantaged and casts down the wealthy and powerful. Why? Precisely because the wealthy have become rich very often by oppressing the poor, or because they have failed

to aid the needy! Why did James warn the rich to weep and wail? it was because they had oppressed their workers. James says, “You have hoarded wealth. The wages you failed to pay the workmen who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter” ([James 5:3-5](#)). God does not have class enemies. But he hates and punishes injustice and the neglect of the poor. The rich are frequently guilty of both.

Long before the days of James, Jeremiah also knew that the rich were often rich because of oppression. He wrote, “Among my people are wicked men who lie in wait like men who snare birds and like those who set traps to catch men. Like cages full of birds, their houses are full of deceit; they have become rich and powerful and have grown fat and sleek. Their evil deeds have no limit; they do not plead the case of the fatherless to win it, they do not defend the rights of the poor. Should I not punish them for this?’ declares the Lord ...” ([Jer. 5:26-29](#)). Through the prophets God announced destruction both for rich individuals and rich nations who oppressed the poor. Isaiah also says this: “The Lord takes his place in court; he rises to judge the people. The Lord enters into judgement against the elders and leaders of his people: ‘It is you who have ruined my vineyard; the plunder from the poor is in your houses. What do you mean by crushing my people and grinding the faces of the poor?’ declares the Lord, the Lord Almighty” ([Isa. 3:13-15](#)). Because the rich oppress the poor and weak, the Lord of history will put down their houses and societies. [p. 76](#)

THE SIN OF NEGLECT OF THE NEEDY

Sometimes Scripture does not accuse the rich of direct oppression of the poor; it simply accuses them of failure to aid and share with the needy.

The biblical explanation of Sodom’s destruction is one example. Through the prophet Ezekiel God says that one important reason he destroyed Sodom was that she stubbornly refused to share with the poor. “Now this was the sin of your sister Sodom: She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy.... Therefore I did away with them as you have seen” ([Ezek. 16:29, 50](#)). The text does not say that they oppressed the poor, although perhaps they did. It simply says that they failed to aid the needy. Today affluent Christians remember Sodom’s sexual misconduct but forget her sinful unconcern for the poor. Is it because the former is less upsetting? Have we allowed our economic self-interest to distort our interpretation of Scripture? Undoubtedly we have. But precisely to the extent that our affirmation of scriptural authority is sincere, to that extent we must permit painful texts to correct our thinking. As we do, we will acknowledge in fear and trembling that the God of the Bible wreaks horrendous havoc on the rich because they often get rich by oppressing the poor or by failing to aid the needy.

BRINGING THE PEOPLE OF GOD TO THE TEST

The third part of the biblical teaching that God is on the side of the poor is that the people of God, if they really are the people of God, are also on the side of the poor. God’s Word clearly teaches that those who neglect the poor are really not God’s people at all, no matter how frequent their religious rituals or how orthodox their creeds and confessions. God thundered through the prophets again and again that worship in the context of mistreatment of the poor and the disadvantaged is an outrage against him.

One of many examples is Amos. "I hate, I despise your religious feasts; I cannot stand your assemblies. Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them ... But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!" ([Amos 5:21-24](#)). Earlier in this chapter the prophet had condemned the powerful for oppressing the poor. They had bribed the judges to prevent redress in the courts. He says that God wants justice from such people and not merely religious p. 77 rituals. Such worship is a mockery of the God of Scripture (Cf. [Isa. 58:3-7](#)).

God has not changed. Jesus repeated the same thing. He warned the people about those who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. Their pious garments and frequent visits to the synagogue are a sham, he said.

The warning of Jesus and the prophets against religious hypocrites raises an extremely difficult question for us. Are the people of God really the people of God at all if they oppress the poor? Is the church really the church at all if it does not work to free the oppressed? Through the prophets God declared that the people of Israel were actually Sodom and Gomorrah rather than his people because of their exploitation of the poor and weak. Jesus was even more blunt. He said that to those who do not feed the hungry and clothe the naked he will speak the terrifying word at the final judgement: "Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels" ([Matt. 25:41](#)). The meaning is clear. Jesus intends his disciples to imitate his own special concern for the poor and the oppressed. Those who disobey are not his and will therefore experience damnation.

Lest we forget this warning, God repeats it in 1 John. "If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?" ([1 John 3:17](#)). What do these words mean for western Christians who demand increasing affluence every year while fellow Christians and others in the Third World suffer malnutrition, even starvation? The text clearly says that if we fail to aid the needy, we do not have God's love, no matter what we say. It is deeds that count, not pious phrases or saintly speeches. Regardless of what creeds we confess or what religious experience we claim, affluent people who neglect the poor are not the people of God at all. That is what Scripture seems to say.

Still the question haunts me. Are professing believers no longer Christians because of continuing sin? Well, obviously not. The Christian knows that even the most saintly are still, as Luther said, "Just stinking sinners." We are members of the people of God, not because of our own good works and righteousness, but solely because of Christ's death for us on the cross. That is true and crucial. But we have to say more. All the texts that we have explored surely mean more than that the people of God are disobedient (but justified all the same) when they neglect the poor. p. 78 The verses we have looked at pointedly assert that some people so disobey God that they are not his people at all, in spite of their pious profession. Neglect of the poor is one oft-repeated sign of that kind of disobedience.

To summarize: Scripture says at the pivotal points of revelation history that God was at work liberating the oppressed. His passion for justice compels him to wipe out rich societies and individuals that oppress the poor or neglect to help them. Consequently, God's people, if they are indeed his people, follow in the footsteps of the God of the poor.

GUILT AND INSTITUTIONALISED EVIL

The second biblical theme is the teaching that sin is both personal and structural. There is an important difference between consciously willed individual acts like, say, lying to a friend or committing an act of adultery, and participation in evil social structures. But both are bad. Slavery is an example of an institutionalized evil. So is the Victorian factory

system where ten-year-old children worked twelve to sixteen hours a day. Both slavery and the factory system were legal, but they destroyed millions of people.

In the twentieth century, although not in the eighteenth or nineteenth, evangelical Christians have been mostly concerned with personal sins. Yet the Bible cares about both. Speaking through his prophet Amos the Lord declares, “For three sins of Israel, even for four, I will not turn back my wrath.” Why? Because “they sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals. They trample on the heads of the poor as upon the dust of the ground and deny justice to the oppressed (thus far the text is talking about oppression of the poor, but it goes on): Father and son use the same girl and so profane my holy name” ([Amos 2:6, 7](#)).

Biblical scholars have shown that some kind of legal fiction underlies the phrase “selling the needy for a pair of shoes.” This mistreatment of the poor was therefore legal, but nonetheless wrong, according to Amos. Moreover, God condemns sexual misconduct and legalized oppression of the poor together. So sexual sins and economic injustice are equally displeasing to him.

One of the tragedies of our own time is that some young activists have supposed that so long as they were fighting for the rights of minorities and opposing militarism they were morally [p. 79](#) righteous regardless of how often they shacked up for the night with a guy or a girl in the movement. Some of their parents, on the other hand, supposed that because they did not steal, lie or fornicate, they were therefore morally upright even though they lived in segregated communities and owned stock in companies that oppressed the poor of the earth. What Scripture says is that both those things are equally serious to God.

God also shows that laws themselves are sometimes an abomination to him. “Can a corrupt throne be allied with you—one that brings on misery by its decrees? They band together against the righteous and condemn the innocent to death. But the Lord has become my fortress, and my God the rock in whom I take refuge. He will repay them for their sins and destroy them for their wickedness; the Lord our God will destroy them” ([Ps. 94:20–23](#)). The Jerusalem Bible has an excellent rendition of verse [20](#)—“You never consent (that is, you never should consent) to that corrupt tribunal that imposes disorder as law.” God wants his people to know that wicked governments sometimes frame mischief by statute. Or as the English Bible puts it: “They contrive evil under cover of law.”

There is one other side to social or institutionalized evil which makes it especially pernicious. Social evil is so subtle that one can be caught in it without realizing it.

For example, God inspired his prophet Amos to utter some of the harshest words in Scripture against the cultured, kind, upper-class women of his day. “Hear this word, you cows of Bashan on Mount Samaria, you women who oppress the poor and crush the needy and say to your husbands, ‘Bring us some drinks!’ The Sovereign Lord has sworn by his holiness: ‘The time will surely come when you will be taken away with hooks, the last of you with fishhooks’ ” ([Amos 4:1, 2](#)). The women involved probably had very little contact with the impoverished peasants. They may never have realized clearly that their gorgeous clothes and spirited parties were possible only because of the sweat and tears of the poor. They may even have been kind to the individual peasants they met. But God called these privileged women “cows” because they profited from social evil. Hence, they were personally and individually guilty before God.

If one is a member of a privileged class, profits from social evil and does nothing to try to change it, then one stands guilty before God. For structural evil is just as sinful as personal sin. Besides, it hurts more people and is much more subtle. [p. 80](#)

PROBLEMS IN THEOLOGY SHAPED BY ECONOMIC PREFERENCES

In light of this quick sketch of the biblical teaching about God being on the side of the poor and against both individual and institutionalized or structural sin, let us ask the question: Are we trapped in structural evil on the whole question of world hunger and the underlying causes?

We have seen that the Bible teaches that God is on the side of the poor and that he cares as much about structural evil as about personal sins. Well then, how does the evangelical community in North America measure up to this teaching? Certainly there are some encouraging new developments. But if we are honest we must confess that most evangelicals are on the side of the rich, not the poor. And most evangelicals are not very much concerned about these injustices.

What has gone wrong? Obviously many things. But at the heart it is a theological problem.

We have fallen into the unbiblical view that orthodoxy is more important than orthopraxis, that is, that correct doctrine is more significant than obedient living. Surely that is wrong. John says bluntly that any claim to know and love God which is divorced from active love for the hungry neighbor is hypocrisy ([1 John 3:17](#)). and the converse is also true, for it is precisely 1 John that insists just as strongly that anyone who does not confess that Jesus is the incarnate Son of God is anti-Christ. Orthodoxy and orthopraxis are both important.

Yet the problem goes deeper. It is not just that we have adopted the unbiblical view that orthodoxy is more important than orthopraxis. At some very important points, even our theology has not been orthodox. The fact that God is on the side of the poor, that it is an essential aspect of the very nature of God to work to liberate the oppressed, is one of the central biblical doctrines. The bible has just as much—in fact a good deal more—to say about this doctrine than it does about Jesus' resurrection. Yet evangelicals insist on the Resurrection as a criterion of orthodoxy and largely ignore the other.

Do not misunderstand. I am not saying that the Resurrection is unimportant. The bodily resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth is absolutely central to Christian faith, and anyone who denies it or says it is unimportant has fallen into heresy. But if centrality in Scripture is any criterion of doctrinal importance, then the biblical teaching that God is on the side of the poor ought to be an equally important doctrine for evangelicals. [p. 81](#)

Many of us have fallen into theological liberalism. We usually think of theological liberalism in terms of classical nineteenth-century liberals who denied the deity, atonement and bodily resurrection of Christ, and they were liberals. People who abandon those central biblical doctrines have fallen into heresy. But notice that the essence of theological liberalism is not so much in the specific error of the liberal thinker but rather in allowing our thinking and living to be shaped by the views and values of the surrounding society rather than by biblical revelation.

Liberal theologians thought that belief in the deity of Jesus Christ was incompatible with a modern, scientific world view. So they followed the surrounding scientific society rather than Scripture. Evangelicals rightly called attention to this heresy. But they tragically made exactly the same mistake, though in another area. They allowed the values of our affluent materialistic society to shape thinking and acting toward the poor. It is much easier in our society to insist on an orthodox Christology than to insist on the biblical teaching that God is on the side of the poor or that we sin when we participate in unjust economic structures. So we have allowed our theology to be shaped by the economic preference of our materialistic contemporaries rather than by Scripture.

WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

Evangelicals have been insufficiently concerned with social justice because their theology has been unbiblical at important points. We have not been nearly as orthodox as we have claimed. But many really do want to follow Scripture wherever it leads. There are millions of evangelicals who are not yet very concerned about poverty and injustice but who truly love Jesus more than anything else. So for these we ask: What should we do? What should the response of Christian people be?

First, we should *repent* of this sin. What I have described is sin, and for Christians the only response to sin is repentance. Sin is not just an inconvenience or a terrible tragedy to our neighbors. It is an outrage against the Lord of the universe. If God's Word is true, then all who dwell in affluent nations are trapped in sin. We have profited from systemic injustice, sometimes only half-knowing, sometimes only half-caring, always half-hoping not to know. We are guilty of an outrageous offense against God and our neighbor.

But thank God, that is not his last word to us. If there were no [p.82](#) hope of forgiveness, then admission of our sinful complicity in evil of this magnitude would be an act of despair. But there is hope. The One who writes our indictment is the One who died for us sinners.

John Newton was captain of a slave ship in the eighteenth century. A brutal, callous man, he played a central role in an horrendous system which fed tens of thousands of people to the sharks and delivered millions to terrible oppression. But one day he saw his sin. He repented, and his familiar hymn overflows with joy and gratitude for God's forgiveness.

*Amazing grace, how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me;
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind ...*

For a while he did not understand his involvement in man's structural evil, and then he did.

*... but now I see.
'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear,
The hour I first believed.*

We are participants, I think, in a system that dooms even more people to agony and death than did slavery. But if we have eyes to see, God's grace will also teach our hearts to fear and tremble, and then also to repent and begin a whole new life style of concern and involvement with the oppressed.

Second, we must become *models* of a better way. We live at one of the great turning points in human history. The present division of the world's resources dare not continue, and it will not. Either courageous pioneers will persuade reluctant nations to share the good earth's bounty, or we will enter an era of catastrophic conflict.

Christians should be in the vanguard. The church of Jesus Christ is the most universal body in the world today. She needs only to obey the One whom we rightly worship. But to obey means to follow; and Jesus, whom we follow, lives among the poor and oppressed and seeks justice for those in agony. In our time, following in his steps will mean simple personal life styles. It will mean transformed churches with a corporate life style consistent with worship of the God of the poor. It will mean costly [p.83](#) commitment to structural change in secular society.

Do Christians today have that kind of faith and courage? Will we pioneer new models of sharing for our global village?

Sadly I must confess my fear that the majority of affluent “Christians” of all theological labels have bowed the knee to mammon. If forced to choose between defending their luxuries and following Jesus among the oppressed, I am afraid they will imitate the rich young ruler.

Still I am not pessimistic! God regularly accomplishes his will through faithful remnants. Even in affluent nations, there are millions of Christians who would rather have Jesus than houses and lands. More and more Christians are coming to realize that their Lord calls them to feed the hungry and seek justice for the oppressed.

If at this moment in history a tenth of the Christians in affluent nations dared to join hands with the poor around the world, we would decisively change the course of world history. Together let us strive to be a biblical people at this point. Let us follow wherever Scripture leads. As we do, may the risen King give courage to bear any cross, suffer any loss and joyfully embrace any sacrifice that biblical faith requires in an age of hunger.

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The Prosperity Doctrine: An Accretion to Black Pentecostalism

James S. Tinney

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The American capitalist impulse being what it is, it is not surprising that its most insidious features have infected the churches and molded them in many of the same ways as other institutions. Without controversy, religion is big business in this country; and Pentecostalism is no exception. In the Black community alone, there are more than 66,000 churches; and more than 10,000 of these belong to one of the organized Holiness or Pentecostal denominations, to say nothing of the thousands of congregations not affiliated with any larger body.¹ In scores of American towns and cities, more money turns over in the Pentecostal churches on any given Sunday than circulates through all the other Black

¹ These statistics represent the aggregate totals affiliated with denominations which are predominantly Black in membership. They are taken from tables found in Tinney's "Selected Directory of Afro-American Religious Organizations, Schools and Periodicals," published by the Howard University Institute of Urban Affairs and Research.

businesses during an entire week. In fact, since statistics show that the smaller churches and denominations raise more money per capita than do the larger and older churches, the ratio of Pentecostal churches to other kinds is in no way indicative of the disproportionate amount of wealth generated by the Pentecostal bodies.² In every sense of the word, Black holiness denominations are true corporations.

No room exists for boasting, however. For these churches have little to show for their millions, except devotion to the American ethos of materialism. What is more, many pastors and bishops and auxiliaries and official agents of the Pentecostal denominations make no attempt to be accountable to their constituencies in financial matters. Few operate on prescribed budgets; fewer still give periodic budgetary reports or open the books for the memberships. If secular businesses operated as do the churches, they would close within a short time. If they kept their books in as shoddy manner as do the churches, they would be subject to p. 85 Internal Revenue Service investigations and many would lose their professional licenses.

But it is not the intent of this article to focus at inordinate length on this aspect of religious economics. Neither is it purposed to demonstrate the abuses and needs God's kingdom suffers as a result of misused and misdirected wealth, while educational institutions languish, presses silence, and missions starve. The God of justice will certainly hold the churches responsible for the failure to employ the unemployed (as well as house and feed and clothe the needy), and to use its potential economic clout to force social change.³ That the Pentecostals—the very churches which minister among the discontented masses and buy limousines for preachers with widow's sacrificial offerings—should be so derelict in duty could be cited as damning evidence against the gospel's relevance.

This is not to deny that the churches (Pentecostal ones included) have contributed to the survival of their members in other, less mundane ways. Certainly the psychological supports are worth recall. Then too, some noteworthy examples of church involvement on housing and relief work do surface from time to time. But the danger is that these positive examples will serve as excuses to quiet the consciences of both members and leaders.

CULTURAL THEOLOGY

Even more damaging evidence already exists that the churches' obeisance to capitalism has already infected its very theology. Black Pentecostalism as well as other branches of the church universal, not only sanctify the profit motive, uphold the American system with nondiscerning loyalty, place the God of poor peoples' money at the service of greed, and fail to monetarily return to the community its collected, enormous wealth. But an entire ideological framework has been developed and blindly promoted in accord with, and supportive of, these many economic evils. Specifically, the reference here is to the "prosperity doctrine" now rampant in Pentecostalism.

² See "Church Financial Statistics and Related Data," in Constant H. Jacquet, Jr. ed. *Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches 1977* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1977), pp. 249–257. Also see special edition on "Protestant Power and Wealth" in *Southern Exposure* (Vol. IV, No. 3), pp. 83–103.

³ It is this author's contention that the churches should create their own work projects, hire the unemployed in their neighborhoods, and thus return money to the community. Such a proposal necessitates, however, that the churches cease the greedy and worthless sinking of contributions into building programs, personal coffers, and other self-perpetuating non-necessities.

This doctrine advances the ideas that prosperity is a gift of God, p. 86 that it is obtainable by faith, and that failure to prosper financially is indicative of some spiritual negligence. Accompanying this belief, in most instances, is a requirement that to get wealth, one must give wealth. Hence financial sacrifice (e.g. using money needed for food or rent as an offering of faith) may be viewed as a means to prosperity or a test of obedience and faith.

If one examines closely the rhetorical explication of this doctrine by its proponents, it becomes obvious that divine prosperity is coined in the same terms as salvation, sanctification, the Baptism of the Holy Ghost, or healing. (All of these are described as “a gift of God,” “obtainable by faith,” and failure is due to “spiritual negligence.” Further, in many churches, these experiences also require a faith-work” as a means of proof of reception.) The blessing of prosperity thus usurps the role of the traditional Pentecostal experiences; it supplements and supplants the gospel message; and it assumes a position of importance equal to blood-bought spiritual realities. In this latter respect, the prosperity doctrine comes dangerously close to rivaling the very blood of Jesus Christ. Spiritually speaking, it does not deserve the position of a doctrine. Experientially speaking, it seems to surface in those circles which earlier bordered on supplanting the gospel with “wonder worshipping and sign seeking.” Pragmatically, it is destructive of faith and confidence toward God for persons who have little education or few business contacts; or who live in a dying or sterile economic environment; or who are continual subjects of racism or exploitation or oppression; or who remain victims of either rural or urban poverty. Politically, the doctrine is dysfunctional—and this is most disheartening—since it works against people taking responsibility for protesting poverty and powerlessness, and rising up and doing battle with the forces of oppression. Those who advance the prosperity belief reveal their own political naivety; and the doctrine itself presupposes a totally false political analysis and foundation.

Be that as it may, scores of Black ministers, as well as nearly all popular/white revivalists whose campaigns involve numbers of Black people continue to promote God-promised financial blessings. The slogans which advertise the wares are endless: “You can have what you want, you can do what you want;” “God’s got it, I can have it, and by faith I’m going to get it;” “You can’t lose with the stuff I lose;” and “Pie in the sky, not bye and bye, but right now.” Radio broadcasts also pick up the theme, offering all kinds of “blessing plans,” “PPP packages,” and “seed faith.” p. 87

All kinds of theological half-truths are employed to buttress the appeal of the prosperity promoters. “God owns the cattle on a thousand hills and the wealth in every mine, so I know he can give me some of it,” one intones. “I’m a child of God; and I don’t inherit poverty because my Father’s not poor,” another explains. What these fail to point out, however, is the truth that God rules over this earth, but he does not yet reign⁴. The kingdoms of this world have not yet become the kingdoms of Christ. There exists a gap between what is potentially ours and what is experientially possessed.

Other evangelists advocate that the “gospel guarantees success;” that “God is concerned about everything about me;” and that “the full gospel includes the total man.” In actuality, however, the gospel is the good news that Jesus has through death conquered death and defeated evil, and now seeks to reconcile the world unto himself. But even the gospel benefits do not accrue to every man to the fullest degree yet. Death and evil still affect even the saints. Whatever freedom from sins and sicknesses may be offered now, it is always partial or relative freedom, and it is temporary. Even the usual Pentecostal

⁴ See George E. Ladd *Crucial Questions About the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952), pp. 63–100.

benefits of the gospel—power over volitional sinning and healing from some diseases—are less than perfect benefits. Both sins and sickness have beset every “saint” at some point in time since conversion; and furthermore, they will continue to do so.

Yet these prosperity ministers claim that prosperity is conditioned upon faith. “Faith is a work which enables us to obtain whatever we want,” congregations are sometimes told. The truth of the matter is that not even faith is perfect. Above all, faith is not a work; it is not something a person can work up or pray down or frenzy one’s self into. It is, if anything, a gift of God. Unless the Spirit imparts the gift of faith by grace, no amount of exertion or self effort will produce it. “All things are possible” to the person who believes. But the other side of the coin is that God does not impart faith to believe for all things.

That is not all. The doctrine of prosperity further appeals to those who are already upwardly mobile or well situated. It provides a perfect blanket endorsement of their attainments and helps to justify their status in full view of the comparative sufferings of those surrounding them. It grants a sense of divine approval to them. **p. 88**

There is also a sinister element to the teaching. For it appeals to the carnal, selfish nature of mankind. And it sounds inviting to those who envy the prosperous teacher—the only one who inevitably does indeed prosper as a result of such teaching.

Clearly, economic evils and benefits alike are neither the result of spiritual disobedience nor of spiritual rewards. For this reason, Pentecostals should reject the prosperity doctrine forthwith. Such doctrine is (1) imprecise in definition, (2) heretical in origin, (3) unscriptural in exposition, and (4) regressive in terms of political economics.

IMPRECISE DEFINITION

Prosperity teachings assume that the believer has already defined for himself what “prosperity” means. Certainly no definitions or clearcut standards are ever set forth by those proclaiming the doctrine. The most that can be said for the concept is that it guarantees “more of whatever” one already possesses. It exemplifies “the Pentecostal passion for ‘more’ which is the most pervasively interesting feature.” In a different context, Bruner says: “The desire for more than usual is conditioned on more than usual obedience and faith and is evidenced by a more than usual experience.”⁵

Unfortunately such circular rhetoric provides no indices for reasonable expectations or even limitations. Prosperity for one person may mean a “better” job, a “better” car, a “better” home, “more” money, “more” clothes, *ad infinitum*. For another person, it may mean something else. Who is to say what it does not include? Certainly not the evangelist, for he advises all hearers (regardless of their present status or success) to believe for “more.” Such indefiniteness makes the whole concept of prosperity a highly subjective one. The concept becomes so relative that it loses all rational meaning. It does not assure equality of results as do other of God’s gifts. Sadly, it perpetuates rather than equalizes distinctions among God’s people.

HERETICAL ORIGIN

The prosperity doctrine is not only subjective, relative and imprecise in definition, it is also foreign to the historical mainstream **P. 89** of evangelical Christianity. The early church, for example, voluntarily entered into a communal life in which personal property and private ownership were sacrificed. So simply did the Christians live that the mere presence of a visitor wearing a gold ring drew attention to the adornment. For a long time,

⁵ Frederick Dale Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), pp. 129, 130.

the church did not even erect special buildings for worship or ministry, but utilized existing structures and make-shift ones. Both the eastern and Roman branches of the Christian church continued to view the higher life of the religious or spiritual as requiring vows of poverty. Later western Protestant movements within the church which sought to recapture early or primitive Christianity (such as the Anabaptists, Mennonites, Quakers, Methodists, Holiness Movement, and even early Pentacostals) not only stressed simplicity of life, but also shunned status symbols associated with wealth.

On the contrary, the prosperity doctrine originated in anti-Christian and often heretical surroundings. Most directly in this country, the teaching stems from the religions of Mary Baker Eddy (founder of the falsely-titled Church of Christ, Scientist or Christian Science) and Charles and Myrtle Fillmore (founders of the Unity School of Practical Christianity). Fillmore, who himself had studied Christian Science, wrote a revised version of the 23rd Psalm which included the following verses:

*The Lord is my banker, my credit is good.... He giveth me the key to his strongbox. He restoreth my faith in riches. He guideth me in the paths of prosperity for his name's sake.*⁶

The entrance of the doctrine of prosperity into Pentecostalism came via the fringe elements and independent “healing and miracle” and “deliverance” evangelists who incorporated metaphysicist (and specifically Unity and Christian Science) doctrines into the traditional Pentecostal understanding of healing. This was done at a time when the “healing and miracle” revivalists were being rejected by the major classical Pentecostal denominations primarily because of alleged internal abuses, growing negative publicity, and moral lapses and defections. It occurred at a time when these “healing and miracle” revivalists, largely discounted by white Pentecostals were forced to turn to Black audiences for *p. 90* support.⁷ The appeal of the prosperity teaching to poor Blacks, who soon crowded the revivalists’ tents and crusades, was likely more than coincidental. It may, in fact, have been a calculated move by the revivalists to shore up support for their own failing evangelical enterprises by thus exploiting the Black community.

UNSCRIPTURAL EXPOSITION

Because the prosperity-teaching evangelists claim Biblical support for their belief, they should be called upon to defend their concepts. Biblical theology, however, will not serve their cause. The New Testament, with one exception, is silent on the issue. Old Testament texts which might casually be thought to address the doctrine, actually do not. What they do say is that God supplies survival needs, that he is the source of wealth insofar as he created the world and its resources, and that wealth (when obtained in a legitimate manner and utilized in benevolence) may be considered a blessing. Even this Old Testament outlook on wealth is nevertheless somewhat disavowed by Christ himself, who repeatedly railed against the wealthy.⁸

Clearly the prosperity teaching is unscriptural. No one in the Bible received wealth as a result of obedience, spirituality, or holiness—not even as a result of faith. The Old Testament verses concerning divine provisions which are commonly misapplied to

⁶ Frank S. Mead, *Handbook of Denominations* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1970), p. 217.

⁷ David Edwin Harrell, *All Things Are Possible: The Healing and Charismatic Revivals in Modern America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975), pp. 198, 201, 202, 234, 235.

⁸ See the article on “Wealth” in *Baker’s Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1960), pp. 550, 551.

today's Christians are either referent to spiritual blessings associated with the promised land of Canaan, or are very restrictive and temporary, and more closely related to sustenance than prosperity.

In actuality, prosperity is antithetical to the numerous, well-established and uncontroverted passages which call for sacrifice, self-denial, giving, fasting, a simple and unadorned life, voluntary vows of poverty and avoidance of evils associated with money, riches, usury, wealth, and mammon. In fact, rather than being proffered as a proof or reward of faith, prosperity is viewed in some scriptures as an enemy of faith. The rich shall not enter into the kingdom unless they dispossess their riches. The faithful are sojourners, pilgrims, dispossessed citizens of earth, whose riches are internal, psychological, spiritual and communal. The chosen faithful few are in truth the oppressed, the poor, the neglected, and marginal or persecuted members of society. On their behalf, p. 91 the land is to be returned to the people every seven years, and debts are to be forgiven. Wealth is not even viewed as necessary for the promotion or furtherance of the gospel.

PERVERTED POLITICO-ECONOMICS

That the doctrine of prosperity does not belong to the realm of truth and universality is evident in the fact that it is an invention wholly of the American scene. As a white, middle class invention, it supports those values and provides a justificatory rationale for the continued exploitation and economic disparity of Blacks and other marginal groups. It serves as a sanctification of the present American system, and a restatement of the Puritan work ethic. Furthermore, it is Calvinistic in tenor and hence foreign to the Arminian emphasis of Pentecostalism. It blames the poor for their poverty and the oppressed for their oppression. It locates remediation of economic injustice within personal spheres rather than social and corporate ones. And it falsely places the responsibility for alleviation of deprivation on the victim rather than the victimizer; on the personal rather than the structural; on the spiritual rather than the practical or temporal; on self-effort rather than on reconstruction of social justice. In a word, it is a simplistic, naive, veritably deficient analysis which associates wealth with personal goodness, faith, industriousness and morality; while associating poverty with personal evil, faithlessness, idleness, laziness and immorality.

The prosperity doctrine further reaches a level of absurdity when applied to non-western, Third World countries, many of which are Black and most of which are non-white. It is inconceivably applicable to places where no monetary economy exists, to non-industrialized areas, to places just emerging from a semi-feudalistic society, and to countries where the average per capita income is, for instance, less than \$100 per year. No amount of prayer, faith, or holiness will change the subsistent existence of believers in these countries. What is more, since the under-development of the Third World is aided by their exploitation by American and other First World countries, there is a sense in which the prosperity of American Pentecostals ensures the uneven development of other countries (including the poverty and hunger of fellow believers located there). No U.S. Christian has a "right" to two cars, two pairs of shoes, two suits, or three daily meals while others are literally starving to death. To rationalize p. 92 that the prosperous can donate more money to missions or relief aid is to place one's self in the vain role of the condescending, as well as to misinterpret the structural and long-term problems which are inherent in present inequities.

The prosperity teaching should be rejected as an accretion to Black Pentecostalism and an example of the perverted economic theories which have helped to keep Black oppression alive.

(abridged)

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Reclaiming the Biblical Doctrine of Work

John R.W. Stott

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In a world of riches and poverty, slavery and inertia, class and economic oppression, protest and revolt are not enough. One, but only one, facet of our Christian response must be the recovery of the work ethic of the Kingdom of God—an ethic that leads to service and to maturity through co-operation with the Creator in the stewardship of creation, and to accountability in redeeming the consequences of the Fall. In this brief article, John Stott explores some aspects of the divine-human collaboration in work that brings “fulfillment to the worker, benefit to the community and glory to God”.

(Editor)

Let me say it before you think it: a clergyman is the last person in the world to expatiate on this topic. For everybody knows that no clergyman has ever done a day’s work in his life. Instead, according to the old quip, he is “six days invisible and one day incomprehensible.” A few years ago a rather drunk Welsh Communist boarded the train in which I was travelling. When he learned that I was a pastor, he told me it was high time I became productive, and ceased to be a parasite on the body politic.

What is our attitude to our work? Here is a popular view:

*I don't mind work
If I've nothing else to do;
I quite admit it's true
That now and then I shirk
Particularly boring kinds of work—
Don't you?
But, on the whole, I think it's fair to say,
Provided I can do it my own way
And that I need not start on it today—
I quite like work!*

What has been called “the orthodox view” of work (or so I have read in a secular book on the social psychology of industry), and has been the basis of industrial psychology and managerial practice (or so I am assured in the same book) is “the Old Testament belief that physical labor is a curse imposed on man as a punishment for his sin.” The author

goes on to write that this view has recently been modified. But even so it is a serious distortion of Scripture. The fall certainly turned work into drudgery, because [p. 94](#) the ground was cursed with thorns and thistles, and cultivation became possible only by the sweat of the brow. But work is a consequence of creation, not the fall; the fall has aggravated its problems without destroying its joys.

So we badly need to recover the biblical doctrine of work. In the first two chapters of Genesis God reveals himself to us as a worker. Day by day, stage by stage, his creative work unfolded. And when he created mankind male and female to his own image, he made them workers too. He gave them dominion, told them to subdue the earth, and thus made them his representatives to care for the environment on his behalf. Then when he planted a garden, he put the man he had made into the garden he had planted, in order that he might cultivate it. It is from these revealed truths about God and man that we must develop a biblical doctrine of work.

First, work is intended for the fulfillment of the worker. The two sentences of [Genesis 1:26](#) belong together: “let us make men in our image” and “let them have dominion.” It is because we bear God’s image that we share God’s dominion. Therefore our potential for creative work is an essential part of our Godlike humanness, and without work we are not fully human. If we are idle (instead of busy) or destructive (instead of creative) we deny our humanity and so forfeit our self-fulfillment. “There is nothing better than that a man should find enjoyment in his work” ([Eccl. 2:24](#); [3:22](#)). And although employers should do their utmost to relieve the discomfort and danger of certain jobs, even such work as this can yield a measure of job satisfaction.

Secondly, work is intended for the benefit of the community. By cultivating the garden of Eden Adam will have fed and perhaps clothed his family. The Bible emphasizes productivity for service. The produce of the “land flowing with milk and honey” was to be shared with the poor, the orphan, the widow, and the alien. Paul told the thief to stop stealing and start working “so that he might be able to give to those in need” ([Eph. 4:28](#)).

Thirdly, work is intended for the glory of God. God the Creator has deliberately humbled himself to require the co-operation of human beings. He created the earth, but entrusted to humans the task of subduing it, He planted a garden, but then appointed a gardener. “You should have seen this ’ere garden,” said the Cockney gardener to the person who piously praised God for the lovely flowers, “when Gawd ’ad it all to ’isself!” The fact is that creation and cultivation, nature and culture, raw materials and [p. 95](#) craftsmanship belong together. As Luther put it, “God even milks the cows through you.”

This concept of divine-human collaboration applies to all honorable work. God has so ordered life on earth as to depend on us. The human baby is the most helpless of creatures. Each infant is indeed a gift of the Lord, but he then drops it into a human lap saying, as it were, “now you take over.” For years children depend on their parents and teachers, Even in adult life, though we depend on God for life, we depend on each other for the necessities of life, not only of physical life (food, clothing, shelter, warmth and health) but of social life too (everything that goes to make up civilized society). So whatever our work, we need to see it as being—either directly or indirectly—co-operation with God in leading human beings into maturity. It is this that glorifies him. Some years ago the chief health inspector of the Port of London wrote to me that to work for his own ends did not satisfy him. “I like to think,” he went on, “that I am responsible for a part of the greater field pattern whereby all serve human welfare and obey the will of our wonderful Creator.”

According to God’s intention, then, work might be defined as “the expenditure of manual or mental energy in service, which brings fulfillment to the worker, benefit to the community, and glory to God.”

The attentive reader will observe that I have made no reference to pay, for it is “work” which I have tried to define, not “employment.” We need to remember that though all employment is work, not all work is employment. Adam was not paid for working in the garden. The housewife is not paid for keeping the home and bringing up the children. And millions of people do spare time to work for the church in a voluntary capacity.

Unemployment is a problem of enormous magnitude. Of the total labor force 6 percent is now unemployed in Britain, 7 percent in the United States and 8 percent in Canada. And the true percentages would be higher if we included those who do not register as unemployed persons and those who are underemployed on account of “overmanning.” Worst hit are young people under the age of twenty-five (44 percent of the unemployed in Britain belong to this category), the blacks, the disabled, and the unskilled. The Third World figures are much worse, however. It is reckoned that 35 per cent of the work force of developing countries are unemployed (about 300 million people) as compared with an average of 5 percent in the West (some 17 million).

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Barnabas—Son of Encouragement

Dick France

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The Holy Spirit is the *parakletos*, and we all know how impossible it is to find an adequate word to translate that rich idea. But among its many aspects we must certainly include that of ‘encouragement’, and it was probably in this sense that the nickname of the Cypriot Levite Joseph was intended—Barnabas, son of *paraklesis*. For in the part Barnabas played in the early years of the Christian mission this ministry of the Paraclete was seen time and again, as he took the side of the misunderstood and the rejected, and proved to be for them a son of encouragement, or as we might put it, a tower of strength.

It is a gift the church still needs. A church plagued by divisions and suspicion, often more concerned with nit-picking controversy than with fellowship and outreach, needs more Barnabases. Readers of *Themelios*, who aspire to positions of responsibility in the church, would be well advised to consider the example of Barnabas lest they turn out to be, like too many of the church’s leaders past and present, effective sons of discouragement.

A full study of Barnabas would need to include the remarkable gift of his family estate which first brings him into the narrative of Acts ([4:36f.](#)), and which may not be entirely unconnected with the fact that he later had to work for his living ([1 Cor. 9:6](#)). But I want to focus on his ministry of encouragement by considering three of the objects of his *paraklesis*.

THE OUTSIDERS

It was one thing for Peter to be forced reluctantly to preach to Cornelius, but a deliberate outreach to Gentiles in Antioch, especially when conducted by non-Palestinian Jewish Christians, was quite another matter, and the Jerusalem establishment was understandably perturbed ([Acts 11:20–22](#)). Barnabas was a good choice as investigator, a Jewish Christian of Diaspora origin ([Acts 4:36](#)) but with Jerusalem connections ([Col. 4:10](#)); but his supreme qualification was his character which, as we shall see, made him a natural ambassador.

‘When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad’ ([11:23](#)). I love that. Perhaps he too had his doubts back in Jerusalem, but Barnabas was not the man to let prejudice stand up against the grace of God. I suspect Barnabas was often ‘glad’. He strikes me as a happy Christian, not a dour dogmatic [p. 97](#) disciplinarian. He looked at a situation from the positive side, and he saw the grace of God where many would have seen only a disturbing innovation. He was a man who put first things first, and the first thing was the grace of God. And so he encouraged the Gentile mission, and he encouraged his new Gentile brothers. He was a Levite (which had no doubt not escaped those who sent him to check up), but he was also “a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith’ ([11:24](#)). And so ‘a large company was added to the Lord’, and Barnabas found himself the leader of the most prolific missionary church of the early days. I am sure he continued to be glad!

And then he was selected to lead an evangelistic tour in the neighbouring provinces ([13:1–3](#)). I know it was the Holy Spirit who made the selection, but I cannot say I am surprised at the choice, given Barnabas’ record to date! And on that tour the same question came up, and Barnabas found himself again supporting an active mission to Gentiles, against the fierce opposition of more traditionally oriented Jews—though not in this case Jewish Christians ([13:43ff.](#)). Back home in Antioch, the issue arose again, now as a clear theological contest among the Jewish Christians, and again Barnabas came out as an uncompromising supporter of the Gentile mission ([15:1ff.](#)).

There is no doubt then that the acceptance of Gentile Christianity owed a lot to the vision of Barnabas, who ‘saw the grace of God and was glad’. It was a major hurdle, and it took ‘a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith’ to clear it. That particular hurdle is long since forgotten, but there are still barriers to the progress of the gospel and to real Christian fellowship—racial barriers, cultural barriers, class barriers. Christianity still faces the threat of self-isolation in respectable traditional circles, and it may need a Barnabas to drag the rest of us over the hurdles behind which we shelter today.

THE SUSPECT

In the fight for the Gentile mission, Barnabas could rely on the support of his most famous protégé, Saul of Tarsus. For Saul knew from his own experience the difference between Barnabas’ openness to the grace of God and the attitude of the Jerusalem church leaders. ‘When he had come to Jerusalem he attempted to join the disciples; and they were all afraid of him, for they did not believe that he was a disciple’ ([Acts 9:26](#)). [P. 98](#)

I can’t say that I blame them. Such a dramatic *volte-face* is hardly natural, and we all tend to expect things to be natural and predictable. Unfortunately, where God is at work they are not, and it can be very uncomfortable to come to terms with God’s way of doing things. Unlike Barnabas later at Antioch, they saw the grace of God, and were—suspicious!

It has been the fate of those who undergo radical conversions ever since. The converted Muslim too often has to face not only the hostility of his Muslim family, but also the cold shoulder of the church which ought to be welcoming him. And it is not so very different for the converted pop star or gang leader in the West. ‘But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared to them’ that his story was true and that his

subsequent behaviour had proved it ([Acts 9:27](#)). So Saul, who could so easily have been left out in the cold to found his own little sect, was brought into the family. Thank God for Barnabas, who was ready to see the grace of God and to take it at its face value. We still need him in many Christian situations today.

It was Barnabas again who brought Saul in where the action was, to help him in leading the Gentile mission at Antioch ([Acts 11:25f](#)). Today we might call it an internship, training on the job. Together they ‘met with the church, and taught a large company of people’, and the foundations were laid for that pastoral and teaching ministry from which were to come in due time the Pauline letters. We owe it, under God, to the vision and encouragement of Barnabas.

I do not think Barnabas was surprised at the way his partnership with Saul eventually worked out: ‘Barnabas and Saul’ ([Acts 13:7](#)) soon became ‘Paul and his company’ ([13:13](#)). It was what Barnabas had in mind when he introduced Saul to the Jerusalem church, and later sent for this gifted convert to be his assistant. He had a God-given gift for spotting talent, and I am sure that as Paul forged ahead and took the lead, he ‘saw the grace of God and was glad’.

The Lycaonian pagans had the situation well weighed up when they identified Barnabas with Zeus, the *éminence grise*, and Paul with Hermes ‘because he was the chief speaker’, the whizz-kid of the team ([Acts 14:12](#))!

So Christianity found its St Paul. It could so easily have been otherwise, when the abrasive young Pharisee met with the very natural suspicion of the Jerusalem worthies. Paul must often have thanked God for the gloriously unselfish *paraklesis* of Barnabas, [p. 99](#) not just at the start but right on until he was well and truly launched into his ministry. Sons of encouragement do not leave the job half done.

THE FAILURE

Another talent spotted by Barnabas was John Mark, his relative from Jerusalem whom Barnabas took, like Saul before him to join the team ministry in Antioch ([Acts 12:25](#)), and a man who later proved his worth as Paul’s right-hand man ([Col. 4:10](#); [Tim. 4:11](#)). But before that time came, Mark’s prospects looked no better than did those of Saul when the Jerusalem church didn’t want to know him. He dropped out of the first evangelistic tour from Antioch ([Acts 13:13](#); [15:38](#)). The many suggested reasons for his ‘desertion’ should be treated as what they are—guesses. But whatever the reason it was enough to make Paul write him off as a failure, and that could have been the end of Mark’s career as a Christian missionary. Predictably, it was Barnabas, the son of encouragement, who took the side of the underdog, and was sufficiently convinced of the grace of God in the life of John Mark to indulge in the most un-Barnabas-like attitude of a ‘sharp contention’ (the Greek is *paroxysm*!) with Paul, bringing about the end of a partnership which had meant so much to them both ([Acts 15:36–40](#)).

There is much we do not know about the background to this episode, as well as about its sequel so far as Barnabas and Mark are concerned. It is possible that there was some misunderstanding between Barnabas and Paul as to the nature of Mark’s proposed involvement; if the Greek tenses are pressed, Barnabas proposed to give Mark a limited second chance (to ‘take him along’ in the aorist, a single action, verse [37](#)), while Paul objected to someone with Mark’s record as a permanent member of the team (to ‘take him with them’ in the present, a continuing state of affairs, verse [38](#)). But the point is that Barnabas found Paul’s attitude too hard; he was for encouragement rather than for rejection. And again events were to prove his faith well founded.

Failure and restoration form a common theme in the biblical history. We have the treasure of the gospel in clay pots, to show that it is God's power, not ours, that is at work ([2 Cor. 4:7](#)). Pots get broken, and even apostles can fail. At such a time the wounded conscience needs not an unbending rigorism, but *paraklesis*. How many potential Marks, I wonder, have been lost [p. 100](#) through a failure of the church to understand a failure, real or imagined? Many of us are too apt to break the bruised reed. Thank God that Barnabas was not so clumsy.

'A good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith.' I think we have seen plenty of grounds for that description of Barnabas. And as a man full of the Holy Spirit he displayed many gifts, but preeminent among them was the gift of *paraklesis*, a gift which could well take its place beside 'helps' in [1 Corinthians 12:28](#) as a gift of the Holy Spirit, the *parakle&140;tos*.

But Paul thought he was too soft. This is clear not only in the *paroxysm* over Barnabas' desire to give Mark a second chance, but also in an incident which happened in the early days of the multiracial church in Antioch ([Gal. 2:11-14](#)). Barnabas, in the august company of Peter himself, gave in to pressure from the Jerusalem church to withdraw from table-fellowship with Gentile believers. No doubt, judging by Barnabas' record as a whole, it was a temporary lapse—it is so inconsistent with Barnabas' 'liberal' attitude to the Gentile mission elsewhere. I wonder, though, whether it is entirely untypical of the man. Barnabas was always one to see the best in people, never one for hasty condemnations. Where Paul would take up the cudgels without delay, Barnabas would not quickly accuse Peter of denying the faith, and so he was more easily led into the compromising position, from which it took the doctrinal sensitivity and the forthright rebuke of Paul to extract him.

Was this softness? Barnabas was not soft in his campaign with Paul for acceptance of Gentiles ([Acts 13:46](#), 'spoke out boldly'; [15:2](#), 'no small dissension'; [15:12](#); *etc.*). He was not one to knuckle under to the attitude of his superiors when he championed Paul in Jerusalem, and he was prepared to break up with Paul rather than abandon his advocacy of Mark. Barnabas could be very firm when he saw an issue clear in front of him. But at the centre of his campaigns were *people* rather than debating points—the outsiders, the suspect, the failure. For them he would fight, even against Paul himself. He would fight for acceptance, for understanding, for a second chance. This is not softness, but generosity, a generosity which perhaps led him to go along with Peter further than he should have done, because he was too generous to question Peter's motives.

Be that as it may, it seems to me that in Barnabas, the son of encouragement, we have an important counterpart to Paul the [p. 101](#) tireless fighter for truth. If Barnabas could be over-generous, Paul, at least in the case of the dispute over Mark, could be over-rigorous, and the Christian pastor has lessons to learn from them both. We need to be as firm and as alert to doctrinal threats as Paul, but too often that Pauline firmness can degenerate into a hard, censorious attitude, which makes no allowances for *people*, and where that is the case we need to remember the 'softness' of Barnabas, If his softness (or generosity, as I would rather call it) could lead him on one occasion into an unworthy compromise, it could also rescue Mark from his record of failure. The true pastor must weigh carefully the relative claims of the rigorism of Paul and the generosity of Barnabas.

I think I would have liked to meet and work with Barnabas. I am sure he would have made me feel that I had a contribution to make. He would have brought out the best in me. But Paul? I am not so sure!

Have you noticed how often Barnabas was used as a liaison man? Sent to investigate the Gentile mission in Antioch, sent to Jerusalem with the famine relief ([11:30](#)), sent on the first evangelistic tour, sent to represent Antioch at the council ([15:2](#)), sent by the council to communicate its findings ([15:22](#), [24](#), [30](#)). I imagine his character had a lot to do with the choice. He could get on with people. Firm and forthright when the occasion

required it, he was also loving and understanding. People would listen to a man like Barnabas.

We owe more to Barnabas than we often realize, Barnabas the son of encouragement. Where would Christianity have been without his marvellous gift for spotting and encouraging talent, for seeing the grace of God (and being glad!)? To him, under God, we owe the Gentile mission, and Mark, and even Paul.

Thank God for Barnabas; and let him teach us to encourage one another.

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The Biblical Assessment of Superstition and the Occult

J. Stafford Wright

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Dr A.P. Stone, a member of the TRACI community, New Delhi and author of Light on Astrology (G.L.S., Bombay, 1979) comments:

Canon J. Stafford Wright gives an authoritative Bible study on occult practices. In general terms, these cover divination, magic and spiritualism. The Biblical ban on all such practices still holds good, and the importance of the study is that all forms of occultism are found worldwide today.

"Divination" includes astrology, palmistry and many other methods. These have become popular again in Western countries, while the East sees them as ancient traditions, often with religious and philosophical sanction. Magic and spiritism, too, are openly cultivated in the West and are part of popular religion in the East.

These days, we are subjected to increasing pressure, both from secular writers and from within the Christian Church, to regard deliberate development of our natural psychic abilities as good and useful. Canon Wright has some wise words to say about this.

Some Christians believe that Satan and his angels are now bound; others, that their power was neutralised by Christ's victory on the cross. The biblical evidence from the early church, and present experience, point to their continued activity, part of it in the occult. Paul enlarges on the Christian's warfare against spiritual powers ([Eph. 6:10](#) sq., cf. [2:2](#)). Far above them, however, is Christ ([1:21](#))."

The Bible refers to superstition and the occult far more frequently than casual recollection would suggest. It would, in fact, be possible to make this paper an encyclopedic review of various practices and the texts that deal with them. Indeed almost every practice could form the theme of a complete paper.

One must therefore look for general principles, the chief of which is that the Bible sets its face against all forms of magic and the occult. It is consequently in striking contrast with almost every religion and society in the world. From the very earliest recorded time

until the present day superstition and magic have been treated as legitimate for those who know how to use them.

In general the Biblical attitude is entirely consistent in its basic background, namely the supremacy of the One God, a jealous God who has made men and women for Himself. His jealousy is desire [p. 103](#) for their welfare. He has given them a material world in which to develop with Himself, but they have an awareness under the surface that life is more than material. The hunger of the heart is meant to find satisfaction in God, but it is possible to pull aside the blanket of the dark and to penetrate a sphere of non-material forces and experiences. One may even break into a world of entities that are as enticing as God, without making demands of moral and spiritual obedience. Superstition thus becomes a nonmoral substitute for religion, in which walking under a ladder is more disastrous than telling a lie, and wearing a charm will cover a multitude of sins. Somehow non-material powers, personal or impersonal, assume the status of a capricious god.

BIBLICAL ASSESSMENT OF SUPERSTITION

Magic goes further. Either by his own inner resources, or by collusion with spirit entities, or both, the practitioner attains mysterious power that is not open to the average person, although the practitioner can distribute the benefits or curses to his clients and their enemies. The magician eats of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and becomes as God.

The consistent attitude of the Bible is that, while there are nonmaterial and spiritual levels, it is for God to use them as He sees fit: it is not for man to intrude into their domain. For example, from time to time God uses angels to carry out His purposes. He may indeed use them invisibly more frequently than we realise, but certainly the Bible records their appearance on occasions. The angel simply acts and speaks as the messenger of God, indeed the word *angel* is identical with messenger both in Hebrew and Greek. But man is never to make contact with the angels from his side. Indeed [Colossians 2](#), a chapter which clearly has magicians in view, condemns 'the worship of angels' (v. [18](#)).

So, to sum up this far, the Bible, claiming to speak as the revelation of God, and knowing man's weakness for substitute religious experiences, bans those avenues into the occult that at the least are blind alleys that obscure the way to God, and at the worst the roads to destruction.

PRACTITIONERS OF THE OCCULT

What then are these avenues? There is a fairly comprehensive list given in [Deut. 18:10, 11](#), although admittedly the translator is not always certain how to express the practice that the Hebrew [p. 104](#) names. The verses begin with the offering of a son or daughter in the fire, a practice which was still rife in the time of Jeremiah ([19:4](#)). This offering to a pagan god is not part of our subject now. There follows a list of banned practitioners of the occult, which it is best to translate rather literally so as to see why modern translations vary over one or two of them:

1. *Diviner*. The root word, *quasam*, is connected with dividing or allocating, and here may refer to allotting someone's fate, perhaps by foretelling the future. Thus Saul asks the woman of Endor to divine for him ([1 Sam. 28:8](#)), and Jeremiah tells the people not to listen to diviners who were speaking of an early return from captivity ([29:8](#)).

2. *Soothsayer*. The Lexicon says that the origin of the Hebrew *anan* is unknown. If it is connected with a similar word meaning *cloud*, the soothsayer would be one who used

natural phenomena to tell fortunes. Today he would read the tea cups or the cards. Probably the objects induced a slight trance state in which clairvoyant capacities were released. Again Jeremiah condemns them as spurious predictors ([27:9](#)).

3. *RSV has augurs; NEB diviners.* The Lexicon suggests that the root word *nachash* means to learn by omens, and this would fit admirably what is said of Balaam, a natural psychic, in [Num. 24:1](#); “he did not go, as at other times, to meet with omens” (RSV). He realised that “there is no enchantment against Jacob” ([23:23](#)); the Hebrew uses the same word. Balaam could find nothing to indicate that there would be any efficacy in such curses as he could muster.

4. *Sorcerer.* The AV translators, at a time when there was something of a panic over witchcraft, translated this as *witch*. There is no reason why witchcraft should not be included, but one doubts whether the Hebrews knew of witches in the modern sense. At the same time the root *kashaph* is thought to denote cutting plants to make a magic brew. If so, this is the first word in this list that speaks of magic that takes the offensive and casts spells. Thus [Isaiah 47:9](#) speaks of sorceries and enchantments being used in vain to stave off the fall of Babylon.

5. The next word certainly indicates one who casts spells, and NEB adopts this translation. RSV has *charmer*, and its only other occurrence is in connection with snake charming ([Psalm 58:5b](#)). The Hebrew *chabhar chebher* has the root meaning of *joining a* p. 105 *joining*, presumably making magic knots like the women in [Ezek. 13:17–23](#), who made magic armbands, although the words are not actually used of them.

6, 7, 8. I want to leave the final 3 words for consideration later. The RSV translates them, ‘medium, wizard, or necromancer’. The NEB has ‘one who traffics with ghosts and spirits, and no necromancer.’ The words may thus be relevant for modern mediumship and spiritualism.

These two verses place a ban on the sort of practices that the Israelites were likely to meet. Indeed we know from objects and writings from Egypt and Mesopotamia that they could not have missed them. Whatever their precise meaning, they cover protective magic, which is what superstition mostly supplies; fortune telling with an eye to the future; and active magic in the form of spells. In the light of discoveries in the Near East, we should probably divide fortune telling into simple precognitive claims and the use of means, such as the inspection of the entrails of a sacrificial animal. A remarkable find from Megiddo is a clay model of a liver marked all over with signs and symbols. This use of sacrificial animals is included in the list of means used by the king of Babylon to determine his course of action ([Ezek. 21:21](#)). Ezekial also includes the use of *rhabdomancy* here (i.e. divination through the fall of arrows or sticks) and the use of *teraphim*, which we shall consider later. Incidentally, it is surprising to find how many artificial forms of divination have been used down the ages. John Gaule in *Mysmantia* (1652) lists some fifty methods.

A significant omission from the list in Deuteronomy is astrology, although [4:19](#) warns against worship of the heavenly bodies. The Bible regards these as marking out the seasons of the year ([Gen. 1:14](#)), but it also shows that on occasions they served as special signs, e.g. the star in the East at the birth of Christ, the darkening of the sun at the crucifixion, and signs in the sun, moon, and stars to herald the Lord’s return ([Luke 21:25](#)), although some believe that these latter signs are not to be taken literally, but symbolically. Astrology as such is treated chiefly as a subject of ridicule. Thus Babylon cannot be saved by “those who divine the heavens, who gaze at the stars, who at the new moons predict what shall befall you” ([Isa. 47:13](#)), nor need Israel “be dismayed at the signs of the heavens

because the nations are dismayed at them” ([Jer. 10:2](#)). And in Daniel the astrologers cannot discover the king’s dream ([2:27](#)) nor the writing on the wall ([5:5-16](#)). p. 106

NON-MECHANICAL AND MECHANICAL DIVINATION

If we divide methods of divination into non-mechanical and mechanical, we can count the false prophets in the former category. Probably they were basically psychic, that is, they had some clairvoyant gifts, and they went into a partial trance state when they received what they believed to be their messages. Some of them prostituted their gift in the service of pagan deities, as did the prophets of Baal in Elijah’s day ([1 Kings 18](#)). Others regarded themselves as prophets of Yahweh, but their inner vision was clouded by what they wanted to believe. Thus the prophets in [1 Kings 22](#) urged the kings to go up to Ramothgilead and prosper, while only Micaiah saw the disaster that would follow. In Jeremiah’s day the false prophets, especially Hananiah, affirmed a speedy return from exile. Jeremiah not only foresaw that the Babylonian domination would last for approximately seventy years from 605 BC, but also foretold correctly that Hananiah would die within a year ([28:16, 17](#)).

There are two possibilities in considering false prophets. A man may have genuine precognitive capacities, but may use them in the interest of a false deity. This automatically excludes him as a prophet to be followed in spite of his true predictions ([Deut. 13:1-5](#)). On the other hand a prophet who uses the Lord’s Name, but makes a false prediction, is not inspired of God ([Deut. 18:20-22](#)). Modern experience shows that trance and semitrance pronouncements often contain a blend of truth and of the speaker’s own wishes. As Jeremiah says in [23:16](#), “They speak visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of the Lord”, and their dreams also are “the deceit of their own heart” (vs. [25, 26](#)). We might prefer to speak of their subconscious or unconscious. hence even prophets have to be included under the heading of messengers from beyond the veil. Some are genuine, but others are dangerous.

There is little more to be said about mechanical methods. Some wish to include lots and the Urim and Thummim as forms of divination, but this is absurd. To toss a coin before a match is not divination. Lots were used to secure fair treatment in distributing the promised land among the tribes ([Num. 26:55](#)), to disclose guilty Achan ([Josh. 7:14-18](#)), and to choose Saul as king ([1 Sam. 10:20-24](#)), although in fact God had already chosen him through Samuel ([1 Sam. 10:1](#)). The last recorded use of the lot was in the choice of Matthias, ([Acts 1:23-26](#)), which as some have pointed p. 107 out, was before the pouring out of the guiding Spirit at Pentecost. After that it was the Holy Spirit who said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul ...” ([Acts 13:2](#)).

The Urim and Thummim were worn on the high priest’s breastplate. They were used on occasions to give a Yes or No answer. This comes out clearly in [1 Sam. 23:10-12](#), where David obtains Yes answers to two questions about his possible arrest. Again, all modern translations of [1 Sam. 14:41](#) follow a text which gives Saul’s words as “If this guilt is in me or in Jonathan ... give Urim, but if in Israel, give Thummim.” This is the nearest we come to discovering how these two stones were used, but we note that they were used solemnly in the context of prayer, perhaps being drawn out of their pouch containers.

The interesting and still undiscovered technical piece of occult practice is the use of the teraphim. Although plural in form, the word is singular in usage. It was evidently an image, sometimes small enough to be easily concealed, as by Rachel, who stole Laban’s teraphim ([Gen. 31:34](#)). Yet the image might also be large, though not certainly so, since David’s wife put the teraphim in his bed to deceive the messengers of Saul into thinking that David had been taken ill ([1 Sam. 19:13](#)). Elsewhere teraphim are used for magical

purposes. Samuel equates with with divination and iniquity ([1 Sam. 15:23](#)). The king of Babylon uses teraphim to discover his plan of action ([Ezek. 21:21](#)). In [Zech. 10:2](#) terephim, diviners and dreamers prove to be ineffective liars.

Perhaps the best way to bring these passages together is to derive the word from *rephaim*, the dead (RSV. the shades) in [Prov. 2:18](#), [Isa. 14:9](#) etc. They may then have been images of departed ancestors, preserved for a similar purpose to the Chinese ancestral tablets. Records from Mesopotamia have shown that possession of the household idols gave a son or son-in-law the primal right of inheritance. This accounts for Rachel's theft in the interests of Jacob, and possibly for Michal's securing of teraphim from Saul's home, but we cannot tell how they were used magically.

OCCULT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Before turning to some more specific points in the Old Testament, we ought to see the very few references to the occult in the New. The term *Magos* is used of the wise men from the East in [Matthew 2](#). We can only guess at who they were, but they had **P. 108** evidently studied Jewish traditions among the many Jews still living in Mesopotamia. They may or may not have been astrologers in the usual sense, and the star, or configuration of stars, which they observed, was something different from the reading of the heavens in the usual astrological manner.

The term is used again of the magicians Simon and Elymas and their magic ([Acts 8:9-11](#) & [13:6, 8](#)). Later in [Acts 19:19](#) we have converts who had formerly practised magic arts (*perierga*) bringing their books to be burned. The only other reference, if we omit the girl at Philippi, is the use of the word *pharmakos* and cognates to describe sorcery as one of the works of the flesh ([Gal. 5:20](#)) and one of the evils of mankind and of Babylon the Great in [Rev. 9:21](#); [18:23](#); [21:8](#); [22:15](#).

Returning now to the Old Testament, we ought to note a few passages where the Bible might seem to countenance superstition and even occult practices. Thus Leah uses mandrakes to cause fertility ([Gen. 30:14-16](#)) with apparent success. There is so much to be learned about fertility drugs that I would hesitate to deny the power to mandrakes in view of their use down the ages. But one must distinguish between a biblical command and a simple record of what happened, mandrakes or no mandrakes. Leah does not seem to have had fertility problems.

There is the story of Jacob's peeled rods producing variegated sheep and goats ([Gen. 30:37-43](#)). Whatever Jacob may have thought about the rods, it has been pointed out that he secured the results by selective breeding (v. [41](#)).

Finally under this head, did Joseph practise hydromancy in Egypt? He told his steward to say that the cup in Benjamin's sack is the one by which he divined ([Gen. 44:5](#)). The word is *nachash* (No. 3 above). The reference is undoubtedly to a form of scrying. By gazing fixedly into a liquid, a psychically inclined person sees pictures taking shape, as in crystal gazing. The probability is that a light auto-hypnotism releases psychic vision. We cannot say for certain that Joseph actually used this method, since it comes as part of a series of incidents in which Joseph and his steward are deliberately deceiving the brothers. In fact in v. [15](#) Joseph claims that he has been divining, whereas, as the story shows, his recognition of his brothers needed no divination at all.

THE BAN ON MEDIUMSHIP AND SPIRITUALISM

Obviously there is much more that could be said on the whole **P. 109** subject of the occult, but most of it would be of purely academic interest, as is obvious from what we have

already said. But mediumship and spiritualism, which we left on one side in [Deut. 18:11](#), is obviously relevant today. We need the answer to several questions. Does the verse refer to mediumship as it is known today? If so, does the ban still apply? If not, to what does it refer?

The three practitioners are translated by RSV as *Medium*, *Wizard*, and *Necromancer*. If the first and third are correct, and refer to contacting the departed, the translation *wizard* is out of place in between. Hence NEB has one who “traffics with ghosts and spirits and no necromancer”. The weakness of this translation is that people do not traffic with ghosts. Similarly the Jerusalem Bible has “consults ghosts or spirits, or calls up the dead”.

The first practitioner is one who consults an *obh*. We shall look for the meaning of this later. The second is *yiddeoni*, from the root *yadah*, meaning to *know*. Hence a *knowing one*. Is this a man, or, as the lexicon says, a familiar spirit who is believed to have superior knowledge? The idea still lingers that the departed speak ex cathedra, as it were. The third practitioner is one who inquires of the dead, which is the literal translation. This should not be translated as necromancer, which commonly suggests the use of a corpse for magical purposes. The word for *dead* here is the equivalent of our *departed*. There are two other Hebrew words for dead bodies.

Let us take the middle word first and note its use in Scripture. It is coupled with *obh* again in [Lev. 19:31](#); “Do not go after the *obhoth* and the *yiddeonim*” (both plural). [Lev. 19:6](#) speaks in similar terms, and adds that God will set His face against one who does so. There is no question of a death penalty for a client. But in [Lev. 20:27](#) the death penalty is prescribed for a man or woman in whom, or with whom, (either translation is possible) is an *obh* or a *yiddeoni*.

It is thus a reasonable conclusion that an *obh* and a *yideoni* are very similar, and it is surprising that Leonard Argyle in *Nothing to Hide*, virtually ignores the latter. Leviticus suggests that both are sought after by a client *via* the person who possesses them. This is even clearer in [Isaiah 8:19](#); “When they say to you, Consult the *obhoth* and the *yiddeonim* who chirp and mutter, should not a people consult their God? Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living?” Consulting *obhoth* and *yiddeonim* is exactly parallel to consulting the departed. Isaiah notes the change of [p. 110](#) voice that is characteristic of some mediumistic communications today. He speaks of it as varying between the twitter of a swallow and the low pitch of the dove or even the growl of a lion, for the word translated *mutter* is used of both in [31:4](#) and [38:14](#). The swallow with its twitter and the dove with its moan both come together in [38:14](#) with the same two verbs as are used in [8:19](#).

One further passage will enable us to draw the case together. It is the famous incident of the woman of Endor, not a witch but certainly a medium, who was expected to contact the departed. She is twice called “a woman who is mistress of an *obh*” ([1 Sam. 28:7](#)). The word translated *mistress* is a feminine of *baal*, lord or owner, and it makes good sense if the woman spoke of ‘my control’. It is true that she is taken over by the spirit, but the spirit is dependent on her ownership if it is to manifest.

This is the conclusion towards which these arguments have been working. We are bound to say that the passages refer to mediums who have contact with, or possession by, spirits. If we make a distinction, we could fairly conclude in the light of modern mediumship that the *obh* is the regular control, and the *yiddeonim* are other spirits who can be called up and who respond in voices that are different from that of the medium.

There are only two passages that might upset this interpretation. One is [2 Kings 21:6](#), with the virtual parallel in [2 Chron. 33:6](#), where Manasseh used (RSV) an *obh* and *yiddeonim*. The word translated *used* (*asah*) is frequently translated *made*, but it is almost as general in scope as our English *do*, with many different translations, amongst which

used is perfectly legitimate. Manasseh need not have made some solid objects. The other is a reference to kings putting away *obhoth* and *yiddeonim* ([1 Sam. 28:3](#); [2 Kings 23:24](#)), but one can put away the spirits by banning the mediums.

ATTEMPTS TO JUSTIFY CHRISTIAN MEDIUMS

There are some earnest Christians who believe that, in spite of the Old Testament ban, there is a place for Christian mediums (or sensitives) today. They commonly quote some of the minor commands of the Law, and say that, since they have been set aside, we need not insist on retaining the ban on mediumship. There is, however, a difference between say, food laws which were repealed by Christ when, according to [Mark 7:19](#), 'He declared all foods clean', and by Peter's vision in [Acts 10, 15](#)—a difference between [p. 111](#) these and laws which have to do with permanent spiritual relationships. Moreover, this argument would allow me to use sorcery, magic, and divination, which are here standing side by side with mediumship.

However, we must obviously see what light the New Testament throws on a possible lifting of the ban. The spirit in the mediumistic girl at Philippi was treated as an enemy to be cast out even though it testified to the truth of the Gospel ([Acts 16:16–18](#)). But, more importantly, in [1 Cor. 15](#) and [1 Thes. 4](#) where Paul consoles Christians for the loss of loved ones, he does not say, as spiritualists would, 'Next Sunday our prophet-mediums will put you in touch with them.' Instead, he assures them that in Christ, who has risen from the dead, they will meet their loved ones again. The ban on direct communication has not been lifted. The Old Testament speaks of false prophets, and the New Testament does the same. The spirits have to be tested to see their attitude to Jesus Christ's incarnation and deity ([1 John 4:1–3](#)). Note that the good spirit is the Holy Spirit, the bad one is some hostile or misleading spirit. The test is not concerned with establishing whether the communicating spirit is your pious grandfather, for the New Testament knows no such communication.

There is another attempted line of justification for the use of Christian mediums. This is to pick out the word *obh* and interpret it in isolation from the two following words. This is the line followed by Leonard Argyle in *Nothing to Hide*. In one single place, [Job 32:19](#), *obh* means a leather wineskin. Transferring this to the other passages, Argyle concludes that the so-called medium was the possessor of a bag which 'makes a piping sound when pressed'. The medium was thus a fake, herself a 'windbag'.

Argyle continues by quoting the LXX translation of *obh*, which in Greek is *eggastrimuthos*, a ventriloquist, one who speaks in the belly. Evidently thinking of stage ventriloquism, Argyle concludes that the alleged medium was a fake ventriloquist. I spent some time in the University Library going through references that cover the period of the Septuagint translators and the early centuries of the Church, especially the new Lexicon by Lampe. In every quoted example, the word refers to someone who is genuinely possessed. The question is in which part of the body the spirit settles, a question which is still unanswered, except that some seem to use the voice box. But, since ectoplasm commonly comes from the belly, it is at least possible that some people experienced the spirit [p. 112](#) there. Theodotus defines *eggastrimuthos* as "Certain people who are energised by demons, whom the Greeks called *inner seers* since the daimon seems to speak from within" (quoted in Lampe). Or, to quote Plutarch (*Moralia* 414E), "To think, as do the *eggastrimuthos* Eurycles of old and now the Pythones, that the god himself clothes himself with the bodies of the prophets, and speaks using their mouths and voices as instruments." One might add Plato (*Sophist* 252c) who laughs at the wonderful *eggastrimuthos* Eurycles, who finds his own ideas contradicted by the voice from his belly.

So, when the LXX uses the word as an equivalent of *obh*, it uses it to mean medium, and as the third word it has *one who enquires of the death*. Thus the LXX has no intention of introducing fraudulent mediums with skin bottles. As regards the exact meaning of *obh* this is still a mystery. The Book of Job contains many unusual words and usages. But it is quite in order to follow, amongst others, Gaster and Albright, and find a cognate in the Arabic *aba* meaning to *return*, a most suitable title for a spirit.

Even if we were to allow Argyle's interpretation, we have still not taken account of the *yiddeonim*, and, although Argyle, rightly objecting to the title *necromancer* for the final member of the three, points out that the words are used only here, this last phrase certainly means, 'One who enquires of the dead'. It is almost as though the verse rounds off its meaning by using this general statement to cover all that is meant by the previous two.

It would take far too long to discuss the reason for the ban. Obviously spiritualism easily draws people from God as the primary object of devotion. I believe that a majority of messages are accounted for by clairvoyance and telepathy between medium and client, and to that extent they are deceptive in their alleged origins. But when one goes deeper and seeks theological and philosophical answers from advanced spirits, the messages are wholly destructive of the Gospel that is centred in the deity, unique incarnation, atonement, and bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, and thus are likely to emanate from evil spirits, if we apply the tests as John does in his first Epistle.

At the same time one can allow that God permits the return of the departed if He sees fit. Moses and Elijah returned at the Transfiguration. Abraham did not say that it was impossible for Lazarus to return, but only that it would be useless. Jesus did not deny that there were such entities as ghosts when He was mistaken for one in the upper room, but pointed out that His risen [p. 113](#) body was of a different quality from that of a spirit ([Lk. 24:36-40](#)). While one knows the power of suggestible hallucination, one need not dispute the word of someone who claims to have seen a loved one after death. What is wrong, according to Scripture, is any attempt to obtain a second communication through a medium.

So we return to what we said near the beginning of this paper. Any communication from the unseen must be initiated by God and not manipulated by men and women. Even prayer is to be drawn out by the Holy Spirit ([Rom. 8:26, 27](#)). I personally would include natural psychic capacities as part of the make-up of some men, women, and children. These gifts should be handed over to God, like every gift, and He will either use them or suppress them as He sees fit. Danger comes through developing these capacities within the context of spiritualism.

I have not made any reference to exorcism. Some would count belief in spirits as superstitious and attempts to expel them as magical. The Bible treats them as real, and, although secular literature indicates that pagan exorcisms were done by magicians, the Bible does no more than refer to Jewish exorcists, whom Christ admitted did cast out demons ([Matt. 12:27](#)), and who tried to obtain results by using the name of Jesus ([Acts 19:13-17](#)). Magical exorcism consisted largely in setting one spirit against another.

Canon J. Stafford Wright was formerly Principal of Tyndale Theological College, Bristol, England. [p. 114](#)

Presbyterian Ministerial Preparation in Brazil

Ronald Frase

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A SOCIOLOGICAL-HISTORICAL CASE STUDY

This article is a section of Dr Ronald Frase's doctoral dissertation "A Sociological Analysis of the Development of Brazilian Protestantism: A Study of Social change" (Princeton Theological Seminary 1975 411-425). The Presbyterian Church of Brazil has now adopted extension training methods in several states.

The article is reprinted to encourage other churches to study their own history and consider the possibility of adopting alternative approaches to theological education and ministry.

HISTORICAL ANTECEDENTS

While all the sending bodies were committed to establishing educational institutions in Brazil none were more committed than the Presbyterians. Their Reformed tradition of a highly educated ministry and presbyterial church government which was well suited to Europe and the settled east coast of the United States was often a liability on the Brazilian frontier. This statement does not deny its many accomplishments but rather is designed to focus attention upon the fact that structures which are viable for one cultural milieu will not function as effectively when exported to another culture without undergoing significant modification.

The Presbyterian Church's commitment to rigid institutional structures has hampered its acculturation to the demands of Brazilian society. That the sending body was not aware of this fact, which in retrospect is self-evident, is reflected in the report of the Board of Education in the *Minutes of the General Assembly* for the year 1847.¹ After declaring that, "The basis of all operations of the Board of Education is, that a pious and well qualified ministry is the great instrumentality appointed by the Head of the Church for the conversion of the world,"² it proceeded to outline the urgent need of more ministers and missionaries to meet the great need of proclaiming the Gospel to every creature. There were at the time 500 Presbyterian churches in the United States without pastors and then there was "the almost confounding element of the increase of our population ... It has been computed in popular language, that the wave of the population moves p. 115 westward at the rate of eighteen miles a year."³ The report explains that while the need at home and abroad was expanding the number of candidates for the ministry (which was "the great instrumentality for the conversion of the world") was diminishing. The report ends by offering a solution to the crisis in the form of a plea for more money to assist seminarians to get an education because "our standards make high literary attainments an

¹ *Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian in the U.S.A.*, vol. XI (1847), pp. 535-37.

² *Ibid.*, p. 535.

³ *Ibid.*

indispensable qualification for the sacred office.”⁴ In 1847 the Presbyterian Church stood in the best position to profit from the expanding western frontier by virtue of its financial resources, evangelists, institutions and trained leadership, yet history shows that the Baptists and Methodists, benefiting from a far more flexible institutional structure, were more successful. They recognized that highly trained ministers are not the only “instrumentality appointed by the Head of the Church for the conversion of the World.”

THE REFORMED LEGACY IN BRAZIL

Unfortunately for the Presbyterians their loyalty to their Reformed legacy prevented them from perceiving that the Brazilian frontier demanded a different response and thus history repeated itself. The pattern of preparing men with “high literary attainments” as pastors was replicated, necessitating the establishment of a seminary. This goal was realized to a remarkable degree but at considerable cost. Gilberto Freyre attests to the seminary’s success with the following observation concerning some of its graduates:

*It is interesting that some of the best philologists of the period such as Eduardo Carlos Pereira, Otoniel Mota, and Jeronimo Gueiros were Protestants. Protestants apparently wishing to prove through their cultivation of the pure mother tongue that they were good Brazilians and good patriots in spite of their rejection of the maternal and traditional religion.*⁵

Such erudition was the result of a combination of native ability and good preparation. The students faced a course of training *p. 116* equal in rigor to what was demanded in North American seminaries.⁶

At this juncture we want to examine some of the ways in which the Reformed legacy of a highly trained ministry proved to be an obstacle to the spontaneous expansion of the Presbyterian Church of Brazil. First, remembering that the vast majority of Brazilians at that time were illiterate and that the churches suffered from lack of pastoral care one must question the wisdom of such intensive education patterned on the classical model which removed capable leadership from active ministry for several years. The many communities visited by J.M. da Conceicao on his peripatetic ministry opened up unparalleled opportunities which, in some instances, were never developed for lack of pastoral care.

Second, the sophisticated and prolonged seminary education tended to alienate aspiring pastors from the simple rustic life of their people. It socialized them into a world of tastes, values, interests and attitudes which was not shared by their congregation and which hindered effective communication with the masses of common people.⁷ Some missionary leaders saw this as both desirable and inevitable because, as one of them

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 537.

⁵ Gilberto Freyre, *Ordem e progresso* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora José Olympio, (959), vol. I, p. 1 xi.

⁶ Paul E. Pierson, *A Young Church in Search of Maturity: Presbyterianism in Brazil from 1910–1958* (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1947), p. 251 notes that the curriculum for 1910 included the following: Psychology, Ethics, History of Philosophy, Greek, Hebrew, Hermeneutics, Textual Criticism, Introduction to the Old Testament, Introduction to the New Testament, Archeology, Sacred Geography, Exegesis of Old and New Testament including Psalms, the Gospels, and Hebrews; two years of Systematic Theology, Bible History, Church History, History of Doctrine, Homiletics, Pastoral Theology and Ecclesiology.

⁷ For a discussion of the middle class mentality of the ministry see Emile G. Leonard, *O protestantismo brasileiro* (Sao Paulo: ASTE, 1961), pp. 232–233.

explained, “the ignorant classes cannot easily understand the full gospel or study it. If, therefore, pastors and missionaries use great care in receiving members the resulting church is predominantly intellectual.”⁸ The Baptists, and later the Pentecostals, discovered that the ignorant classes, which accounted for approximately 85 per cent of the population,⁹ were fully capable of understanding the Gospel and that the most effective pastors were those who lived among their people and whose preparation consisted of on-the-job training.

Third, the above option was not available within the Presbyterian system of church government which reserved the p. 117 right of administering the sacraments to ordained seminary graduates. The Reformed legacy was an obstacle to a rapidly growing church whose demand for pastors could never be met by such a stringent policy of supply. Unlike the Baptists whose educational requirements did not stand in the way of ordaining proven lay people with minimal education when the occasion demanded, many Presbyterian congregations were denied the status of Church recognition for years.¹⁰ McIntire states that “... the local church was considered to be founded as soon as two or more people became members. The actual organization of the church, however, was often delayed for many years.”¹¹ Mário Neves, the redoubtable organizer of many churches in the states of Espírito Santo and Minas, recalls that because of the great shortage of pastors many seekers (*interessados*) became tired of waiting to be received into a Presbyterian Church and consequently joined other denominations.¹²

The writer became the first pastor of the church, Valério Silva, in Salvador, Bahia, in 1963. This congregation had been organized approximately forty years earlier. Two obstacles had stood in its way of acquiring church status. According to Presbyterian ecclesiology a session was composed of a minimum of two elders. Just as the civil government made literacy a requirement for voting so the Presbyterian Church made it a requirement for the office of elder. Valério Silva could only boast one. This was resolved when a very dedicated elder from the larger and more fashionable downtown church, Major Jeter, volunteered to move his membership to Valério Silva. The second obstacle was economic. Valério Silva was located in an extremely impoverished section of the city and could not begin to contribute to the support of the middle class life style of a pastor. This was resolved by assigning the writer, whose salary was paid by the mission, to be the church’s pastor. Neither of these factors—education or poverty—are barriers to the ecclesiology of Baptist or Pentecostal groups.

Fourth, the expense of a seminary training, generally subsidized by the sponsoring presbytery, was a luxury beyond the means of many presbyteries. In 1928 the Presbytery of the North was p. 118 unable to send its only new candidate to seminary while the Presbytery of Pernambuco was unable to send three of its four candidates because funds were lacking.¹³

Fifth, the Presbyterian form of government calls for the collaboration of both teaching elders (ordained pastors) and ruling elders (ordained laymen) in its various

⁸ W.A. Waddell, cited by Pierson, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Leonard, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

¹¹ Robert McIntire, *Portrait of Half a Century, 1859–1910* (Cuernavaca: CIDOC, 1969), p. 8/3.

¹² Mario Neves, *Meio século* (Sao Paulo: Casa Editora Presbiteriana, 1955), pp. 28–29.

¹³ Pierson, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

judicatories—sessions, presbyteries, synods and General Assembly. These juricatories can only function effectively by meeting at frequent intervals for planning, consultation, and supervision. Brazil's sparsely populated interior, inadequate transportation system, and the great distances between communities made such a system impractical. Instead of a monthly meeting of presbytery, as is common in the U.S., many Brazilian presbyteries have only one stated meeting a year. The Northern Synod, which in 1914 stretched from the Amazon to Rio de Janeiro, was often unable to hold its biennial meeting for lack of a quorum. Both economic and geographical barriers militated against synodical organization and there were those who advocated that they be abolished, but Alvaro Reis reasoned that the Brazilian Church should retain them because the U.S. Church had synods.¹⁴

This commitment to Presbyterian order meant that many congregations were left to their own devices with a rare visit from a pastor. The writer was impressed on more than one occasion to visit congregations which maintained a very active life directed by the initiative of their lay leaders. One such congregation on the island of Itaparica, located a few miles from the city of Salvador, could recall going three years without a pastoral visit and still it maintained weekly worship services, Sunday School, and a youth program but it could not celebrate the sacraments or receive new members except on those rare occasions when the pastor visited. This neglect, Pierson notes, cultivated a spirit of congregationalism among the Presbyterians in the northern part of Brazil.¹⁵

REASSESSMENT

In reassessing the Presbyterians' attempt to replicate the Reformed tradition in Brazil it is important to recognize the vastly different historical circumstances which provided the context for the Reformers' activity in sixteenth century Europe and the missionaries P. 119 in nineteenth century Brazil. There are two significant aspects in which these contexts differed. First, the Europe of the sixteenth century was a relatively stable, mature, Christian society whereas nineteenth century Brazil represented a young, dynamic, pagan nation (in the eyes of the missionary) with an expanding frontier experiencing dramatic social change. Secondly, the problem faced by the Reformers was one of conservation whereas the missionaries were confronted by the problem of penetration. The reformers lived in a Christian society and their preoccupation was understandably one of order—how to preserve the *corpus christianum* against the unrestrained antinomian tendencies of the Enthusiasts which threatened to destroy the Church. They met this threat by elevating the role of the ordained ministry as the instrument to maintain order and not, as the 1847 General Assembly Minutes stated, as the “great instrumentality appointed by the Head of the Church for the conversion of the world.” Living in a Christian society threatened by destruction the principle of order took precedent over the concern for mission. The missionaries, by contrast, found themselves confronted by a totally different problem—how to penetrate a secular and pagan world with the evangelical message. They were caught in the dubious situation of developing an offensive strategy with church structures designed for defensive purposes—preserving order. Had the Reformers been confronted by the problem of penetrating a secular society instead of conserving the threatened *corpus christianum* it is safe to assume that they would have developed a far more flexible church structure.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 130.

The Presbyterian Reformed legacy's preoccupation with order saddled it with a relatively inflexible church structure which failed to adapt to the exigencies of a frontier missionary opportunity. The Baptists, as on the U.S. frontier, once again took advantage of their more flexible structure and although they initiated their work more than two decades after the arrival of Simonton they overtook the Presbyterian Church of Brazil by 1931 and the total Presbyterian communion by 1940.¹⁶ when one attempts to account for the more rapid growth of the Baptists it is evident that its principle of local autonomy was far more viable given the demographic character of the country and a society which historically had resisted centralized control. Leonard suggests p. 120 that its less demanding ministerial preparation, its simpler message, and its identification with the lower classes were also assets for a church expanding among the popular masses of Brazil.¹⁷ Another factor which was effectively exploited by the Baptists was the lay ministry. Although there is abundant evidence of lay activity within the Presbyterian Church it was never fully exploited due to an incipient clericism fostered by an ecclesiology which placed effective power in the hands of the clergy at the expense of the laity.

Baptist flexibility permitted laymen to meet the requirements for ordination without enduring the long, arduous, and costly training which presented itself as an insuperable barrier to Presbyterians without the necessary educational background. Lay evangelists were employed by the missions and a few even worked for the Presbyterian Church. Some of these were extremely effective and desired ordination and while their services as pastors were urgently needed they were denied ordination because of their lack of seminary education. Such evangelists, were they in the employ of the Baptists, would have been ordained and it was precisely for this reason that the Baptist attracted many pastors trained by other denominations.¹⁸ Explaining the dilemma of the Presbyterian lay evangelist Pierson says:

*Even though he did the work of a pastor he could not administer the sacraments or preside over the local session. This placed him in a position which was not only theologically indefensible, but psychologically untenable.*¹⁹

There were efforts to mobilize the laity and to provide alternatives to formal seminary education as a prerequisite for ordination within the Presbyterian Church but these efforts were defeated by the proponents of presbyterian order. In 1877 a *Training School* for ministerial candidates was established in Sao Paulo and a young enterprising missionary, a recent graduate of Princeton Theological Seminary, Rev. John Howells, joined the faculty. He quickly perceived the problems created when students from the interior were exposed to the conditions of urban life. Such an experience often produced such a strong disaffection with rural life that they were unable to return and serve in the presbyteries p. 121 which had sponsored them. In order to surmount this problem he struck on the idea of establishing a similar school at Brotas in conjunction with an existing self-supporting school where students paid for their tuition by working two hours a day

¹⁶ Erasmo Braga and Kenneth G. Grubb, *The Republic of Brazil: A Survey of the Religious Situation* (London Dominion Press, 1932), p. 97.

¹⁷ Leonard, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

¹⁹ Pierson, *op. cit.*, p. 238.

on the school farm.²⁰ It was his intent to provide religious training for teachers from that rural area during their four months vacation period, thereby equipping them to be lay leaders of rural congregations. His strategy is described in an 1878 Board of Foreign Missions report as follows:

*... it is the intention of Rev. Howells to have another class at Brotas for four months in the year, where those who are teaching school can attend during vacation, that they may be fitted to become Bible-readers and evangelists. It is expected that while teaching the children during the week, they will, on Sabbath, minister in spiritual things to their parents, making simple but practical explanations of Scriptures and exhortations. These Bible-readers, coming from among the people, and having been educated without losing their former habits of life, and therefore living just exactly as the people, will not only seem nearer to them and better able to sympathize with them, but will also require much less for their support, and consequently in a short time will be entirely independent of the mission.*²¹

Such a program was indeed far-sighted for its time, approximating the pattern of present-day Pentecostalism. The school carried on for nine years when it was forced to close because of failure of its farm crops.²²

There were attempts to discover more economical, less time-consuming, and more relevant alternative routes to ordination than formal education. The area of Eastern Minas and Espirito Santo was hard-pressed to find pastors to supply the rapidly multiplying rural congregations of the prosperous coffee frontier during the second and third decades of this century. This most dynamic center of Presbyterianism was unable to recruit a sufficient number of pastors who had the prescribed seminary training. Impatient with the time-consuming seminary preparation which siphoned off needed leadership and gave candidates a [p. 122](#) theological education which, in their judgement, was excessively sophisticated for their rural congregations, they resolved to ordain some candidates who were field-tested but had not completed the formal seminary program. Mário Neves, one of the leading pastors of the area, reports a strong clerical reaction in the church councils where the seminary of Jequitibá was referred to as the “factory of crippled ministers.”²³

Another effort to expedite the preparation of laymen was an attempt made by the short-lived Union Seminary. This seminary was the result of interdenominational effort stimulated by the Panama Congress. It was established in Rio in 1919 and introduced some innovative programs. Many of its courses were offered at night to accommodate business and professional people who were interested in studying for the ministry. Courses were offered on more than one level and it was attended by some students who were motivated by their interest in theology and were not necessarily seeking ordination. Once more the spirit of clericism reared its head and protested that such a program would lower standards considered essential for the ordained ministry.²⁴

Boanerges, in his biography of Conceicao, makes the observation that the death of the ex-priest marked the end of a period when the initiative of the Church was in the hands of nationals. During Conceicao’s brief ministry the missionaries were hard-pressed to follow up the many opportunities opened by his wide-ranging itineration. With his death

²⁰ Charles Malvern Brown, “A History of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. in Brazil” (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Ohio State University, 1947), p. 154.

²¹ Robert L. McIntire, *op. cit.*, p. 7/64.

²² Charles Brown, *op. cit.* p. 154.

²³ Mario Neves, *op. cit.*, pp. 29–30.

²⁴ Pierson, *op. cit.*, pp. 165–174.

they assumed control of the direction of the work and imposed the North American pattern upon Brazil.²⁵ Prior to Conceicao's conversion the missionaries had made only modest headway using the North American pattern of gathering a crowd to hear a sermon. Blackford succeeded in gathering an audience but there was little response to the message, even in Brotas, while Schneider was meeting frustration in his ministry to the German colonos in nearby Rio Claro. Boanerges traces the relative ineffectiveness of this approach to the fact that unlike American and English audiences the Brazilians did not possess a familiarity with biblical literature.²⁶ Conceicao's remarkably successful efforts of evangelism forced the missionaries p. 123 to temporarily abandon their strategy. Boanerges describes this change in strategy as follows:

The hour of destiny was approaching in which the young national Church would create its own methods of penetration and propagation of the Gospels which was the arduous and exhaustive struggle along the roads, from ranch to ranch: of personal and direct contact with the person being evangelized; prayers on bended knees on the earthen floors of tiny rooms and principally the tremendous power of a man possessed by the Holy Spirit and prepared to live his life in preaching family by family, house by house, individual by individual, and soul by soul.²⁷

Conceicao has been criticized because of his lack of organization and structure. It must be remembered that a church can die just as easily from stifling overorganization as underorganization and it is academic to discuss which is worse. It is correctly pointed out that he neither baptized nor organized churches. His ministry consisted in preaching and treating peoples' physical infirmities. He had a distinct distaste for routine and organization which Leonard suggests is part of his rejection of Roman Catholicism. He had left a hierarchical church which was superorganized and he had no appetite to create another.²⁸ Waddell acknowledges that Conceicao's method spared the Brazilian Church from the experience of overorganization which had befallen Presbyterian mission effort in so many other places:

Conceicao and Chamberlain covered so much country that it was utterly impossible to establish regular services with Sunday sermons, a Thursday evening meeting, and the other paraphernalia of North American religious expression in each place where they had awakened interest.²⁹

Pierson argues that Conceicao's ministry would have been more productive had he remained in Brotas consolidating the work there and itinerated less. This is a moot question, after all this was strategy which the missionaries had been following and with less than gratifying success. It can be just as persuasively argued that the strength of his ministry was his itineration which opened up communities permitting others to enter and nurture a congregation. p. 124 It was also his itineration which made a significant impact on the first four seminarians who at various times accompanied him on his travels when they were not studying in Rio. Not only were they inspired by Conceicao but they provided

²⁵ Ribeiro Boanerges, *O padre Protestante* (Sao Paulo: Casa Editora Presbiteriana, 1950), p. 192.

²⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 144–145.

²⁷ *Ibid*.

²⁸ Leonard, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

²⁹ W.A. Waddell, "History of the Brazil Mission," in *Modern Missions in Chile and Brazil*, by Reginald Wheeler, *et. al.* (Philadelphia, 1926), p. 344.

much-needed manpower to the small Presbyterian force which alternated between three and four couples. This combination of formal theological training and practical field work was a much more appropriate preparation for a rapidly growing frontier church than the North American model which was destined to dominate the preparation of future Brazilian pastors. The concern for order prevailed over the concern for mission. The missionaries failed to see that a structure which had been reasonably effective in one culture at one point in time had to be significantly altered when exported to another culture. In retrospect it is clear that the Reformed concept of a highly educated ministry prepared by formal seminary training acted as a constraint upon the development of the Presbyterian Church. When confronted by conditions propitious for rapid growth it was unable to maximize its opportunity for lack of structural flexibility. Other denominations, such as the Baptists and later the Pentecostals, possessing greater structural flexibility were able to respond in a manner appropriate to the given historical conditions and experienced spectacular growth. It is not being suggested here that either the Baptists' or Pentecostals' traditions are models to be copied *en toto* and that the Reformed tradition be scrapped. Both these traditions have their own problems which are endemic to their structural organization. It is being suggested, however, that the Reformed concept of ministerial preparation is less than adequate for those historical moments which offer the opportunity of rapid growth as witnessed by both the North American frontier and the Brazilian experience.

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Teaching Christ as Liberator in Extension Education

Chris Sugden

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AN EXPERIMENT IN WRITING A TEE COURSE ON CHRISTOLOGY

This bold attempt to break out of the traditional mould of teaching Christology to Christians who live in the midst of poverty and oppression demands serious reflection. Does it weaken the fundamentals of systematic theology or illuminate them? Is extension education a better context in which to interpret Biblical theology than a residential college?

The writer welcomes advice and help in revising the course. All correspondence should be addressed to: TAFTEE. P.O. Box 520, Bangalore 560 005, India. This 10 week course is available for \$10 and reprint rights for 10% royalty of the cost of reproduction.

The Editor of ERT would also welcome articles and comments in response to this disturbing model.

(Editor)

At the end of a hard day selling fire fighting equipment in Bangalore, South India, Bernard sat down to his daily hour of studying his degree-level TEE course on Jesus the Liberator. In the middle he read this *frame* or a unit of study.

“This is a sermon based on a real life story: John, a Christian, worked as a managerial trainee in a factory. He saw injustice and exploitation on every side and decided to form a workers’ union. As a leader of this Union but with no experience he went to others for help. He called on a Christian lay man who told him that if he could avoid being exploited and ill-treated himself, he would do better to ignore the goings-on around him: it would do his career no good if he got involved. He then called on a Christian pastor. He told John that he was getting mixed up in politics and that the pastor could not get involved in this issue.

In desperation he called on a communist. This man asked him what his problems were and how the exploited workers were suffering. He went with John to the court to defend victimized employees. He helped John get financial assistance for the workers’ families and put him in touch with skilful advisers and lawyers to help him.

In the light of our study of Jesus’ parable of the Good Samaritan which of these do you think proved neighbour to the man seeking to rectify injustice in the factory? What is your reaction to this p. 126 application of Jesus’ story? Is it a faithful application? Does it distort the meaning of the parable?

.....
Discuss in your tutorial.”

Well, Bernard was ready for the tutorial. “How can Christians get involved in these trade union matters?” he demanded. If you want to stand for truth you will never get anywhere in the unions. they will kick you out.”

Bernard was of course an articulate, forceful and youthful salesman, by and large his own boss. Next to him in the tutorial sat Elijah, a shy elderly evangelist. He had lived in a slum area for a number of years. Now he spoke up: “But Christians must do something for the people I live with. They must stand for what is right. Being kicked out should not stop you making a start. It didn’t stop Jesus.” Then a member of a trade union and a professional association joined in. A lively discussion covered trade unions’ practices and the way to understand the parable of the Good Samaritan. In the process the students were doing theology. Theology is what results when Christian believers apply Scripture to their life situation and work out what is true and relevant about God and His will today for them.

To be more precise they were doing Christology. They were seeking to understand how to obey the God revealed through Jesus in their society by studying what Jesus did in His society. The course on Jesus the Liberator attempts to combine a Chalcedonian understanding of Jesus as fully God and fully man, the evangelical conviction that His substitutionary death for sin is the one way for men to come into a forgiven living relationship with God with the insights into Jesus’ ministry to the poor and oppressed contributed by Liberation Theology. In this report I outline an attempt to write a TEE Christology course at degree level and to combine three ‘musts’ for Christian adult education—it must be relevant, practical and fun to study. People coming from a hard day’s work won’t abide further drudgery.

GENERAL THEOLOGICAL METHOD

The course attempts to put the discoveries of the new hermeneutics into practice—that we do not fully understand the meaning of the Biblical text until we apply it in our own context **P. 127** today and obey it. The course uses the method described by Tony

Thistleton in his essay “Understanding God’s Word”¹ as the “merging of horizons”. *First*, the student studies the first century horizon. He examines Jesus in His own historical socio-economic and political context. For example, he studies the hierarchical society of Jesus’ day in which social inequalities were sanctioned by religion, where women, children, the sick, traders, Gentiles, Samaritans and the people of the land were denied access to God by the pharisaic and scribal interpretation of the law. He studies the radical stance Jesus took in eating with tax collectors, healing the children of Gentiles and praising good Samaritans. He sees the political implications of Jesus’ actions in a society where no division was made between religion and politics.

Secondly, the student reflects on his own twentieth century Indian horizon and seeks horizons similar to the one Jesus was in. In India religion sanctions social inequalities between upper castes and outcastes: women are assigned an inferior status; officials sometimes abuse their power for financial profit just as the tax collectors did. And of course the poor are always with us.

The *third* step is to merge the horizons—to apply Jesus’ teaching in his situation to a parallel situation today. This process is circular. By applying Jesus’ teaching to our horizon we learn more about the nature of Jesus’ teaching: a Good Samaritan is tame today, but a good communist is as hot for us to handle as a good Samaritan was for Jesus’ leaders. We also learn to question our own horizon. Jesus held up as his pattern of leadership the role of a servant. In India most middle-class Christian homes have servants. They work long hours often without a day off for low pay and are regarded often as very inferior. Jesus’ teaching on the nobility of servanthood and Paul’s teaching on master-servant relationship questions the situation we live in.

The *fourth* step in merging horizons is to obey God’s will as it challenges us. The course must challenge and change behaviour. In the study on Jesus and Social Inequalities students are asked,

“Can you think of anything you could do in the next week which would show the newness of life of the kingdom in your relationship with socially inferior people—for example could you do the washing up? p. 128

..... ?”This method means that in studying each aspect of Jesus’ ministry students are required to reflect critically on their society also.

“Reflecting on the prophets’ hope for a just and righteous society under the Prince of Shalom, write a speech beginning “I have a dream for India.....”

In the light of Jesus’ healing ministry to the lepers (the out-castes), the women (second class citizens), servants of hated Roman soldiers, Samaritans who were bitter enemies, and blind people who were thought to be punished for sin, evaluate Christian medical work where even with concessions the daily cost of Church-related hospitals is RS 20–40 per patient, or one fifth of a labourer’s monthly salary.”

The method of merging horizons is important for correctly interpreting Jesus today in Indian society. But by taking these four steps the student also covers more traditional ground. He learns the historical veracity of the Gospel records by seeing how all that Jesus does only makes historical sense in the socio-economic and political situation of pre-AD 70 Palestine. The standard components of an academic Christology course are all to be found in Jesus the Liberator. The student covers basic gospel source criticism, arguments for the historical veracity of the gospel records, the way parables force their hearers to make judgements, the possibility of miracles, the Son of Man and suffering servant, the atonement, the evidence for the resurrection, understandings of the second coming and what the millenium might be and the doctrine of the Trinity.

¹ In *Obeying Christ in a Changing World*, Vol. 1. The Lord Christ, Edited by John Stott, Collins 1977.

But what is crucial is the focus for looking at Jesus. The course does not view him in terms of doctrines. It examines him in terms of what he did in his society to decisively liberate men from all forms of evil.

THE THEOLOGICAL FOCUS

The theological focus is that Jesus was God's agent to bring God's plan for creation to fulfillment by inaugurating the kingdom of God. This is God's plan of total liberation for man's whole life. It brings new relationships between God and man, man and man, man and the physical world.

The student begins by studying the earliest Christological title "Jesus is Lord" and sees how this is awarded Jesus on the basis [p. 129](#) of the resurrection. After studying the evidence for the resurrection he examines its significance in vindicating Jesus as the one who brings God's kingdom.

The nature of God's kingdom is studied first in the transformation of the physical realm, climaxed in the resurrection. Jesus' healing miracles show God's compassion and the power of his kingdom to affect the physical realm. The student evaluates Christian medical work and also studies Francis Mac Nutt's guides to the Christian practice of faith healing and exorcism, taken from his book *Healing* (Ave Maria Press 1974).

In the nature miracles the student sees Jesus as the one who transforms, restores and delivers the creation of which he is sovereign. He then evaluates three cases by what he learns from the nature miracles.

"How would you advise these people in the light of the fact that God will transform the best of man's work in the kingdom?"

(a) David is a printer, he produces quantity at the expense of quality because his customers accept his work. He knows he can do much better.

(b) Prabhu is a householder; his kitchen waste makes a terrible mess in his compound but he feels it is not his job to clean it up.

(c) Abraham is a pastor; he advises all the young men in the Youth Club to train as pastors because he feels that is the only work God really blesses."

Only in the fourth week of the ten week course do students examine the historical basis for the claim that this risen Lord is the same person as the carpenter who ate with disreputable people and did women's and servants' work in washing his disciples' feet. From the material in the lesson students have to be ready to take part in a role play at their tutorial with a person who does not believe Jesus existed, a person who thinks the historical details of Jesus' life are unimportant, and a person who argues that the gospels contain an interpretation of Jesus which we must remove to find the real Jesus.

THE MINISTRY OF JESUS

What do people really teach about Jesus? The first section examines Jesus' prophetic ministry, in particular his understanding of the law. Jesus thought that the effect of much Jewish interpretation of the law was oppressive and unjust to some people [P. 130](#) but gave others a way of avoiding God's will for love and justice while pretending to obey Him. At the end of the lesson the student is asked to prepare for his tutorial in this way:

"A leader of your church opposes a member who proposes to send a voluntary medical team to a slum area on a Sunday—breaking the Sabbath. Write a dialogue between the two people and be prepared to take the part of either of them in the tutorial."

The lessons on “Jesus and Religious Oppression and Social Inequalities” encourage the students to see that Jesus did not hand out charity to oppressed people—he restored their rights, dignities and self-respect, motivating them to advance further and help others in turn. He went to the root cause of injustice in Israelite society. The religious practice and laws of the leaders deprived most of the Jews of their rights as members of God’s people to know God’s law, to enter his kingdom or have dignity and fellowship in an undivided society. Jesus actively resisted this oppression because it gave a wrong idea of God, and caused injustice and suffering. He took the side of outcast rejected people. He showed that God was a God of mercy and forgiveness who changes their status. Jesus also wanted to free the leaders from their false and loveless religion. To them he stressed God’s judgement and call to repentance. The student is then asked to write out what he thinks are the root causes of the problems of Indian society, the rights that are denied to people, and how they can help deprived people know their rights.

Inevitably Jesus was involved in the politics of his day and in conflict. If he had not got involved his silence would have left the field free for the powerful to continue unhindered. Jesus’ principles of involvement in conflict were that he exposed underlying conflicts and did not attack individuals or make personalities the issue as is the prevailing method in India. He recognised that people belonged to groups and dealt with them as such but took sides with the underprivileged. The example of William Wilberforce and his work to abolish the slave trade is given and students are asked to identify these principles of Jesus’ ministry in Wilberforce’s work.

RESISTANCE TO THE ROMANS

Two lessons are given to “Jesus and Resistance to the Romans.” After scanning the nature of the Roman occupation of **P. 131** Palestine students are asked to consider present day situations that are parallel to first century Palestine in President Somoza’s Nicaragua, the plans by the South African government to bulldoze down the black community at Crossroads, and a recent tragedy near Madras where high caste Hindus set fire to a Harijan colony and butchered twelve people. Then the policies of different groups in Palestine towards the Romans come under review. For example, the Sadducees benefited from Roman rule and were quite content with it. In contrast to them, Jesus stressed that God’s power to make the last first was active in the world. He taught that true leadership was service not domination and prophesied a rapid end to the Sadducees’ power. The student then reads a comment on the Indian emergency of 1976–77:

“The denial of rights to working people, the continued victimization of the rural poor and landless, the so called beautification of the cities that destroyed the homes of the urban poor, the compulsory sterilization drive violating the dignity of thousands all these are a reproach to any nation.”

The student then compares various reactions to the emergency found among Christians (support, hesitancy and opposition) with the attitude of the Sadducees and of Jesus to the Romans.

Jesus also rejected violence as a solution. Instead of violently overthrowing the Romans or replacing unjust Jewish leaders Jesus proclaimed a new order where men would be free from all the evil that oppresses human beings and disfigures human society. This was no escapist solution as John Desrochers writes in an enrichment book for the course, *Christ the Liberator*, p. 128.

“The creation of a new Israel was the most revolutionary and dangerous undertaking anybody could have embarked on at the time of Jesus, for it involved a radical restructuring of society and an open confrontation with religious and secular powers.”

So the study proceeds to “The Church, The Revolutionary Community.” Jesus’ teaching on the community life of the disciples and its practice in the New Testament is used as a basis for students to evaluate the life of their own Christian community. The course asks these questions:

“Does your fellowship regulate its life by allegiance to Jesus’ teaching and obedience to the whole word of God? Do the leadership patterns show the model of Jesus the servant? Do they develop and draw on the contributions of every member? Do p. 132 members live by the kingdom pattern of repentance and forgiveness and feel able to say sorry to each other? Is her primary calling to be a sign of God’s kingdom in the midst of the old age and to use kingdom and not worldly means in achieving her kingdom goals? Does she accurately challenge surrounding society or merely reproduce the disfigurements of society? Does she deliberately unite people of different backgrounds or reproduce the dominant divisions of society? Does she provide a community of healing and reconciliation where people can open themselves to receive love? Are members available to meet each others’ material and personal needs? What can you do to promote these goals in the coming weeks?”

JESUS AND THE POOR

“Jesus and the Poor” takes a week’s study. The first day requires the student to meet with a poor person whom they regularly see—their servant, driver, gardener, the postman, a rickshaw driver, tailor or coolie. They are asked to find out in a casual way where he lives, and in what sort of shack. How many in his family, which ones are earning and what is their total income? What does he dislike about his job and what improvements does he hope for? What prevents him improving his position and what problems does he have? The students are asked to record and reflect on their findings later and share them in the tutorial.

The second and third days are studies on poverty in the Old and New Testament. Jesus’ good news to the poor is “that the cause of injustice in man’s rebellion is dealt with. He promises a radical change in economic relationships and beings to totally reverse the arrangements of his day. He brings real change to the lives of suffering people, shows that he is God’s king who defends the poor and creates a new people of God to care for the poor.” He liberates the rich from rebelling against God by seeking their security in wealth and ignoring or oppressing the rights of the poor. They are to devote themselves to the concerns of God’s kingdom—just relationships and true peace—and God will provide them enough to live on.

Students examine the 1971 census of India to see how 6% of Indians control 80% of the country’s resources and 94% have 20% to live on. They then examine long case studies of a Christian group in Jabalpur who took up the cause of cycle-rickshaw pullers, and a Church group in Bombay who opened a club for p. 133 pavement children. They seek to discover principles of Christian involvement with poor people that these groups followed.

The tutorial is a simulation game on the rickshaw pullers of Nagpur to show how merely patching up wounds does not change underlying causes of injustice. I have reproduced this game in an appendix. Students are referred to Julia De Santa Ana’s *Good News to the Poor* for further enrichment reading.

SUFFERING

The final three weeks of the course concentrate on the cross, suffering and salvation.

“God’s programme for the material and spiritual liberation of his creation from the powers of evil, rebellion and death was carried out by his suffering servant. Our theme for the next three weeks is how Jesus accomplished this total and decisive liberation.”

Jesus’ suffering must not be separated from his ministry. It arose directly out of the stance he took on the issues of his day, taking sides with the powerless sufferers against the powerful. He undertook a prophet’s ministry and saw a prophet’s fate coming to him. The problem of Jesus’ death is how one who claimed to be anointed by God to bring his kingdom came to die under his curse. Studies of the Son of Man and the suffering Servant show that Jesus linked the concepts of judgement, forgiveness and suffering. The rejection by God’s people of God’s judge and true servant was the proximate cause of Jesus’ suffering. But as representative of God’s covenant people, he absorbed the consequences of his peoples’ rebellion—death. In doing so he suffered the judgement they deserved so that they might be forgiven. The students are encouraged to link this with their experience of worship in baptism and communion. In these sacraments we identify ourselves afresh with Jesus our representative under God’s righteous condemnation as the grounds of our forgiveness and new life.

The above paragraph condenses three days’ study in which I attempt to link substitutionary atonement closely with the actual events of Jesus’ ministry and the way the gospels present his understanding of his suffering and death. In India Christian forgiveness is regarded as very mechanical. A wash in the blood of Jesus is like a wash in the Ganges. I attempt to show how Jesus’ death for forgiveness is far from a mechanical ritual but intimately [p. 134](#) bound with his whole ministry. So four studies examine the Cross as God’s judgement on sin, an offering for sin of the perfect life as a propitiation, the conquest of evil and the revelation of God’s love in taking the initiative to bring Shalom.

In studying how the Cross reveals man’s rebellion, its consequences and God’s judgement on man’s rebellion, students reflect on corporate as well as individual sin. They are asked to suggest examples of corporate sin in India and how Christians can repent of them.

“If we are members of a privileged class that profits from corporate wrongdoing and do nothing to try and change it we are guilty before God.”

Jesus is the representative head of a new race who offers his perfect life as a sacrifice to God and takes the penalty of his people’s rebellion against God on him. Here is a *frame* at the end of this lesson.

“What is the significance of understanding Jesus’ death as an offering to God for man’s sins, to turn away his wrath?”

1. Man is so helpless in his rebellion that only God can take the initiative to rescue him.
2. Man’s rebellion is so deep-rooted that mere moral reform or social change is not sufficient to help him.
3. Injustice, exploitation, dishonesty and adultery are not only crimes against fellow humans; they are damnable sins against God which can only be forgiven because of a perfect life and a sacrificial death.
4. The need to atone for and put right the consequences of evil is only met when God’s wrath and judgement are turned away.

5. God is so concerned to rescue man and bring him to fulfillment in his kingdom that he takes the initiative, makes the offering and suffers the penalty himself to open his kingdom to his former enemies.

The following people need to recognize one or more of the above truths about the liberation which Jesus brings by his sacrifice. After each example summarize what should be emphasized to that person.

1. Mrs Chowdry drives herself and others hard in Christian service. It is her duty she feels to live an obedient life in order to [p. 135](#) make up for the wrongs she has done and put right wrongs other people have done ...
2. George D'Souza is a social worker. He gets disappointed that only a few people seem really changed by his work. Though many poor people benefit from what he does, some of them only want to become rich and powerful. None of the privileged people he talks to seem to care about the problems of the poor....
3. Thomas David is a young Christian businessman who wants to be successful. He is offered a partnership in a venture which will make a large profit by using cheap non-union labour....
4. Christine Chatterji used to be an enthusiastic member of the young people's group. Now she works for an exporting company and travels a lot. She has seen some of the excitement of the business world but has got very disillusioned about life. The "law of the jungle" seems to be the only law to follow. She feels that Christianity is for nice people who do not face up to the realities of the world....

Discuss your answer in your tutorial."

In the study on the conquest of evil, students are introduced to the theology of the principalities and powers of evil, a theology of the evil which infects all man's systems. Jesus on the Cross is the one who frees men from the power of evil, of man's sin, lust, the desire to dominate others and of Satan. The life of the Church in the power of the Spirit demonstrates Jesus' Lordship over evil. Students examine case studies of Church life to see how a Church demonstrates freedom from some of the powers of evil. For example, Roswith Gerloff writes of Black Churches in America:

"They have given dignity to people forced to live in societies not of their own making and have helped to preserve the values of their communities. They have only been able to do all this because of Christ, because of the gospel which liberates from bondage to oppressive and overpowering structures. They have helped the freed man to look beyond material possessions and to deliver him from a slave mentality".

The final study of the Cross as a revelation of God's love highlights God's way of overcoming evil, by taking the initiative to love his enemies and by suffering the consequences. From the studies on suffering on the Cross the student is asked to assign passages from the New Testament from memory to the following [p. 136](#) principles for Christian action against evil: Absorb violence, resist evil, regard suffering as redemptive, seek your opponents' best interests, take the initiative in seeking reconciliation, admit your complicity in personal, and corporate rebellion, and identify with the victims of injustice. They are then asked to identify these principles in two case studies of Christian action.

The Cross was set up in the midst of suffering and injustice and one study concentrates on its message to people who are suffering. The Christian message gives motives for taking action against suffering—not for accepting it fatalistically as many do in India. First, suffering is not an illusion but a serious and harsh reality. The sufferings of Jesus, and of the refugee are real. Secondly, God is not aloof from suffering. Students are asked to

suggest four examples from India of people who could say “How can God know about my suffering?” and then give a way in which Jesus suffered in a similar way. Thirdly, Jesus took the initiative in attacking and relieving suffering in all its forms. Finally, when suffering will not go away God still triumphs because he can use it redemptively to further His purpose of bringing peace. The transformation of suffering is studied in Paul’s letters and students are asked for examples they know of where the suffering of a Christian brings life to others. Finally, students examine the action of a Church in South Africa which gave shelter to evicted black people and are asked to state how it illustrates the reasons for Jesus’ sufferings and Paul’s teachings on suffering in Christian ministry.

The final week draws together an understanding of salvation by examining all aspects of salvation achieved by Jesus under the headings of the Christian festivals. Then they apply Jesus’ liberation to society, and compare it with liberation as taught by Hindu religion and Marxism. The final two days look at the relationship between Jesus and the Spirit of God who makes real among us what Jesus has made possible for us: and between Jesus and the Father, in that he has a direct access to the Father which he opens to us as he leads us beyond Himself to the majesty and fulness of God.

REFLECTIONS

Throughout the course students are continually asked to suggest parallels from their society to Jesus’ situation, offer pastoral advice for a case study, evaluate some Christian activity, write a **P. 137** parable themselves, plan some initiative and at the end evaluate the course. This critical reflection is vital because little in Indian education or church life encourages people to think for themselves. The link between what the Bible teaches and what I ought to do is usually forged by what the preacher says and by unquestioned traditions of the elders. The course tries to forge this link by challenging the student to make his own evaluations and defend them in the tutorial.

Also the course is intimately related to actual case studies from local church life. TEE courses are best written in the context of ministry in a local church in order to provide a living laboratory of case studies with which to interact the scripture. Students are being trained to catalytic leaders of an obedient Christian community. So they need to learn to think creatively and biblically out of their own situations. The course tries to model this and encourage them to do it. The course has many inadequacies and omissions. It probably does not measure up to its stated goals as it should. A critic could suggest that the course should make practical suggestions that are very tame compared to Jesus’ radical action. However, it does try to give one practical step which students can realistically take which leads in the direction Jesus points.

APPENDIX

The Rickshaw Pullers of Nagpur

This game reproduces on a very small scale a situation in society. Those taking part try and experience what people in that situation feel like and why. The game is based on the true situation of rickshaw pullers in Nagpur, India. Your tutorial group will split into three groups, one representing the rickshaw pullers, one representing rickshaw owners and one representing rickshaw users.

The group will first meet separately to evaluate its present system from their point of view and will discuss whether they want any changes. How will the people you represent feel and argue? None are Christians so don’t assume Christian attitudes.

Then the group will come together and, while still sitting in three groups, engage in conversation to discuss the situation and suggestions for change.

This is the situation:

There are 7000 rickshaws in Nagpur. 1000 pullers own their own [p. 138](#) rickshaws. 6000 hire them out from 50 owners for Rs 5.00 a day (60 cents). They earn a total of Rs 15.00 a day of which they need Rs 5.00 for food. They are responsible for all repairs to their rickshaws—a measure to discourage accidents or negligence among a group considered as drunkards and unreliable.

The cost of one rickshaw is Rs 1250 (\$150.00).

Calculate the daily income of an owner of 50 rickshaws.

Calculate how many rickshaws a puller could have bought with the money he has paid for hiring a rickshaw for 15 years—working 6 days a week, 50 weeks a year.

Be ready to argue against the other groups such questions as:

Pullers “The owners charge too much”

Users “The pullers charge too much”

Owners “We put capital at risk”

Owners and Users “The pullers should work harder”

Owners and Pullers “The user should pay more”

Note for sharing at the end of the simulation game:-

A group of Christians in Nagpur tried many schemes to work with the rickshaw pullers

- a. They called the pullers together to find out their problems.
- b. They provided a place for them to meet—a hall instead of the pavement.
- c. They provided a workshop for them to repair their rickshaws.
- d. They raised loans to provide autorickshaws but they were too expensive.
- e. They motorized the cycle-rickshaws but the frames were not strong enough to stand the pull of the motors.
- f. With the rickshaw-pullers they presented a petition to the state government to restrict licences for owning rickshaws to one licence per person, who would also have to be a registered puller. Rickshaw owners would have to hand over the rickshaws to the pullers at no cost. The state government recently put this into law.

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Christian Higher Education in America in the 1980s

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When Charles W. Eliot became president of Harvard University in 1869, there were only three other administrators: the steward of the dining hall, the regent of the dormitories,

and a part-time registrar. That was over two hundred years after the founding of Harvard in 1636. The distinctive purpose of America's first institution of higher learning is well known. Its earliest printed rules announced that the chief aim should be that "everyone shall consider the mayne End of his life & studyes, to know God & Jesus Christ, which is Eternall life."¹

The pattern of secularization set in quickly in the colonies, however, and was well on its way a hundred years after the founding of the nation's first college. Brubacher and Rudy make these observations about the decline of college graduates going into the ministry:

*The percentage of college graduates going into the ministry was 50 during the first half of the 18th century. By 1761, however, this had fallen to 37 per cent and by 1801 to 22 per cent. Revivalism brought the figure back to 30 per cent by 1836, but then a steady decline set in, and it was 20 per cent in 1861, 22 per cent in 1881, and 6.5 per cent in 1900.*²

In the fall of 1976, 11,337,000 students flooded to the colleges and universities of the United States. By 1980 it is expected that fewer than 20 percent of those students will be in private institutions and only a miniscule proportion in schools which could be called "Christian" as Harvard was in 1636. Yet the member schools of the American Association of Bible Colleges enrolled 29,846 students last year and they represent less than half of the existing Bible colleges and institutes on the North American continent. Surely, more than double that number are in Christian liberal arts colleges and several thousand more are enrolled in evangelical seminaries.

Every aspect of Christian work is affected by Christian higher education. The Bible colleges and Bible institutes have virtually p. 140 kept the twentieth-century missions movement in operation; and seminary graduates carry out educational responsibilities in local churches as pastors and ministers of education, in parachurch organizations focusing on evangelism, missions, or education, and in colleges and seminaries themselves. Of Dallas Seminary alumni, 14.6 percent (one out of seven) are presently teaching or administering at the college or seminary level somewhere in the world and a significant group in each year's graduating class identifies some form of Christian higher education as the ministry to which they aspire.

Every Christian worker is affected in one way or another by this vast and important enterprise. Pastors make decisions regarding church support for denominational or independent institutions. Christian leaders counsel young people regarding their choice of college. Parents are directly involved with the question of whether and where their children will attend college. And all Christians must be concerned with that facet of ministry which literally provides leadership for all other aspects of ministry carried out in the name of Jesus Christ in the world today.

By the term *higher education* this author is referring to that vast network of postsecondary schools of learning without specification as to whether they are public or private, proprietary or nonprofit, two-year or four-year colleges, graduate or undergraduate, Christian or non-Christian. Rather than trying to identify each time between a Bible college, a Christian liberal arts college, or a seminary, the author will pull them all under the banner *Christian college* unless more detailed elucidation is called for. A Christian college may be defined as a *postsecondary institution of learning which takes seriously an evangelical doctrinal statement; classes in Bible and Christian ministry; a*

¹ *Colonial Society of Massachusetts*, vol. 15, *Collections*, Harvard College Records, 1:24.

² John Brubacher and Willis Rudy, *Higher Education in Transition* (New York: Harper & Row, 1958) p. 10.

distinctively Christian philosophy of education and life; and the quality of spiritual life on campus. That definition could apply to a Christian liberal arts college with the broadest of programs or to a Bible institute or a seminary with a single-purpose curriculum.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

Without question the earliest colleges in America were Christian institutions. The colonial Anglicans and Calvinists wanted a highly literate and college-trained clergy functioning in their churches and established their colleges with this educational goal in mind. Brubacher and Rudy, whose work is a classic history on [P. 141](#) higher education, openly admit that “the Christian tradition was the foundation stone of the whole intellectual structure which was brought to the New World.”³

To these early American church leaders the advancement of learning and the service of the church were merely two sides of the same coin. Piety was not to be separated from intellect, and religious faith was to be taught in a rational and systematic manner not only to clergymen but also to potential professional men in other fields, notably public officials of various kinds.

In the early years educational institutions set the pattern for society and were largely governed by the influence of the churches. Slowly, however, as secularization spread throughout the growing young nation, it also strengthened its grip on her educational institutions. The size of the country, its heterogeneous makeup, and increasing geographical spread of its population fostered a pluralistic trend in both the theology and the style of educational institutions.

It is quite chic in educational circles to refer to the tradition-bound patterns of Harvard. On one occasion Robert M. Hutchins of the University of Chicago commented on change at Harvard by saying, “I understand that Harvard University is making its diplomas larger or smaller—I’ve forgotten which. This is a step in the right direction.” But, of course, Harvard *did* change drastically and dramatically; so much so that Yale University was founded in 1701 partly to counteract the liberalism that was already strangling Harvard.

William Warren Sweet, noted church historian, suggests that the principal dynamic behind the college-founding enthusiasm of American Christians was the spirit of revivalism and missionary thrust. The Great Awakening in the mid-eighteenth century was a major impulse to the development of Christian colleges. But the mortality rate of colleges founded in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries amounted to nearly 80 percent by the end of the Civil War!

The contemporary scene is almost as confusing as the society which forms its backdrop. Someone once said that American society is so frustrated that if Moses came down from Sinai today the two tablets he carried would be aspirin. President David McKenna suggests that the Christian college, having passed through “the church era, the alumni era, the accreditation era, [p. 142](#) and the business era” is now in “the government era.” He writes:

... the government era will give the Christian college its most severe test in both identity and exposure. It may imply a broader base of student enrollments. It could give the curriculum a public service thrust. It will certainly require a redefinition of the purpose of the Christian college when “service in the public interest” is added to the traditional statements about

³ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

“Christian service,” “institutional loyalty,” “academic quality,” and community participation.”⁴

Of course, McKenna has identified a crucial point when he speaks of purpose. A Christian college in the late 1970s dare not be like Churchill’s description of the British Labor Party: “Like Columbus, it does not know where it is going, it does not know where it is when it gets there, and it is doing it all on someone else’s money!”

Since the publication of McKenna’s article, the involvement of the federal government in higher education in America has become increasingly burdensome. By far the majority of institutions are involved with governmental aid at least in the form of student loans and grants. And even that limited involvement now requires compliance with all kinds of bureaucratic regulations. The American Council of Education has estimated the cost of compliance with federal requirements at almost two billion dollars a year.

Few people realize how massive the educational enterprise is in America. Over \$122 billion is spent annually on education in this country, an amount which funds 66 million people including students. Those figures make education the largest single economic enterprise in America. Pressure on every institution is for greater efficiency and accountability and, to be sure, these things must be rendered to Caesar. But in contrast there must be, on the part of the Christian institution, a commitment to quality, excellence, and values as part of what is rendered to God. The contemporary scene is a difficult one and it is virtually devoid of simplified solutions. As H. L. Mencken once said, “For every complex problem there is a simple answer—and it is wrong.”

ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS OF CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

A genuinely Christian institution of higher learning will possess **P. 143** three qualities which cannot be minimized nor compromised.

Evangelical Commitment

A genuinely Christian institution is different from a college which is merely “church-related.” Taking seriously an evangelical doctrinal statement means identifying that doctrinal statement in public places such as the catalog, and requiring commitment to that statement on the part of the faculty and the board. It is a fact of history that many formerly Christian colleges are now merely church-related institutions. They maintain the appropriate denominational ties for purposes of funding and status, but have abandoned the essential qualities which made them distinctively Christian among institutions of higher learning.

Ecclesiastical Allegiance

A college may be denominational or interdenominational, but it must serve the local church both in its own community and on a wider scale. But how can one ascertain the genuine commitment of a college? Five questions can be asked to or about a college to test its seriousness in this dimension: (1) Is the curriculum oriented to the church’s ministry? (2) Are students required to attend church services? (3) Are students required to engage in Christian service ministries while in school? (4) Does the college genuinely listen to pastors? (5) Where do the graduates go both in terms of their vocational choice and worship experiences?

⁴ David McKenna, “Changing Partnerships in Christian Higher Education,” *Christianity Today*, August 21, 1970, p. 7.

Educational Quality

A Christian college must be both Christian and college. Because of financial pressures so much emphasis has been placed on public relations in recent years that one may be forced to say of some institutions, “There is less here than meets the eye.”

An institution of Christian higher education ought to be accredited by appropriate professional agencies. It is impossible for parents or local churches to check all the variables in an attempt to establish educational quality. Faculty credentials, library holdings, curriculum design, instructional patterns, facilities and equipment, transferability of credits—these can all be measured under the broad banner of accreditation either regional or professional.

A rejection of established checks and balances on educational [p. 144](#) quality leads to a superseparatism which produces intellectual incest, academic inbreeding, stagnation of educational quality, and a smug complacency. A diploma mill by any other name is still a diploma mill even though it may have the name “Christian” or “Bible” on its catalog. The legitimate Christian college abhors the diploma mill because it is as contrary to biblical standards as is the abjectly secular college which has no concern for the truth of God in its program or its classrooms.

BIBLICAL PHILOSOPHY OF CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

In speaking here to “foundations,” it may be necessary to say just a word about some contrasts between Christian higher education and secular higher education. These are not the only differences and by the calculation of others, they may not even be the most important differences. But differences they are, and they must be faced by anyone who seriously concerns himself with the study of Christian higher education.

Distinction Between Theistic-Supernaturalism and Naturalism

Theistic supernaturalism refers to an educational commitment which places God at the center of the universe and therefore the center of all learning. Naturalism, on the other hand, rather than referring to a specific viewpoint in philosophy, might well be called “secularism,” a closed world view which indicates that only through science can trustworthy knowledge be attained.

Public institutions of higher learning in this country are irrevocably committed to a secularistic humanism, the opposite of theistic supernaturalism. To be sure, they are increasingly troubled by students with a religious obsession which is leading them into everything from Moonism to Hare Krishna, but this article is using *theistic supernaturalism* in the biblical sense. All education must have some authority, however loudly it may decry the need for that authority. In that sense, all educational philosophy can be said to take to itself some kind of God.

If theistic supernaturalism is the opposite to naturalism, then it can be said that Christian theism is the opposite of secularism. The foundational philosophic construct for education then is metaphysics—an understanding of ultimate reality. To this the Christian responds with the very beginning words of Scripture—“In the beginning God.” James W. Sire says it well:

Christian theism is primarily dependent on its concept of God, for [p. 145](#) theism holds that everything stems from Him. Nothing is prior to God or equal to Him. He is He Who Is. Thus theism has a basis for metaphysics. Since He Who Is also has a worthy character and is thus

*the Worthy One, theism has a basis for ethics. Since He Who Is is also He Who Knows, theism has a basis for epistemology. In other words, theism is a complete world view.*⁵

Distinction Between Revelationism and Rationalism

Since there is a God, and since that God has spoken in history, the most important aspect of learning for the Christian is to find out what God has said. God's revelation, both special and natural, becomes the heart and core of the curriculum. That position stands against rationalism, the view that man alone is responsible for the creation and certification of truth. The problem, of course, is that one tends to think of the opposite of rationalism as irrationalism and that is precisely what revelational Christianity is not.

But to say that Christian education is the only true rational approach to learning is not to deny faith. The Christian college emphasizes faith, but the kind of faith the Bible calls for is not a mindless commodity. Far from asking the student to abandon his mental faculties and intellectual integrity, the quality Christian college seeks to develop his mind as a significant part of the total man. However, it recognizes that the mind is only one part of the total man and it must not be developed in isolation from the spirit which is also a God-given function of human personhood. *To the genuinely Christian educator the mind matters and he is concerned that students develop a rational Christian faith which recognizes the historic foundation of Christianity recorded in special revelation, the Bible.*

Distinction Between Absolutism and Relativism

Perhaps here one faces the crux of the whole matter in philosophy. The study of truth, morality, ethics, and values hinges on the idea of absolutism. Secular education has committed itself almost completely to the principle of relativism. Educational institutions are pressed by the society at large and by the educational establishment in this country to throw absolute standards p. 146 to the wind and yield to the tide of permissiveness that has engulfed the American culture.

That has long been the case with respect to the teaching of *truth* as relative; *values* caved in as people began to wonder whether premarital chastity is really something to be held on to; then *morality* severed all of its links to any concrete standards with the arrival of coeducational dormitories and x-rated film showings on most university campuses; and finally, *ethics* are now declared completely situational though a nation still feigns shock at accounts of widespread cheating in military academies. Many people have lost sight of the difference between right and wrong.

DIAGNOSTIC PROJECTIONS FOR CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

Projections on Enrollment

A decreasing birthrate leads most prophets of higher education to prognosticate a decreasing enrollment in the future college market. Generally, a 10 percent drop in enrollment is expected in colleges and universities between the early 1980s and mid-1990s. But birthrate is only one of the many factors affecting college enrollment, particularly in Christian schools. For example, denominational schools are greatly influenced by the growth or decline of their denominations, probably the most significant factor affecting those schools' enrollments. The burgeoning evangelical private elementary and secondary school movement will be of some benefit to Christian colleges, and the rank permissiveness in state colleges and universities may eventually turn

⁵ James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1976), p. 42.

parents and pastors toward Christian higher education much in the way they have turned to Christian elementary and secondary schools in this decade.

A fairly stable trend has developed in which 80 percent of the children whose fathers graduated from college will go to college themselves (87 percent when both parents are college graduates).⁶ As a nation turns its attention to the sunbelt, schools in the South will tend to have a slight advantage over schools in the North and particularly the Northeast. According to a report by Ben Wood and Associates, "Generally, Christian schools of the future will attract a larger percentage of the market if they retain and revitalize their distinctive integration of Christian faith and [p. 147](#) learning."⁷ After treating the enrollment issue from various perspectives the editors of that report offer this concluding paragraph:

*The interplay of these many factors, while complex, indicates hope for the continuation of education in Christian oriented schools. The key for future stability is twofold. First, it is necessary that schools increase their sensitivity to a student's needs and goals. This is especially important as we see more students desiring a practical educational experience. Second, reaffirmation of the Christian world view in all aspects of the Christian college training is vital. Again, an integration of faith and learning applicable both inside and outside of an academic setting is highly desirable.*⁸

For seminarians who are contemplating a ministry in college teaching this author offers two points of advice: First, if a seminary student is working in a high content field such as biblical languages, church history, or systematic theology, he should pursue a doctorate immediately after his master's work is completed. And somewhere along the way he should learn how to teach. The faculties of evangelical colleges and seminaries are jammed with people who know enormous amounts of content but have never stopped long enough to consider how that content can best be communicated to other people. Second, students who are studying in and want to teach Christian education, homiletics, evangelism, or missions should spend at least five years in the appropriate ministry, usually in a local church.

Seminaries represent the most positive current phenomenon in evangelical higher education. An increase of 11 percent was reported in seminary enrollments between the fall of 1974 and the opening of the 1975-76 academic year. Since that time they have continued to climb until almost fifty thousand students are now enrolled in graduate theological schools in the United States and Canada this year.

Not only that, but seminarians are showing much more commitment to ministry in the 1970s than they did in the 1960s when the church was less popular. A February, 1976 poll of students at three evangelical seminaries indicated the following results: two-fifths want to enter established pastorates; one-fifth want to plant [p. 148](#) new churches at home or abroad; one-fifth hope to become college or seminary professors; and the other one-fifth are undecided. Of great encouragement is the fact that 16 percent of the students responding are definitely planning on overseas ministry and 60 percent are open to it as a possible career.⁹

⁶ Market Compilation and Research Bureau.

⁷ *A Digest of Trends in Higher Education within the Christian Perspective* (Wheaton, IL: Ben Wood and Associates, n.d.) p. 6.

⁸ *Ibid.*; p. 12.

⁹ *Christianity Today*, May 21, 1976, p. 34.

Projections on Curriculum

One clearcut trend in the area of curriculum across higher education in America is vocationalism. American pragmatism has finally made its way to the college level and students are seeking marketable skills rather than general refinement of the culture personality. Of course, not everyone agrees with this trend and many deplore it outright. One example is Robert M. Hutchins, president of the University of Chicago from 1929 to 1945 and then its chancellor until 1951. Hutchins also was the founder of the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions in Santa Barbara, California and its first president from 1949 to 1974. When asked his definition of a university, Hutchins replied:

*A university in an intellectual community of people at various stages of development, physical and intellectual, who are trying to understand major issues that confront and are likely to confront mankind.*¹⁰

Projections on Finance

Institutions are caught between effectiveness and economy as the two polarities on a continuum line of financial practice. Effectiveness can enjoy the luxury of concerning itself only with the institution's goals and objectives with full emphasis on results instead of resources. Economy, on the other hand, simply aims at managing without waste and constantly guards the resources. It is a belt-tightening procedure which talks a lot about survival rather than growth.

A middle ground is efficiency, an emphasis on the maximum return for the dollar, or as Robert McNamara used to say, "the most bang for the buck." Its key ideas are caution and management to produce the greatest outputs with the available inputs.

The danger, of course, is for the Christian institution to consider [p. 149](#) itself somehow immune from the problems of finance which plague higher education in general. Some of these institutions have already discovered the mystical irrationality of that view. The facts are frightening, as Paul Reinert of St. Louis University observes:

*Today, as never before in modern times, the entire private sector of U.S. higher education is unsure of its future. The latest figures in a continuing study by the Association of American Colleges reveal that some 365 of the nation's private colleges and universities may be ready to close their doors in 1981 unless immediate aid is forthcoming. Two hundred institutions will be exhausting their liquid assets within a year. Within ten years, forty per cent of all private Ph.D.-granting institutions will be out of business.*¹¹

Christian schools belatedly have gotten into the deferred-giving business and are now commonly using terms never heard before in the hallways of theological academe—estate planning, gift annuities, deposit agreement plans. Of course, the future is not entirely dark but Christian schools dare never again be passive toward the sources of financial support.

To thrive in the next two decades, Christian schools will have to continually be open to new resources of revenue, reducing the portion now brought in by the student. Technology will play an increasingly important role which will require creative, open thinking on the part of

¹⁰ Robert M. Hutchins, "The Hutchins View of the University," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 23, 1977, p. 5.

¹¹ "Rescue Begins at Home" (Management Division, Academy for Educational Development, 1972), pp. 7-8.

*Christian schools. Careful planning in these and other areas ... will result in a positive financial picture for the foreseeable future.*¹²

Projections on Educational Standards

It may be that clever inventions such as pass-fail (in which no one ever fails), admission of undergraduate students who cannot write a coherent sentence, so-called free universities and open education will eventually be demonstrated as folly. The problem, of course, is to maintain educational and academic integrity in the face of enormous financial pressures which seem almost to compel some schools to put on any kind of circus in order to attract paying customers. **p. 150**

It is essential to be reminded that the ultimate dependence for the survival, health, and growth of Christian institutions rests on the sovereign God. The prayer factor and the reward of God's faithfulness on those who trust in Him is a dimension which sets Christian colleges completely apart from the rest of higher education.

The absolute importance of Christian higher education to the church of Jesus Christ in the late twentieth-century world cannot be overemphasized. The *church desperately needs the Christian college* though too often it forgets that need amidst its other problems and pressures. This author has attempted elsewhere to articulate the inseparable relationship between Christian higher education and the task of world evangelization:

*Are you interested in missions? Be interested in Christian higher education. Do you want to support missions? Support Christian education. Without the Christian college there is no local church, there is no sending homebase and there is no sustained work on the field. When we strengthen the Christian college, we strengthen the work on the field, we strengthen the homebase, and we strengthen the local church.*¹³

Individual Christians, private philanthropists to whom God has given a great store of resources, Christian businesses, and particularly local churches need to rise up as one and call the Christian college and seminary "blessed." To be sure, they must carefully distinguish between those institutions which maintain evangelical commitment, ecclesiastical allegiance, and educational quality and those who do not. But having found the former, they must plunge themselves sacrificially into their support. Everett Cattell spelled this out more than seven years ago:

*We must face facts. If we evangelicals are to have youth prepared to live in a society in which Christians are increasingly a minority and are surrounded with increasing paganism, they must, in addition to a personal experience of Christ, which is basic, have an intellectual understanding of their faith and its relation to the arts and sciences ... Keeping the evangelical colleges alive and relevant is a life-and-death matter.*¹⁴

(abridged)

This was the first in a series of four articles delivered by the author as the W. H. Griffith Thomas Memorial Lectures at Dallas Theological Seminary, USA, November 1-4, 1977. **p. 151**

¹² *A Digest of Trends*, p. 32.

¹³ Kenneth O. Gangel, "The Neglected Word of the Great Commission," *Communicare*, 1977, p. 10.

¹⁴ "The Grim Alternatives in *Christian Higher Education*," *Christianity Today*, July 3, 1970, p. 4.

The “White” Jesus is not the Jesus of the Bible

S.E.M. Pheko

I am against a “White Jesus”. He is the imagination of Western artists who painted angels “white” and Satan “black”. The Jesus of the Bible is unique and far more than a mere man—be he black, white, brown or yellow. Jesus was a Palestinian, a pure Jew. The Jews of Jesus’ day were not black and brown. Unlike Karl Marx who was a German Jew, Jesus was not European.

Jesus was a man in the sense that He represented every race. His mission on earth was to all the tribes, races and nations of this world ([John 3:16](#)). In this context, therefore, it becomes irrelevant whether Jesus as God came into the world in flesh ([1 Timothy 3:16](#)) was black, white, yellow or pink. The Jesus seen in pictures is inadequate. He perverts our thoughts about God and imparts all sorts of wrong impressions to us about His character. The commandment of God in [Exodus 20:4](#) says, “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the water under the earth”. The commandment forbids idolatry which consists not only in the worship of the image of false gods, but also in the worship of the true God. The application of this commandment today is that we should not make use of visual and spiritual representations of the Triune God. Pictures distort His full nature and character.

Some people see no harm in the use of pictures of Jesus Christ in Sunday School or having crucifixes of Christ in their rooms. They say that these pictures help them meditate on Christ when they pray or are tempted. In Africa, the use of pictures or images has not helped much in revealing the Jesus of the Bible Who is the Lord and Saviour. For Africa and the rest of the world, to appreciate Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, we should hear His voice in the Bible and see less of the images or pictures supposedly representing Him.
(abridged)

Mr. S.E.M. Pheko is an exiled South African netionist who works with Every Home Crusade in Zambia and with *Daystar* communications (Nairobi). [p. 152](#)

Book Reviews

FAITH AND CHURCH

Paul: Apostle of the Free Spirit

by F. F. Bruce

(Paternoster Press, Exeter, 1977, £9.60)

Abstract of reviews in *Themelios* January 1979 by David Campbell and in the *Evangelical Quarterly* October-December 1978 by Colin Hemer.

The book is neither an attempt at biography nor a systematic exposition of Pauline theology. It deals with each epistle in its historical context, and with the principle theme of Paul's thought as the development of events and controversies bring each into focus. The most characteristic mark of the work is his attempt to interweave classical history and archaeology with NT history and theology. In the account of Paul's speech on the Areopagus, the author relates each theme to aspects of classical thought and provides a good reference of its authenticity, relating it especially with the parallels in [Romans 1-3](#). Paul was far more versatile than some of his interpreters have allowed: his words in Romans suggest how he might have been expected to approach an educated pagan audience.

There is a carefully balanced account of the recurring difficulty of Paul's relations with the Jerusalem church. There is no false idealisation here. Paul and the Jerusalem apostles may have shared a hearty unity in principle without thereby being exempt from the pressures of personal tension and diverse perspective. Typical chapters study Paul and the life to come (a masterpiece), the law, flesh and spirit, baptism and the Lord's supper, but the theme of life in the Spirit receives a scant two pages. A fairly balanced reference is made to the issue of glossolalia though more stress is placed on its occurrence in non-Christian circles than on its proper Christian use, on which subject the author remains silent. There is little discussion on the gifts of the Spirit. Paul's positive treatment of the Law as in [Romans 7](#) deserves fuller treatment. In defending the authenticity of Ephesians, Professor Bruce relates the major themes to those of the Pauline corpus as a whole.

The concluding chapter focuses on the central portrait, four themes of Paul's teaching which still need emphasis: that true religion is not a matter of rule and regulation, but of God's free acceptance when people respond to his love; that in Christ men and women have come of age as responsible adults; that people matter more than causes and principles; that unfair discrimination [p. 153](#) is an offence against God and man. This book of nearly 500 pages is a valuable reference and study tool for theologian, pastor and layman alike, despite the price!

Our Sovereign God

Addresses Presented to the Philadelphia Conference on Reformed Theology, 1974-76
ed. by James M. Boice
(Baker, Grand Rapids, 1977. Pp 175, \$5.95)

Abstract of a review by Earl D. Radmacher

The choice of the sovereignty of God as the theme of this book is most appropriate because of the tragic absence of emphasis in contemporary Christian writing on the character of God. The book preserves a fine balance between the elucidation of the doctrine of sovereignty and its application. The opening message by Stott on "The Sovereignty of God and Son" concludes with a comprehensive application involving the intellectual, ethical, vocational, ecclesiastical, political and global implications of Jesus as Lord. Our "feeling-oriented" generation needs to interact with his statement that "no man or woman is truly converted who is not intellectually converted". R. Nicole clarifies and rephrases the so-called five points of Calvinism. He found that over 500 of 1780 verses of Jesus' sayings contain some reference to the doctrine of grace.

In part 2 of "Knowing the Sovereign God", J. Packer clarifies what it means to know God. R. Sproul in two chapters asks, "Why don't we know God?" and "Why must we know God?". The answers are insightful expositions of [Romans 1:18](#) and [Luke 4:1-13](#). R. Keiper's chapter on "The Key to Knowing God" shows the practical value of understanding three of God's attributes—his loving kindness, his judgement and his righteousness. In

the third section, J. Boice applies the doctrine of sovereignty to practical issues. Sproul, Keiper and Nicole cover sovereignty in relation to prayer, witnessing and optimism. In the final section, J. Stott applies the doctrine to the community of believers—the Church—with a cogent exposition of [Acts 2:42–47](#). In a final chapter Nicole shows that none of the supposed objections to the doctrine stand the test of time and experience. [p. 154](#)

Knowing Scripture

by Dr. R. C. Sproul

(Downers Grove, Ill., InterVarsity Press, Pp 126, \$3.50).

Abstract of a review by James M. Boice

In this short study the young director of the Ligonier Valley Study Center, Stahlstown, Pa., USA, has effectively presented most of those general principles of biblical interpretation that one needs for a fruitful lifetime study of God’s Word. The book is based upon the belief that the Bible is for every Christian, not just for theologians or particularly “spiritual” persons; every Christian can understand it in spite of what some believe and say, but all can misunderstand it.

How are we to study Scripture? Sproul says we read the Bible to hear what God says—it is His revelation after all. Because God is not a God of confusion nor is double-tongued, the message we hear must (or should) be clear, universal and consistent. Scripture is to be the ultimate interpreter of Scripture. It is what the Reformers called “The analogy of faith”. Because God is the author of Scripture and does not contradict himself, it is scandalous for the interpreter to choose an understanding of one text that denies the clear meaning of another.

Most readers will find Chapter 4, “Practical rules for Biblical Interpretation” to be most useful. The rules are: 1. The Bible is to be read like any other book, 2. Read the Bible existentially, 3. Historical narratives are to be interpreted by the didactic, 4. The implicit is to be interpreted by the explicit, 5. Determine carefully the meaning of words, 6. Note the presence of parallelisms, 7. Note the difference between the spirit and letter of the law, 9. Be careful with parables, and 10. Be careful with predictive prophecy. Each of these rules is carefully explained and illustrated.

A chapter on “Culture and the Bible” and another on “Practical Tools for Bible Study” concludes the volume. In an interesting foreword, J.I. Packer expresses his satisfaction with this publication.

THEOLOGY AND CULTURE

The Willowbank Report—Gospel and Culture

(Lausanne Occasional Papers No 2, Wheaton, Illinois, P.O. Box [p. 155](#) 1100. Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, 1978, Pp 37, Pb, \$1.00)

Abstract of a review by Paul Rees in *Occasional Bulletin of Missionary Research*, October 1978.

This is the condensed findings from a consultation of 33 theologians, anthropologists, linguists, missionaries and pastors from all six continents, designed to clarify complicated aspects of the settings within which the givenness of the Gospel must be declared, dramatized and (within limitations) domesticated. The contents range over “Culture in Biblical Revelation”, “Understanding God’s Word Today”, “The Content and Communications of the Gospel”, “Conversion and Culture” and the cultural implications of “Christian Ethics and Lifestyle” Except for the serious notice it takes of the cultural climate

by which the entry of the Gospel is always affected, there is nothing startling in the entire report.

It is the candour that is refreshing. Samples: "No theological statement is culture-free" (p 13); "sensitive cross-cultural witnesses will not arrive at their sphere of service with a prepackaged gospel" (p. 14); "elements in our traditional evangelical view of conversion are more cultural than biblical and need to be challenged" (p. 19); "perhaps the most insidious form of syncretism in the world today is the attempt to mix a privileged gospel of personal forgiveness with a worldly (ever demonic) attitude to wealth and power" (p. 26). No attempt is made to evaluate "liberation theology" as a form of contextualization, or to come to grips with the western culture hangover that has played so large a part in determining conciliar attitudes and relationship among evangelicals in the Third World.

The committee is heroically trying to break free from its own cultural predilections so the report is a useful pointer to further exploration.

Note. A learning package, *Hearing and Doing* contains 10 copies of the report, a teacher's guide, 12 charts and discussion guides, three cassettes with excerpts from the Consultation, and role playing exercises and other group activities. It is produced by Partnership in Mission, 1564 Edge Hill Road, Abington, Pennsylvania 19001 on behalf of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization and costs \$19.95. [p. 156](#)

Philosophy of the Upanishads A Christian Understanding

by Moti Lal Pandit

(I.S.P.C.K. Delhi 1978 Pp 89 Rs 7.00. Available from TRACI, 105 Savitri Building, New Delhi 110 048, India)

Abstract of a review by Fr. J.D.M. Stuart of the Cambridge Brotherhood, Delhi in *The North India Churchman* January 1979.

Mr Pandit begins with three chapters on the Vedic background and setting of the Upanishads. As a philosopher he argues that there is no single coherent philosophy or development of thought in the dialogues. They are "a repository of diverse currents of thought ... in which all later philosophical ideas were in a state of fusion" (p 24). But the reviewer thinks the absence of a Greek form of logic means no more than that we have to search more carefully to find the Upanishad's own logic. Pandit's philosophical approach means he says little of their religious significance.

The author has some penetrating expressions on the central subject of Brahma-Atman. The goal of the Upanishads is "a state. of nonconsciousness ... not to be thought of as a state of annihilation of the self."

The reviewer asks what counts as a Christian understanding of the Upanishads. One short way is to look for such Christian concepts of personal relation to God and sin and then having found that the Upanishads have little to say about them, arrive at a negative estimate of their value. Such questions must be raised. But the reviewer suggests that the first stage in a Christian interpretation should be to understand the Upanishads in their own context and reach an understanding which Hindus themselves would accept as fair and just. Only then can we appreciate the positive values in them which alone can account for their central place in Hindu life and religion.

MISSION AND EVANGELISM

Christian Mission and Social Justice

by Samuel Escobar and John Driver

(Herald Press, 1978, P. 112. Pb. \$3.95)

Abstract of reviews by Roger Olson in *Eternity*, January, 1979 p. 157 and John Stott in *Occasional Bulletin of Missionary Research*, January, 1979.

The author's purpose is not to develop a theology of the relationships between evangelism and social justice. They are committed to the view that action is inseparable from Christian mission. This thesis is more important since the publication of Arthur Johnson's "*Battle for World Evangelism*".

Escobar seeks to show that evangelicals have too long adopted an uncritical stance towards socially and politically unjust situations. He gives a careful biblical evaluation of "poverty" as combining a spiritual with a sociological dimension. While making it clear that he is himself neither a Marxist nor a liberation theologian, he is critical of mission leaders who sanction oppressive systems simply because they fear socialism. He urges that the uniqueness of the people of God demands the development of a critical stance towards every existing system.

John Driver is a Mennonite who has worked in Latin America for about 25 years. He gives a helpful analysis of five strategies for social justice which Christians are advocating in Latin America and concludes with his own proposals "consistent with the Anabaptist vision of the Church" which emphasize the Church as the Messianic, witnessing and servant community.

Both authors oppose every uncritical acceptance of the status quo and every attempt to put mission and social justice in watertight compartments. They challenge evangelicals to become aligned with the powerless and strike a "gospel-based critical stance" towards all existing economic systems.

The World Council of Churches and the Demise of Evangelism

by Harvey T. Hoekstra

(Tyndale House, Wheaton, Ill., USA, The Paternoster Press, Exeter, UK, 1979, Pp 300, \$5.95, £5.00)

Abstract of a review by Paul G. Schrottenboer in R.E.S. News Exchange, June 12, 1979.

This book claims that the WCC programs have too often diverted member churches from their world-wide missionary and evangelistic task rather than give them support. The author is not abrasive or excessively polemical, but fosters the hope that the WCC will effect not evangelism's demise but its revival. He claims that the other divisions of the WCC, especially those connected with p. 158 justice and development are steadily shaping the CWME to their concept of mission.

After careful research in the Geneva archives and questionnaires and interviews with staff, Hoekstra believes that in the WCC persons less committed to the cause of classical mission have gained influential positions. The order God-Church-world has given way to God-world-Church. Since much of the material in this book is not available in libraries, the reader can neither confirm nor refute the findings. Dr Hoekstra, a former missionary in the Sudan and Ethiopia is the past President of the Reformed Church in America which is a member of the WCC.

The Battle for World Evangelism

by Arthur Johnston

(Tyndale House, Wheaton, Illinois, 1978. Pp 416, \$5.95)

Abstract of a response by John Stott, *Christianity Today* January 5th, 1979 and of a review by Tod Putney, *Partnerscan*, April 1979.

“Historically the mission of the church is evangelism alone”, says Arthur Johnston, a mission’s professor at Trinity Divinity School, Illinois, USA. But he warns that within some evangelical circles a partnership between evangelism and social action has been conceived. He argues that the reason evangelicalism almost died within the ecumenical movement after the Edinburgh conference of 1910 was that a loss of scriptural authority occurred with the attendant growth of universalism, theological inclusivism and an emphasis on socio-political involvement. So whenever evangelicals mix evangelism with socio-political involvement, concludes Johnston, scriptural authority is weakened.

John Stott applauds Johnston’s analysis of the nature and cause of “the ecumenical betrayal of the evangelized millions”, but both reviewers ask whether scriptural authority should be equated with Johnston’s interpretation that sees “social action and social improvements as valuable where the new birth had preceded and prepared society to accept and sustain them”. John Stott points out that Lausanne left the relationship between evangelism and social action unresolved. He asks if it is adequate to Scripture to think of service only as a means for and result of evangelism; did not Jesus’ works make his words visible, visually proclaim the gospel of the kingdom and elicit faith? [p. 159](#)

Arthur Johnston fears that John Stott “dethrones evangelism as the only historical aim of mission”. John Stott describes his own efforts as an attempt to “enthroned love as the essential motivation for mission”. If God’s love dwells in us, he says, we must meet our brothers’ and sisters’ needs whether social or spiritual. Both Stott and Putney feel the distinction between evangelism and social action misunderstands the nature of the body ministry of the Church. Evangelism, social work, discipleship, teaching and worship are all ministries in Christ’s body. To call one primary neglects the ministry of the Christian community as a whole. In many missionary situations a choice between evangelism and social action would be inconceivable.

Putney also fears that Johnston reflects a culturally conditioned view that social reform automatically flows from regenerated personal lives. This view ignores the thrust of the Old Testament to seek justice for the oppressed and it contradicts the twentieth century reality of born-again Christians helplessly captivated by the status quo. Putney finds that Johnston does not listen to the insights that non-white and non-western evangelicals bring from their own context of theology, but puts the clock back to the westernized version of evangelism expressed at Berlin in 1966.

ETHICS AND SOCIETY

Church and Nationhood

ed. Lionel Holmes

(World Evangelical Fellowship, 1978, Pp 88, \$1.50)

Abstract of a review by Howard Larsen, United Nations, New York, in *Eternity*, April 1979.

As a follow-up to the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization (1974), the World Evangelical Fellowship Theological Commission held a symposium in Switzerland (1976) to consider problems under the general heading of Church and Nationhood. The book contains the papers presented and the Basel letter to the churches. It is very useful for a mission discussion group that is concerned about consciousness-raising. It contains perspectives largely from the Third World with which the average western reader is not acquainted.

Given the variety of church and state structures world-wide, no [p. 160](#) simple description of or prescription for church-state relations is possible. But the participants agree that with faith, hope and love, the church has an intercessory role, and evangelizing

responsibility, a duty to serve all mankind and a prophetic obligation to challenge dehumanizing situations which are an affront to common standards of justice. Whether, as one North American contributor suggests, we can also apply pressure on American foreign policy to influence global corporations exercising economic imperialism is somewhat doubtful. But that does not mean we should not try, providing there is some co-ordination of effort and guidance in those occasions where the circumstances are clear. The catch is that it is often years later when we learn of scandals.

Poverty, Explanations of Social Deprivation

by Robert Holman

(Martin Robertson, London, Pp 302, £3.75)

Reviewed by Christopher Sugden

Robert Holman was Professor of Social Administration at Bath University, and is now a community social worker in a council housing estate. He lectured in the 1979 London Lectures on Christianity, sponsored by John Stott. He gives a masterly summary of surveys conducted on poverty in Britain over the last eighty years which provides informed content to Christian compassion and concern for justice. He finds the cause of relative poverty, where people have less material and environmental resources than average, in systems which distribute resources unfairly and promote powerlessness. What is the link between resources, structures and personal relationships? He concludes,

“Whatever the means of instigating change, those who advocate a more equal society are sometimes charged with ... regarding possessions as more important than people. The opposite is true. It is realised that the quality of people’s relationships underlie a satisfactory life ... I reckon that my deepest needs are met through relationships—with the members of my family, with friends, with neighbours, with workmates and I believe with God ... these relationships cannot be entirely separated from material matters. Concern, love, compassion, feelings must be expressed through the sharing of resources. This book has attempted to show that ... grossly unequal conditions are likely to promote those features which inhibit the growth of [p. 161](#) happy relationships. I believe in seeking those structural changes which will lead to a society in which the distribution of resources will facilitate concern for others, tolerance and sharing”. p. 293.

Marx and the Bible

by José P. Miranda

(SCM Press, London, Pp 338, £3.50)

Abstract of a review by Martin Goldsmith in *Themelios*, January 1979.

In the flood of politically relevant but theologically thin books on political and liberation theology this book by a Mexican theologian stands out as exceptional—it is almost entirely devoted to genuine Biblical exegesis. Miranda shows that God is not to be known through idolatrous images but the *Debarim*, his spoken imperative of justice. To know God therefore means social justice and a oneness with God’s compassionate chesed Justice, not cultus, is fundamental. Genesis is the preface to the great liberation event of Exodus. The just man is further shown in [Psalm 37](#) to be involved in God’s purpose of justice. Moses and Abraham are examples of just men called to do righteousness and justice. God’s *Mishpat* is shown to be aimed at saving men from injuries of oppression rather than merely reflecting juridical rigidities. The original function of the OT judge in protecting the poor and weak is mirrored in the NT position of the poor at the Last Judgement.

Miranda is weakest when interpreting Romans as corporate faith unto national righteousness, and the crucifixion of Jesus being ‘the incarnation of all human injustice’.

His hermeneutic principle sometimes leads to a distortion of the apparant sense of scripture.

PASTORAL MINISTRY

Eros Defiled

by John White

(IVP, 1978 Pp 168 £1.25)

Reviewed by E. David Cook in *Churchman*, Vol 93, No 3, 1979.

IVP and John White are to be congratulated for grasping the prickly [p. 162](#) nettle of sexuality in the modern setting and producing a down-to-earth, wholesome and biblical approach to the all too often embarrassing questions of sexual behaviour. John White has a clear standard for Christian sexual behaviour in mind, and brings the whole variety of sexual behaviour to that bar in a loving pastoral way. He is true to the whole gospel of love and forgiveness and at the same time as upholding God's standards for mankind.

The author's style is easy and he uses examples well. He does not duck any of the 'hard' questions and looks at many different biblical passages. The book is a blend of morality, psychiatry, practical counselling, and a biblical attempt to look at the issues. He examines the nature of sex and sexual pleasure, premarital and marital sexual activity, adultery and homosexuality. The concluding chapters are a stirring Anabaptist call to discipline in the life of the church. This requires careful and serious attention at a time when the immorality of the present age and the force of renewal within the church are both calling for strict discipline in the church. There is one unease about his argument. White makes some use of 'what is natural' in relation to the rejection of homosexuality as a pattern of sexual life, and against masturbation and other sexual practices which stop short of the normal sexual act of intercourse. This reliance on what is 'natural' may prove too much for him. If taken literally, it must exclude all forms of birth control except 'natural' methods. What is natural has a part to play in the deciding of norms for sexual morality, but we need to be clear how we arrive at the content of 'natural'. The book, however, is a must for every pastor and counsellor.

A People for His Praise:

Renewal and Congregational Life

by John Gunstone

(Hodder and Stoughton, 1978 Pp 190, £3.25)

Abstract of review by John P. Baker in *Churchman*, Vol 94, No. 2, 1979.

Although the author stresses that renewal in Christian and congregational life does not necessarily mean charismatic renewal—and indeed looks forward to the day when that particular river will merge with complete acceptance into the whole of church life—it is with the experience of charismatic renewal that this book deals. [p. 163](#) John Gunstone is full of practical wisdom in seeking to relate the experience of personal renewal to the life of the local and wider church. His range is wide, covering personal renewal, the local church, the small prayer group and larger prayer meeting, pastoral leadership, preparation for renewal, congregational life and worship, mission healing, initiation, ecumenism, house churches, and the relation of the charismatic to the institutional in the church. This means that while no major area is avoided or excluded, the treatment of several topics will strike some readers as less than adequate. His obvious charity towards all men sometimes leads the author to be a little less critical and incisive in his

assessments than he might have been, while on several subjects he speaks with the obvious authority born of experience.

THEOLOGICAL AND CHURCH EDUCATION

Teaching Techniques of Jesus

by Herman H. Horne

(Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, 1978, Pp 212, \$2.35)

Reviewed by Robert L. Youngblood.

The author, Dr Herman H. Horne, was one of America's outstanding educational thinkers. He was a contributor to the Evangelical Teacher Training Association (ETTA) book, *Teaching Techniques*, widely used as training material for Sunday School teachers. Horne's work is based on the Gospels and he analyses the teaching methods of Jesus. Horne does not profess to be writing a theological work and therefore does not deal with the content of the teaching of Jesus but with the form in which the content is cast. The author both examines the teaching techniques of Jesus and applies them to the improvement of teaching methods. A partial list of Jesus' techniques discussed in the book includes Jesus' way of securing attention, His point of contact, His aims, His use of problems, His conversations, His questions, His answers, His discourses, His parables, His use of the Scriptures, His use of the apperception and His use of symbols. Readers will appreciate the provocative questions in each of the book's 27 chapters, designed to stimulate group discussion. The book is well written, full of practical techniques for teaching and therefore is highly recommended for lay workers as well as pastors. [p. 164](#)

Models of Religious Broadcasting

by J. Harold Ellens

(Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1974 Pp 168, \$3.45)

Abstract of a review by G.R. Jacks in *Princeton Seminary Review* Vol II, No 1. 1978.

In early days of religious broadcasting the Church owned radio stations, but economic pressures forced many to sell. Even after churches bought air-time, little money was left for programme production. A simple preaching format was cheapest, but the distancing effect of the medium only magnifies all the difficulties the pulpit has in communicating to the pew.

In theological terms, the pulpit model (Bob Schuler) and the spectacle model (Billy Graham) suggest only a transcendent God who invades our world to function in it through mysterious forces, rather than an incarnate God emptied of spectacular divinity becoming human and serving.

A third model, pedagogical, uses parable, drama and documentary. A fourth model, the leaven model, has a provocative soft-sell format placed in prime-time for maximum exposure. For example, one spot pans across children's faces for about twenty silent seconds. Then the narrator says, "There are five million hungry children in the United States. You've just met thirty of them". Another example is interviews of religious personalities by programme hosts. They can raise crucial questions rather than imposing answers. Such approaches may be the Church's only chance to get through to people when they are most likely to be watching television, for the problem of religious broadcasting today is the inability of religious broadcasters to influence primetime commercial broadcasting. [p. 165](#)

Journal Information

Publications Referred to in This Issue

Bibliotheca Sacra: A Theological Quarterly.

Published by Dallas Theological Seminary, 3909 Swiss Avenue, Dallas, Texas 75204, USA. Rates \$5.00 a year, \$5.50 overseas.

Christianity Today

Subscription services P.O. Box 354, Dover N.J. 07801, USA. Rates \$18 a year, \$20 overseas. (22 issues).

Churchman

Published by the Church Society (Anglican), 7 Wine Office Court, Fleet St., London EC4A 3DA, U.K. Rates: £4.50 a year, £5.50 overseas. (4 issues).

Crux

Published by Regent College, 2130 Westbrook Mall, Vancouver, BC, Canada V6T 1W6. Rates: \$8.00 a year (4 issues).

Eternity

1716 Spruce St., Philadelphia, Penn. 19103, USA. Rate: \$9.00 a year, \$10 overseas (Published monthly)

Evangelical Missions Quarterly

Evangelical Missions Publishers, Box 794, Wheaton, Ill. 60187, USA. Rates: \$8.50 a year (4 issues).

Evangelical Quarterly

Published by Paternoster Press, 3 Mount Radford Crescent, Exeter EX2 4JW, UK or Wm B. Eerdmans, 255 Jefferson Ave., SE, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49602, USA. Rates: £4.40 or \$13.20 a year.

Extension Seminary Quarterly Bulletin

Apartado 3, San Felipe Reu, Guatemala, Central America. Rates: \$5.00 for 2 years. [p. 166](#)

Faith and Thought

Journal of the Victorian Institute or Philosophical Society of Great Britain, 130 Wood Street, Cheapside, London EC2 V6DN, UK. Rates: £1.50 a copy (3 issues).

Missiology: An International Review

1605 East Elizabeth St., Pasadena, Cal 91030, USA. Rate:\$10 a year (4 issues).

North Indian Churchman

Published for Church of North India by ISPCK, Kashmiri Gate, Delhi, India. Rates: \$3.00 a year (monthly). Postage extra.

Occasional Bulletin of Missionary Research

Published by Overseas Ministries Study Center, Ventnor, N.J. USA. Circulation Department P.O. Box 443, Fort Lee, N.J. 07024, USA. Rates:\$9.00 a year (4 issues).

Partnerscan

Published by Partnership in Mission, 1564 Edge Hill Road, Abington Pa. 19001, USA. Rates: \$9.00 a year (11 issues).

Perception

Published by the Association of Evangelicals of Africa Madagascar, P.O. Box 49332, Nairobi, Kenya. Also in French. Free of Charge.

Presbuteros

Published by Covenant Seminary, St Louis, Missouri 63141, USA.

Princeton Seminary Review

Published by Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton N.J. 08540, USA. Free of charge.
p. 167

R.E.S. News Exchange

Published by Reformed Ecumenical Synod, 1677 Gentian Drive S.E., Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA 49508.

Spirit: A Journal of Issues Incident to Black Pentecostalism

Published by James S. Tinney, P.O. Box 386, Howard University, Washington DC 20059, USA. Rates: \$5.00 a year. Overseas \$10.00 (3 issues).

Tenth: An Evangelical Quarterly

Published by the Philadelphia Conference on Reformed Theology and Tenth Presbyterian Church, 17th & Spruce Streets, Philadelphia Pa 19103, USA. Rate: \$5.00 a year.

Themelios

Published by the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students, 10 College Road, Harrow, HA1 1BE, Middlesex, England. North American orders to TSF, 233 Langdon, Madison, Wisconsin 53702, USA. Rates: £1.30 or \$3.00 a year (3 issues).