

EVANGELICAL REVIEW OF THEOLOGY

VOLUME 4

Volume 4 • Number 2 • October 1980

Evangelical Review of Theology

*Articles and book reviews selected from publications
worldwide for an international readership,
interpreting the Christian faith for contemporary
living.*

EDITOR: BRUCE J. NICHOLLS



Published by
THE PATERNOSTER PRESS



for
WORLD EVANGELICAL FELLOWSHIP
Theological Commission [p. 172](#)

ISSN: 0144-8153
Vol. 4 No. 2 October 1980-March 1981

Copyright © 1980 World Evangelical Fellowship

Editorial Address:

The *Evangelical Review of Theology* is published in April and October by The Paternoster Press, Paternoster House, 3 Mount Radford Crescent, Exeter, UK, EX2 4JW, on behalf of the World Evangelical Fellowship Theological Commission, 105 Savitri Building, Greater Kailash-II, New Delhi-110048, India.

General Editor:

Bruce J. Nicholls

Assistants to the Editor:

David Housholder, Kathleen Nicholls, Moti Lal Pandit, Chris Sugden

Committee:

(The executive committee of the WEF Theological Commission)

David Gitari (Chairman), Arthur Climenhaga (Vice-Chairman),
Wilson Chow, Jorgen Glenthoj, Pablo Perez.

Editorial Policy:

The articles in *The Evangelical Review of Theology* are the opinion of the authors and reviewers and do not necessarily represent those of the Editor or Publisher.

The Editor welcomes recommendations of original or published articles and book reviews for inclusion in the ERT. Please send clear copies or details to the Editor, WEF Theological Commission, 105 Savitri Building, Greater Kailash-II, New Delhi-110048, India. [p. 175](#)

Editorial

The Second Latin American Congress in Evangelisation held at Lima, Peru last November spoke the Word of God to a people who do not know Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord and who cry out against moral corruption, political and demonic oppression and the denial of human rights. 1980 will be remembered as a year of ecumenical conferences—WEF's *Serving our Generation* near London (March); WCC's *Your Kingdom Come* in Melbourne (May); LCWE's *How Shall They Hear?* at Pattaya (June) and Edinburgh '80 on Frontier Missions (October). In addition there have been a number of world denominational gatherings. To varying degrees they have all struggled with the issue of how to relate Christ's evangelistic commission to the social demands of the gospel to love our neighbours who are polarising into rich and poor.

In practice, evangelical Christians respond to immediate and urgent needs, be they evangelistic or social responsibility. In theory, they believe that the Bible sets priorities and determines methods of obedience to the demands of the Gospel. Their dilemma is how to relate theory and practice, especially when the resources of people and money are hopelessly inadequate to meet either the call to world evangelisation or the demands of global suffering and injustice. In the search to discern priorities a flood of theological and pragmatic questions arise—Is evangelism only verbal proclamation? Do community development programmes secularise the church? Can there be a new political and economic order without supporting violence?

The answers of both Melbourne and Pattaya were one-sided and in a sense were intended to be so. A simple marriage of convenience is no answer. A much more thorough Biblical analysis of the lostness of mankind and the bondage of man in society is needed, and at the same time a deeper awareness of the dynamics of the diversity of our human situation. Insights from human philosophies and ideologies must be brought to the test of Scripture, and the focus of the church as new communities that are a foretaste of the coming Kingdom kept clear.

The two numbers of ERT for 1980 deal with issues that relate to Biblical authority and trustworthiness and to liberation from injustice and to community development. The April 1981 issue will feature areas of Biblical hermeneutics. Understanding the task did not begin with our generation. We have a heritage of "common roots". Emilio Antonio Núñez' keynote address *Heirs of the Reformation* at CLADE II reminds not only his own continent of this fact, but the whole evangelical world. [p. 176](#)

John Wesley, Theologian of the Spirit

A. Skevington Wood

*Reprinted from Theological Renewal No. 6, published with Renewal
June/July '77, with permission.*

For too long, many have dismissed John Wesley as an unsystematic preacher. In this article a well-known church historian argues that Wesley made a distinctive contribution to the theology of the Holy Spirit. Contextualised at the heart of the most remarkable revival that

Britain has ever known, Wesley's insights on the use of the rule of Scripture have clear implications for Christianity today.

(Editor)

Recent research has reassessed John Wesley's contribution to theology. His stature in this area has been enhanced by such investigations. Too often in the past he has been dismissed as something of a lightweight. A. N. Whitehead regretted that the Methodist movement could 'appeal to no great intellectual construction explanatory of its modes of understanding'.¹ While it is true that Wesley produced no *Summa Theologica*—his incessant itineration in the interests of mission left him no leisure for such a demanding enterprise—his extensive occasional writings reflect a mature and creative theological judgment. It has been claimed that Wesley was essentially a theologian of Christian experience. Certainly his sermons and treatises provide an exposition of the spiritual advance encouraged and made possible by the Evangelical Revival of the eighteenth century. But Wesley himself approached the phenomena of Christian experience objectively, focusing attention on the ministry of the Holy Spirit underlying them. In this sense Wesley may well be regarded as a theologian of the Spirit. We shall confine ourselves to certain aspects of his approach as they relate to the inception and development of new life in Christ.

SPIRIT OUR GUIDE: SCRIPTURE OUR RULE

While it is useless to search Wesley's thought for any systematic presentation of pneumatology, argues Professor W. R. Cannon, it is only necessary to read even a few of his sermons 'to realise the tremendous emphasis that he gave to the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of men'.² Wesley however, was careful to steer clear of two **P. 177** dangers which tend to bring the doctrine into disrepute. In the first place he refused to fall into the trap of so stressing the significance of the Spirit as to depreciate Christ. He realised that the specific task of the Holy Spirit is to glorify the Son and to apply the benefits of Christ's redemption. 'This operational stress on the Holy Spirit's administration of the work of Christ makes it imperative that we understand the work of the Holy Spirit in Wesley's thought', claims Dr. L. M. Starkey; 'it is the key not only to his theology but to his entire evangelical enterprise.'³ Precisely because Wesley understood from scripture this supportive role of the Spirit, his theology remains firmly Christocentric.

If Wesley avoided any magnification of the Spirit to the detriment of Christ, the living Word, he was equally concerned that the Spirit should always be seen in relation to the written Word which he has inspired. This was not to subordinate the Spirit to the scriptures but simply to safeguard the principle, re-discovered by the Reformers, that the wisdom imparted by the Spirit comes through revealed Word and does not supersede it. Wesley complained that the Quakers, for example, made scripture 'a secondary rule, subordinate to the Spirit'.⁴ But, he insisted, 'the scriptures are the touchstone whereby

¹ A. N. Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, Cambridge, University Press, 1933, p.27.

² W. R. Cannon, *The Theology of John Wesley*, New York, Abingdon Press, 1956, p.214.

³ L. M. Starkey, *The Work of the Holy Spirit: A Study in Wesleyan Theology*, New York, Abingdon Press, 1962, p.34.

⁴ *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley*, Standard Edition, ed. John Telford, London, Epworth Press, 8 Vols., 1931 (Letters), 2.117. Wesley was referring to Robert Barclay in particular.

Christians examine all, real or supposed, revelations ... For though the Spirit is our principal leader, yet he is not our rule at all; the scriptures are the rule whereby he leads us into all truth.⁵ Wesley preferred to call the Spirit our 'guide', who uses the 'rule' of scripture through which to communicate with us.⁶

Wesley employed the term 'inspiration' to describe the overall ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. 'By inspiration we mean that inward assistance of the Holy Ghost which "helps our infirmities, enlightens our understanding, rectifies our will, comforts, purifies, and sanctifies us".'⁷ 'Every good gift is from God, and is given to man by the Holy Ghost', Wesley explained in his *Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion* Part I (1745). 'By nature there is in us no good thing; and there can be none, but so far as it is p. 178 wrought in us by that good Spirit ... He *inspires*, breathes, infuses into our soul, what of ourselves we could not have.'⁸ Does 'our spirit rejoice in God our Saviour'? It is 'joy in', or by, 'the Holy Ghost'. Have we true inward peace? It is 'the peace of God' wrought in us by the same Spirit. Have we love? It 'is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us'.⁹

Wesley defended his preference for the term inspiration in this sense on the grounds that it is scriptural, that it is found in the Anglican Prayer Book, and moreover that he knew none better. It is more exact than 'influence', since 'breathing bears a near relation to spirit'.¹⁰

THE METHODIST DISTINCTIVE

In his correspondence with 'John Smith' (thought to be the pseudonym of Thomas Secker, Bishop of Oxford and later Archbishop of Canterbury), Wesley did not resist the charge that the Methodists preached 'perceptible inspiration'. 'For this I earnestly contend', he replied; 'and so do all who are called Methodist preachers. But be pleased to observe what we mean thereby. We mean that inspiration of God's Holy Spirit whereby he fills us with righteousness, peace and joy, with love to him and to all mankind. And we believe it cannot be, in the nature of things, that a man should be filled with this peace and joy and love by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit without perceiving it as clearly as he does the light of the Sun.'¹¹ Wesley did not hesitate to underline this as 'the main doctrine of the Methodists' and 'the substance of what we all preach'.¹² He refused to move a hair's breadth from the proposition that '*no man can be a true Christian without such an inspiration of the Holy Ghost as fills his heart with peace and joy and love, which he who perceives it not has it not.*'¹³

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Letters*, 4.39. Here Wesley was endorsing a statement by one of his Anglican critics, John Potter, Vicar of Reymerston, Norfolk, who in 1758 had published *A Sermon on the Pretended Inspiration of the Methodists*.

⁸ *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley*, 3rd edition, ed. Thomas Jackson, London, John Mason, 141 Vols., 1829–31 (Works), 8.106.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Works*, 8.107.

¹¹ *Letters*, 2.63,64.

¹² *Letters*, 2.64.

¹³ *Ibid.*

This Wesley took to be ‘the very foundation of Christianity’, ‘the strongest evidence of the truth of Christianity’, and ‘the most infallible of all proofs’.¹⁴ In these bold assertions he was echoing the dying words of his father, Samuel P. 179 Wesley, Rector of Epworth: ‘The inward witness, son, the inward witness; this is the proof, the strongest proof of Christianity.’¹⁵ Wesley recognised with the utmost clarity that spiritual life begins with spiritual birth. What ought to have been an obvious inference was in fact far from axiomatic in the eighteenth century. In his evangelistic preaching Wesley, like Whitefield, majored on regeneration. But he also related it immediately to holiness. William Warburton, Bishop of Gloucester, in his *Treatise on Regeneration*, appeared to identify it with the entire process of sanctification. Wesley more accurately regarded it as ‘only the threshold of sanctification, the first entrance upon it. And as, in the natural birth, a man is born at once, and then grows larger and stronger by degrees; so in the spiritual birth, a man is born at once, and then gradually increases in spiritual stature and strength. The new birth, therefore, is the first point of sanctification, which may increase more and more unto the perfect day.’¹⁶

JUSTIFICATION, REGENERATION AND SANCTIFICATION

Regeneration is thus distinct from justification. The latter, according to Wesley, is ‘that great work God does *for us*, in forgiving our sins’; the former is ‘the great work God does *in us*, in renewing our fallen nature’.¹⁷ In order of time, these are simultaneous. In logical sequence, however, justification precedes the new birth. ‘We first conceive his wrath to be turned away, and then his Spirit to work in our hearts.’¹⁸ Elsewhere Wesley distinguishes between justification and regeneration like this: ‘The one implies what God does for us through his Son; the other, what he works in us by his Spirit.’¹⁹ Or again: ‘God in justifying us does something *for us*; in begetting us again, he does the work *in us*. The former changes our outward relation to God, so that of enemies we become children; by the latter our inmost souls are changed, so that of sinners we become saints. The one restores us to the favour, the other to the image of God. The one is the taking away the guilt, the other the taking away the power, of sin: so that, although they are joined together in point of time, yet are they of wholly distinct natures.’²⁰ P. 180

The agent of regeneration, as of sanctification to which it leads, is the Holy Spirit. He is ‘the fountain of all spiritual life’.²¹ As a result of his new birth, the sinner ‘feels in his heart the mighty workings of the Spirit of God’, to use the language of the Anglican Homily for Rogation Week, as Wesley did.²² But this is not to be interpreted ‘in a gross, carnal sense, as the men of the world stupidly and wilfully misunderstood the expression;

¹⁴ *Ibid.*; *Letters*, 2.383; *Letters*, 1.263.

¹⁵ *Letter*, 2.134,135.

¹⁶ *Works*, 7.205.

¹⁷ *The Standard Sermons of John Wesley*, ed. E. H. Sugden, London, Epworth Press, 1921 (*Sermons*7, 2.227.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Sermons*, 1.119.

²⁰ *Sermons*, 1.299,300.

²¹ *Works*, 6.394.

²² *Sermons*, 2.233.

though they have been told again and again, we mean thereby neither more or less than this: he feels, is inwardly sensible of, the graces which the Spirit of God works in his heart.²³ These are detailed, as in other passages, as love, joy and peace. 'By the use of these, he is daily increasing in the knowledge of God, of Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, and of all things pertaining to his inward kingdom.'²⁴ Only after experiencing the new birth can a man 'be properly said to live: God having quickened him by his Spirit, he is alive to God through Jesus Christ.'²⁵

HOLINESS: FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT OR CHARISMATIC GIFT?

It is essential for a proper understanding of Wesley's teaching on holiness that it should be seen as stemming immediately both from justification and the new birth. 'In that instant (i.e. of justification) we are born again, born from above, born of the Spirit: there is a *real* as well as a *relative* change.'²⁶ Justification makes possible a positional righteousness in which a man is brought into a new relationship with God, but this needs to be matched by a progressive, actual righteousness, reflected in conduct and character, lest the grace of God should be received in vain. Wesley realised that sanctification is the purpose both of justification and regeneration. The reason why man is put right with God and given new life is that he should live righteously.

'When we are born again, then our sanctification, our inward and outward holiness begins', Wesley insisted; 'and thenceforward we are gradually to "grow up into him who is our Head".'²⁷ In a memorable passage, the maintenance of the Christian life is described under the analogy of respiration.²⁸ It is by breathing in oxygen p. 181 that natural life is sustained: it is by breathing in the Spirit that supernatural life is sustained. It is the Spirit's work first to inspire and then to preserve the life of God in the soul of man. Thus 'we are enabled, "by the Spirit" to "mortify the deeds of the body", of our evil nature; and as we are more and more dead to sin, we are more and more alive to God.'²⁹

Wesley recognised that the Holy Spirit is 'the immediate cause of all holiness in us', since we are in ourselves no more capable of developing spiritual life than of initiating it.³⁰ He explained that the title 'Holy', when applied to the Spirit of God, does not only denote that he is holy in his own nature, but that he makes us so too. 'He is the great fountain of holiness to his Church, the Spirit from whence flows all the grace and virtue, by which the stains of guilt are cleansed, and we are renewed in all holy dispositions, and again bear the image of our Creator.'³¹ On the other hand, Wesley stressed the complementary truth that 'the proper end and design of all the influences of the Holy

²³ *Sermons*, 2.233,234.

²⁴ *Sermons*, 2.234.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Sermons*, 2.446.

²⁷ *Sermons*, 2.240.

²⁸ *Sermons*, 2.234; cf. *Sermons*, 1.303.

²⁹ *Sermons*, 2.447.

³⁰ *Letters*, 3.9.

³¹ *Works*, 7.486.

Spirit' is to produce holiness in us.³² Such holiness was early defined by Wesley as 'likeness to God', the 'conformity of our will and affections to his will'.³³

'By means of his presence with us, we receive from him a great fullness of holy virtues; we take such features of resemblance in our spirits as correspond to his original perfections.'³⁴

Commenting on [John 7:38](#) in his sermon 'On Christian Perfection', Wesley observed that at the time of our Lord's earthly ministry 'the Holy Ghost was not yet given in his sanctifying graces, as he was after Jesus was glorified'.³⁵ Later, 'when the day of Pentecost was fully come, then first it was that they who "waited for the promise of the Father" were made more than conquerors over sin by the Holy Ghost given unto them.'³⁶ In his *Notes on the New Testament*, Wesley related the same verse to the fact that the fruit of the Spirit could only be borne in full measure after Pentecost.³⁷

Wesley's interpretation of holiness was practical and ethical as well [p. 182](#) as biblical and theological. He stripped the concept of any merely sentimental and unduly pietistic trappings in order to reach the hard core of moral substance. It is significant that a series of thirteen expositions of the Sermon on the Mount was included in the standard collection of forty-four sermons chosen to represent his major emphases.³⁸ Wesley believed that it was the purpose of our Lord's discourse 'to give us a full prospect of Christianity; to describe at large the nature of that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord'.³⁹ Through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, the believer is enabled to conform to the pattern shown to him on a more momentous mount than Sinai. This was the message and experience which changed the permissive face of eighteenth century society and ushered in an age of renewal. Confronted by 'the grave moral need of his day', declared Dr. Howard Watkin-Jones, 'Wesley proclaimed a doctrine of "scriptural holiness" in which the operation of the Holy Spirit never ceased to receive the utmost emphasis.'⁴⁰

This strongly ethical pre-occupation led Wesley to regard the fruit of the Spirit, rather than a manifestation of charismatic gifts, as the major criterion of an effective Christian life. This was a position he reached early in his ministry—even before his evangelical conversion—but which he saw no reason to modify at any later stage. As he enquired 'into the nature and operations of the Holy Spirit, as bestowed upon Christians', he made some pertinent observations.⁴¹ 'And here I shall pass by the particular extraordinary gifts vouchsafed to the first ages for the edification of the Church; and only consider what the Holy Spirit is to every believer, for his personal sanctification and salvation. It is not granted to every one to raise the dead and heal the sick. What is most necessary, is, to be

³² *Works*, 7.491.

³³ *Ibid.* Sermon CXXXVIII, 'On Grieving the Holy Spirit', was written in 1733.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Sermons*, 2.162.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*, London, Epworth Press, 1929 (1754) (Notes), 335.

³⁸ *Sermons*, 1.315–542; 2.9–36.

³⁹ *Sermons*, 1.319.

⁴⁰ H. Watkin-Jones, *The Holy Spirit from Arminius to Wesley*, London, Epworth Press, 1929, p.297.

⁴¹ *Works*, 7.514.

sure, as to ourselves, that we are “passed from death unto life”; to keep our bodies pure and undefiled, and let them reap that health which flows from a magnanimous patience, and the serene joys of devotion. The Holy Spirit has enabled men to speak with tongues, and to prophesy; but the light which most necessarily attends it is a light to discern the fallacies of flesh and blood, to reject the irreligious maxims of the world, and to practise those degrees of trust in God and love to man, whose [p. 183](#) foundation is not so much in the present appearances of things, as in some that are yet to come.’⁴²

THE CHARGE OF ENTHUSIASM

In his *Further Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion* Wesley met the accusation of his critics that the Methodists claimed ‘such inspiration as the apostles had; and such a receiving the Holy Ghost as that was at the day of Pentecost’.⁴³ Wesley was well aware that he might lay himself open to the familiar charge of ‘enthusiasm’—that is, of misguidedly claiming extraordinary powers from the Holy Spirit. He nevertheless insisted that it is possible for the experience of Pentecost to be renewed in later ages, although he was careful to define the sense in which this is so. ‘Indeed I do not mean, that Christians now receive the Holy Ghost in order to work miracles; but they do doubtless now “receive”, yea, are “filled with the Holy Ghost,” in order to be filled with the fruits of that blessed Spirit. And he inspires into all true believers now, a degree of that same peace and joy and love which the Apostles felt in themselves on that day, when they were first “filled with the Holy Ghost”.’⁴⁴ Hence Wesley could issue a warning which was all the more necessary because of the antinomian excesses of some more extreme groups on the fringe of the revival. ‘Let none ever presume to rest in any supposed testimony of the Spirit, which is separate from the fruit of it. If the Spirit of God does really testify that we are the children of God, the immediate consequence will be the fruit of the Spirit, even “love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, temperance”.’⁴⁵ This *caveat* was characteristically balanced by a second: ‘Let none rest in any supposed fruit of the Spirit without the witness.’⁴⁶

Wesley regarded the Spirit himself as ‘best of gifts, and that which includes every good gift’.⁴⁷ His last sermon before the University of Oxford in 1744 dealt with ‘Scriptural Christianity’, from [Acts 4:31](#)—‘And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.’ ‘Not that we find any visible appearance here, such as had been in the former instance’ (i.e. Pentecost), Wesley explained: ‘nor are we informed that the *extraordinary gifts* of the Holy Ghost were given to all or any of them; [p. 184](#) such as the gifts of “healing, of working” other “miracles, of prophecy, of discerning spirits, the speaking with divers kinds of tongues, and the interpretation of tongues ([1 Cor. 12:9, 10](#)). Whether these gifts of the Holy Ghost were designed to remain in the Church throughout all ages, and whether or not they will be restored at the nearer approach of the “restitution of all things”, are questions which it is not needful to decide. But it is needful to observe this, that, even in the infancy of the

⁴² *Works*, 7.514,515.

⁴³ *Works*, 8.107.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Sermons*, 2.358.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Notes*, 243 ([Lk 11:13](#)).

Church, God divided them with a sparing hand. Were all even then prophets? Were all workers of miracles? Had all the gift of healing? Did all speak with tongues? No, in no wise. Perhaps not one in a thousand. Probably none but the teachers of the Church, and only some of them ([1 Cor. 12:28–30](#)). It was, therefore, for a more excellent purpose than this that “they were all filled with the Holy Ghost”. It was to give them (what none can deny to be essential to all Christians in all ages) the mind which was in Christ, those holy fruits of the Spirit, which whosoever hath not, is none of his.’⁴⁸

Wesley assumed that the special gifts of the Spirit had been withdrawn after the New Testament period, although he was prepared to keep an open mind about the possibility of their reappearance at a later period or in the final age. But he preferred not to indulge in idle speculation. ‘Without busying ourselves, then, in curious, needless enquiries, touching those *extraordinary* gifts of the Spirit, let us take a nearer view of these his ordinary fruits, which we are assured will remain throughout all ages: of that great work of God among the children of men, which we are used to express by one word, “Christianity”; not as it implies a set of opinions, a system of doctrines, but as it refers to men’s hearts and lives.’⁴⁹

On one occasion Wesley did allow himself to ventilate a hypothesis to account for the disappearance of *charismata* from the early Church. Travelling to Cornwall in 1750, he read an ‘odd book’—*The General Delusion of Christians with regard to Prophecy*.⁵⁰ It was written by John Lacy, one of the French ‘prophets’. While dissociating himself from the eccentricities of the Camisards, Wesley p. 185 commented: ‘I was fully convinced of what I had long suspected: (1) That the Montanists in the second and third centuries, were real, scriptural Christians: and (2) That the grand reason why the miraculous gifts were so soon withdrawn was not only that faith and holiness were wellnigh lost, but that dry, formal, orthodox men began even then to ridicule whatever gifts they had not themselves, and to decry them all as either madness or imposture.’⁵¹

In his correspondence with Dr. Conyers Middleton, Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, Wesley listed the chief *charismata* conferred upon the apostolic Church as: (1) casting out devils; (2) speaking with new tongues; (3) escaping dangers, in which otherwise they must have perished; (4) healing the sick; (5) prophecy, foretelling things to come; (6) visions; (7) divine dreams; and (8) discerning of spirits.⁵² Some of these appear to have been mainly intended for the conviction of Jews and heathens (exorcism and tongues); some mainly for the benefit of believers within the body of Christ (healing, prophecy, discernment of spirits); and all of them in order to preserve the Church from extinction in the era of the great persecutions.

⁴⁸ *Sermons*, 1.92,93; cf. *Notes*, 401 ([Ac 2:38](#)): “The gift of the Holy Ghost’ does not mean in this place, the power of speaking with tongues; for the promise of this was not given “to all that were afar off”, in distant ages and nations; but rather the constant fruits of faith, even righteousness, and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.’

⁴⁹ *Sermons*, 1.94.

⁵⁰ *The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley, Standard Edition*, ed. N. Curnock, London, Epworth Press, 8 Vols., 1909–16 (Journal), 3.490; cf. *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, 4.77.

⁵¹ *Journal*, 3.490.

⁵² *Letters*, 2.327. Middleton had published *A Free Inquiry into the Miraculous Powers, which are supposed to have subsisted in the Christian Church* (1748), in which he denied that miracles were even performed by Christ and the Apostles, let alone in the early Church. Wesley was able to show, from his detailed grasp of parristics, that such manifestations did not altogether cease until the beginning of the fourth century.

As he rebutted the charge of enthusiasm, Wesley repeatedly denied that he or any who remained in connection with him made any profession of possessing the supernatural gifts of the Spirit. If they had, they might reasonably be expected to substantiate their assertion. 'But this is not our case', Wesley insisted. 'We lay claim to no such thing. The Apostles did lay claim to extraordinary inspiration, and accordingly proved their claim by miracles. And their blessed Master claimed to be Lord of all, the eternal Son of God. Well, therefore, might he be expected to "do the works which no other man did", especially as he came to put an end to the dispensation which all men knew to be of God.'⁵³ The Methodists could hardly be censured for failing to prove what they had never affirmed.

Bishop Warburton arraigned Wesley because he had 'laid claim to almost every apostolic gift in as full and ample a manner as they were p. 186 possessed of old'.⁵⁴ Wesley set out the *charismata* from [Mark 16:17, 18](#) and [1 Cor. 12:8-10](#). 'Five of them are enumerated in the former catalogue; to three of which—speaking with new tongues, taking up serpents, drinking deadly things—it is not even pretended that I lay any claim at all. In the latter, nine are enumerated. And as to seven of these, none has yet seen good to call me in question—miraculous wisdom, or knowledge, or faith, prophecy, discernment of spirits, strange tongues, and the interpretation of tongues.'⁵⁵ That only left exorcism, healing and the performance of miracles. Wesley had little difficulty in discounting such charges. On several occasions he joined with others in praying for the deliverance of those bound by the devil and rejoiced to see an immediate and gracious answer, but as to formal exorcisms he replied: 'I never used them. I never saw them; I know nothing about them.'⁵⁶ Similarly, he had on occasion witnessed physical cures in response to the intercession of faith, but this he distinguished from the apostolic gift of healing.⁵⁷ Had he possessed and exercised the latter, he would hardly have needed to prescribe the homely remedies contained in his *Primitive Physic*.

While Wesley resolutely resisted any suggestion that either he or his followers laid claim to the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, he did not exclude the possibility that their exercise might be restored. As a matter of observation, he recorded that they died out when Christianity was recognised as the state religion in the Roman Empire. 'Yet I do not know that God hath anyway precluded himself from thus exerting his sovereign power from working miracles in any kind of degree in any age to the end of the world. I do not recollect any scripture wherein we are taught that miracles were to be confined within the limits either of the apostolic or the Cyprianic age, or of any period of time, longer or shorter, even till the restitution of all things. I have not observed, either in the Old Testament or the New, any intimation at all of this kind. St. Paul says, indeed, once, concerning two of the miraculous gifts of the Spirit (so, I think, the text is usually understood), "Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues they shall cease." But he does not say, either that these or any other miracles shall cease till

⁵³ *Letters*, 5.248. George Fleury, Rector of Waterford, had demanded that those who claimed the extraordinary powers of the Spirit should produce commensurate miracles. Cf. *Works*, 8.234,235 for a similar response from Wesley.

⁵⁴ *Letters*, 4.340.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Letters*, 4.345, cf. 2.251.

⁵⁷ *Letters*, 4.344,345; cf. 2.253,254.

faith and hope shall cease also, till they all be swallowed up in the vision of God, and love be all in all.’⁵⁸ p. 187

While Wesley was alert to the genuine operation of the Spirit in his time, he was not blind to the possibility of spurious intrusions. In his *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (1766), Wesley referred to the ‘great increase of the work of God’ in London during the year 1762.⁵⁹ He described how, at the height of the revival, ‘enthusiasm broke in’, despite his own warnings.⁶⁰ ‘Two or three began to take their own imaginations for impressions from God, and thence to suppose that they should never die; and these, labouring to bring others into the same opinion, occasioned much noise and confusion. Soon after, the same persons, with a few more, ran into other extravagances; fancying they could not be tempted; that they should feel no more pain; and that they had the gifts of prophecy, and of discerning of spirits.’⁶¹ Wesley was reminded of what he already knew: namely, that Satan sows tares among the wheat of Christ. He realised that this has always been the case, especially when there is any remarkable out-pouring of the Holy Spirit.⁶² As Augustine recognised, the devil is the ape of God and he will invariably endeavour to counteract the work of the Spirit by attempted imitation. Wesley regretted that, as a result, the genuine renewal in the Spirit represented by the mainstream of the Methodist movement was brought into disrepute and became an object of ridicule.⁶³

PURE LOVE

What, then, is the distinguishing feature of the Spirit-filled life? How may the genuine experience be identified and the false exposed? Once again, Wesley points to the fruit of the Spirit as delineated in [Galatians 5:22, 23](#). Whereas the gifts may be counterfeited, the fruit cannot, it is this that marks off the work of God from the delusion of the devil. ‘That proud spirit cannot humble thee before God. He neither can nor would soften thy heart, and melt it first into earnest mourning after God, and then into filial love. It is not the adversary of God and man that enables thee to love thy neighbour; or to put on meekness, gentleness, patience, temperance, and the whole armour of God. He is not divided against himself, or a destroyer of sin, his own work. No; it is none but the Son of God who “cometh to destroy the works of the devil”. As surely, therefore, as holiness is of God, p. 188 and as sin is the work of the devil, so surely the witness thou hast in thyself is not of Satan, but of God.’⁶⁴

For Wesley, love was the ultimate evidence. In his comments on [John 4:19](#) (‘We love him, because he first loved us’), Wesley affirmed: ‘This is the sum of all religion, the genuine model of Christianity. None can say more: why should any one say less, or less intelligibly?’⁶⁵ Such consuming love for God, which leads to corresponding love of man, is

⁵⁸ *Letters*, 2.261.

⁵⁹ *Works*, 11.406.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Works*, 11.407. Wesley quoted with approval the comments of a candid friend.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Sermons*, 1.217,218.

⁶⁵ *Notes*, 915 (I John 4.19).

poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us for this very purpose. 'Entire sanctification'—which Wesley sees as the result of the Spirit's fullness—'is neither more nor less than pure love—love expelling sin and governing both the heart and life.'⁶⁶ Love, as the highest of the Spirit's gifts and the first of the Spirit's fruits, is the *sine qua non* of the Christian life.

Wesley lived at the heart of the most remarkable revival that Britain has ever known. It reflected various characteristics and conveyed many benefits. Wesley himself, however, was in no doubt at all as to what was the clearest proof of its authenticity. 'Many of our brethren and sisters in London, during that great out-pouring of the Spirit, spoke of several *new* blessings which they had attained. But after all, they could find nothing higher than *pure love* ...'⁶⁷

Dr. A. Skevington Wood is Principal of Cliff College, England. p. 189

New International Version—The Bible of Evangelicals

A review article by Robert G. Bratcher

Reprinted from The Bible Translator (July 1979) with permission

The Holy Bible—New International Version. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Bible Publishers 1978; London: Hodder & Stoughton 1979. (Copyright: New York International Bible Society)

At long last conservative Protestants in the United States have brought forth a translation that bids fair to establish itself as the Bible for evangelicals. When the Revised Standard Version appeared in 1952, it was subjected to severe criticism by many conservatives and fundamentalists. Several Bibles were eventually published under conservative auspices (e.g. the Amplified Bible in 1965, the Modern Language Bible in 1969, and The New American Standard Version in 1971), but none of them succeeded in taking its place as the standard Bible for evangelicals.

BACKGROUND TO THE TRANSLATION

The effort which finally culminated in this translation began in the 1950s, when committees were appointed by the Christian Reformed Church (in 1956) and the National Association of Evangelicals (in 1957) to study the possibility of a new translation. In 1967 the New York Bible Society assumed responsibility for the project and appointed a committee of fifteen scholars to direct it. In 1968, Dr. Edwin H. Palmer became the full

⁶⁶ *Letters*, 5.223; cf. *Sermons*, 2.448: 'Love excluding sin; love filling the heart, taking up the whole capacity of the soul.'

⁶⁷ *Letters*, 7.57. The reference is to the intensification of the revival in the year 1762.

time Executive Secretary of the project. Work began in 1968, and the Gospel of John was published in 1969; the New Testament appeared in 1973; Isaiah was published in 1975, Daniel in 1976, and Proverbs and Ecclesiastes in 1977.

The total cost has been reported at two and a quarter million dollars. One hundred and fifteen scholars from more than a dozen evangelical denominations took part in the work. They were divided into twenty teams composed of five persons each: two co-translators, two consultants, and one English stylist. Each team's work went to an intermediate editorial committee (either of the Old Testament or of the New Testament), then to the General Editorial Committee, and finally to the fifteen-member Committee on Bible Translation.

The publicity released with the publication of this translation stresses the interdenominational and the international character of the work. The Preface (p. vii) lists thirteen different denominations represented. As for the countries represented, a pamphlet entitled p. 190 *The Version of Our Time* gives a "partial list" of ninety-seven scholars, of whom eighty-seven are Americans; there are three each from Canada and England, and two each from Australia and New Zealand. Evangelical seminaries are strongly represented; seven scholars are listed from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, of Chicago, Illinois.

Emphasis is also placed on the translators' "high view of Scripture". The New Testament Preface states that they were all committed to "the full authority and complete trustworthiness of the Scriptures, which they believe is God's Word in written form." In the Preface to the Bible the following is stated: "The translators were united in their commitment to the authority and infallibility of the Bible as God's Word in written form."

The following principles guided the translators in their work:

1. Begin with and be faithful to the original text in Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic languages.
2. Clearly reflect the unity and harmony of the Spirit-inspired Writings.
3. Retain only what the original languages say—not inject additional elements of unwarranted paraphrasing.
4. Communicate God's revelation in the language of the people—to do for our time what the King James Version did for its day.
5. Be equally effective for public worship (pulpit and pew), for private study and devotional reading.
6. Establish universal acceptance by creating an ecclesiastical team of 100 scholars who hold to a high view of Scripture as set forth in the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Belgic Confession, and the Statement of Faith of the National Association of Evangelicals.

All of these are commendable and, by and large, unexceptionable. There might be differences of opinion as to what constitutes "unwarranted paraphrasing". Certainly in Mt 8.25 "we're going to drown" should not be seen as an unwarranted paraphrasing of *apollumetha*, nor should "will take their places at the feast" in Mt 8.11 be thought an unwarranted paraphrasing of *anaklithe&181;sontai* (see also "the entire Roman world" for *pasan tēn oikoumenēn*; in Lk 2.1).

Principle number 4 seems to reflect the idea that the King James Version of 1611 was written in the language of the people; it certainly was not the popular language of the day. Principle number 2 should not be taken to mean that artificial unity and harmony must prevail throughout the whole Canon. A translator must represent faithfully the meaning intended by each separate account and not try to harmonize different accounts where there are divergences. Certainly this translation does not appear to have attempted to do so. p. 191

The reception accorded this newest translation has been nothing short of spectacular. By December 1978 over 1,200,000 copies had been sold, and it is reasonable to assume that in time this translation will replace the King James Version as the Bible of evangelicals.

The mechanical part has been superbly executed. The book is a manageable 4cms. thick (15.5cms. wide, 23cms. long), the paper is top quality, thin enough to make for a reasonably sized book yet opaque enough to keep the print from showing through to the opposite side of the leaf. The text is printed in one column; the use of poetic structure is frequent and effective. The text is divided into sections, with section headings. The psalms do not have headings. In Job the speakers are identified in the margin. Meticulous attention has been paid to punctuation; e.g. Mt 21.16: praise^{c?}; Mk 4.12: forgiven!^a Lk 20.17: capstone^{a, b?}

After the end of the New Testament there is a page-long Table of Weights and Measures followed by fourteen maps (eight for the Old Testament and six for the New Testament); the color of the maps may not command universal approval.

The Preface provides useful information on several aspects of the work, and should be carefully read by translators who intend to use this Bible in their work.

TRANSLATORS' USE OF STANDARD TEXTUAL PRINCIPLES

In making textual decisions the translators were guided by standard textual principles. *For the Old Testament* their text was "the standard Hebrew text, the Masoretic Text as published in the latest editions of *Biblia Hebraica*" (Preface, p. viii). Use was made of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Samaritan Pentateuch "and the ancient scribal traditions relating to textual changes". All ancient Versions were also pressed into use. Standard procedures are followed throughout, but one looks in vain for anything that is labeled a conjecture. 1 Sam 13.1, for example, appears as follows:

Saul was \lfloor thirty \rfloor^a years old when he became king, and he reigned over Israel \lfloor forty- \rfloor^b two years.

^a1 A few late manuscripts of the Septuagint; Hebrew does not have *thirty*.

^b1 See the round number in [Acts 13:21](#); Hebrew does not have *forty-*.

The lower half-brackets are explained in the Preface (p. x): "To achieve clarity the translators sometimes supplied words not in the original texts but required by the context. If there was uncertainty about such material, it is enclosed in brackets." But this definition p. 192 does not square with the use of the brackets in 1 Sam 13.1. Another such example is to be found in 2 Kg 6.33, where the MT reads "the messenger arrived and said"; the words that follow, however, are manifestly spoken by the king of Israel, not by the messenger himself. So NIV has "... the messenger came down to him [that is, Elisha]. And \lfloor the king \rfloor said ..."

In most instances the half-brackets seem quite unnecessary. Some examples are given: "the wings of \lfloor my \rfloor dove" ([Ps 68:13](#)); "will possess \lfloor the land \rfloor as far as Zarephath" ([Ob 20](#)); "I will not turn back \lfloor my wrath \rfloor " ([Amos 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13, 2:1, 4, 6](#)); "to alienate you \lfloor from us \rfloor " (Gal 4.17). This is a needless and needlessly distracting device, of interest only to scholars, who by definition are able to assess such matters on their own.

In some places NIV takes into account the *tiqqune sopherim* ("corrections of the scribes"). In [Job 32:3](#), for example, MT is translated in the text: "they had found no way to refute Job, and yet they had condemned him"; the footnote reads: "Masoretic Text; an ancient Hebrew scribal tradition, *Job, and so had condemned God.*" In [Gen 18:22](#) the Hebrew text had read "Yahweh remained standing before Abraham." This was changed

by the scribes (a *tiqqun sopherim*) to “Abraham remained standing before Yahweh.” NIV translates the MT, which incorporates the scribal change, and cites the earlier text in footnote, again as “an ancient Hebrew scribal tradition”. In Hos 4.7 the earlier text had read “they changed my glory into shame”; this was changed by the scribes to “I will change their glory into shame,” and this is the text of the MT. Here NIV maintains the uncorrected text “they exchanged”, but prefers the corrected text “their glory”.

The translators’ Greek text of the NT was an eclectic one, and the Preface states (p. ix) that they used “the best current printed texts of the Greek New Testament”. [Mk 16:9–20](#) is separated from [16:8](#) by a space and a line, with the information: “[The two most reliable early manuscripts do not have [Mark 16:9–20](#).]” [John 7:53–8:11](#) is set off from the rest of the text by a space and a line, with a note at the top: “[The earliest and most reliable manuscripts do not have [John 7:53–8:11](#).]” [John 5:3b–4](#) is omitted from the text, as are most other Textus Receptus scribal additions, even where complete verses are involved (see [Lk 23:16](#), [Acts 8:36](#)).

CONSERVATIVE APPROACH TO EXEGESIS

As for the exegesis of the text, it is essentially conservative, that is, **P. 193** there is no determined attempt to break new ground in understanding the meaning of the original text. The beginning of the Bible reads in very familiar terms:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ²Now the earth was^a formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

^{a2} Or possibly *became*

Gen 3.15 differs little from what has become traditional:

And I will put enmity
between you and the woman,
and between your offspring^a and hers;
he will crush^b your head,
and you will strike his heel.

^{a15} Or seed ^{b15} Or *strike*

Is 7.14 reads: “Therefore the Lord himself will give you^a a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and^b will call him Immanuel.^c” The footnotes read: ^{a14} The Hebrew is plural ^{b14} Masoretic Text: Dead Sea Scrolls *and he or and they* ^{c14} Immanuel means *God with us*. [Psalm 2:12](#) is translated: “Kiss the Son, lest he be angry / and you be destroyed in your way, / for his wrath can flare up in a moment. / Blessed are all who take refuge in him.” The use of initial capital letters in this psalm for “his Anointed One” (v. [2](#)), “my King” (v. [6](#)), “my Son” (v. [7](#)) and “the Son” (v. [12](#)) seems an attempt to convert this psalm to Christianity.

Where the meaning of the text is still unknown, a footnote indicates this: “The meaning of the Hebrew for this word (or, sentence; or, phrase) is uncertain” (see, for example, [Ec 2:5](#), [Jer 8:13](#), [18](#), [Amos 3:12](#), [9:6](#)).

One rather unusual device is the use of quotation marks to set off a word or phrase which the translators judge is being used in a sense different from the normal one. In [Mt 9:10](#), [11](#) (and parallels) the text reads:

¹⁰While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew’s house, many tax collectors and “sinners” came and ate with him and his disciples. ¹¹When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and ‘sinners’?”

Similarly in [Mt 6:1](#): “Be careful not to do your ‘acts of righteousness’ before men, to be seen by them.” In the same way “gods” appears in quotation marks in [Ps 82:1, 6](#), as well as in the quotation of [Ps 82:6](#) in [In 10:34](#). One curious instance is the bracketing of “seven(s)” within quotation marks in [Dan 9:24–27](#). [p. 194](#)

TRANSLATION OF CULTURAL DISTINCTIVES

Some cultural features may be examined. For terms of distances and measures NIV gives the American equivalent in the text and in a footnote provides the Hebrew or Greek form and the metric equivalent. So in [Lk 24:13](#) the text has “about seven miles,” while the footnote reads: “Greek *sixty stadia* (about 11 kilometers).” [John 2:5](#) has “from twenty to thirty gallons” in the text, and the footnote says: “Greek *two to three metretes* (probably about 75 to 115 liters).” Monetary equivalents are handled somewhat differently. In [In 6:7](#), for example, Philip is made to say, “Eight months’ wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!” The footnote reads: “Greek *two hundred denarii*.” In [In 12:5](#) the three hundred denarii appear as “a year’s wages” in the text.

The hours of the day, however, are not given their modern equivalents; the translation is literal, “tenth hour” ([In 1.39](#)), “third hour,” “sixth hour,” and “ninth hour” ([Mk 15:25, 33, 34](#)). The same is done in the parable of the workers in the vineyard ([Mt 20:1–16](#)).

The word “leprosy” is used both in the OT and the NT but in each section where the word is used, a footnote is given: “The Hebrew/Greek word was used for various diseases affecting the skin—not necessarily leprosy” (see [2 Kg 5.1](#), [Lk 5.12](#)).

In some instances modern names are used for areas and countries, but this is not consistently done. “Cush” appears in the OT at all times, with a footnote: “the upper Nile region” (and see [Acts 8.27](#)). “Caphtor” is always explained in footnotes as meaning Crete (see [Amos 9.7](#)). In the NT the traditional “the Sea of Galilee” is used as a name, but when that body of water is referred to it is called a lake. In the OT *yam suph* is always translated “the Red Sea”, always accompanied by a footnote: “Hebrew *Yam Suph*; that is, Sea of Reeds” (and see also [Acts 7.36](#) and [Hebrew 11.29](#)).

It would seem that “prayer shawls” in [Mt 23.5](#) is an anachronism.

The use of the nonce word “kinsman-redeemer” to translate *gō’el* in [Ruth](#) (see [2:20, 3:9, 12, 4:1, 3, 8](#)) seems ill-advised. The sacrifices known as *shelāmim* are translated “fellowship offerings”, with the traditional term “peace offerings” given in footnote (see [1 Kg 8:63, 64](#)). The Hebrew *herem* is translated “devoted thing(s),” with a good explanatory footnote (see [Jos 6:18, 7:1](#)).

For some reason “Mary Magdalene” is used in the Synoptics, but in [John](#) she appears as “Mary of Magdala”.

Although in some places the translation is not characterized by male-oriented language, still it persists in others. So [Ps 1:1](#) begins, [p. 195](#) “Blessed is the man who ...” and [Is 40:6](#) reads “All men are like grass ...” In the Sermon on the Mount the disciples are enjoined, “let your light shine before men” ([Mt 5:16](#); see also [5:13](#); [6:1, 2, 5, 14, 15, 16, 18](#); [10:32, 33](#)).

Literalism also persists in such titles as “Daughter of Tarshish” ([Is 23:10](#)), “Virgin Daughter of Sidon” ([Is 23:12](#)), “Daughter of the Babylonians” ([Is 47:1](#)). The literal “horn” continues to appear: “by your favor exalt our horn” ([Ps 89:17](#); see also [89:24, 112:9, 132:17, 148:14, Lk 1:69](#)). Since this translation got rid of “gird up your loins” (see [2 Kg 4.29](#), “Tuck your cloak into your belt”; see also [1 Kg 18.46](#)), why couldn’t they eliminate the horns?

Some passages are painfully literal: [Rom 3:18](#) (quoting [Ps 36:1](#)) reads, “There is no fear of God before their eyes”; [Eph 1:18](#) has “the riches of his glorious inheritance in the

saints". In [Rom 3:25](#) "God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood," the structure of the English sentence requires that "faith" modify God. [Lk 9:55-56](#) reads: "But Jesus turned and rebuked them, and they went to another village." In English this can only mean that "they" are the same ones referred to by "them", that is, James and John; the meaning that comes from the English text is that Jesus rebuked James and John and so the two went to another village. [Ps 147:10](#) is needlessly literal:

His pleasure is not in the strength of the horse,
nor his delight in the legs of a man.

The chiasmus in Mt 7.6 is disregarded. Sometimes there is a restructuring of the text, such as at the ending of Jonah: "But Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well. Should I not be concerned about that great city?"

The translators stated that in matters of style their purpose was that the English should be "clear and natural ... idiomatic but not idiosyncratic, contemporary but not dated." The archaic "thou," "thee" and "thine" have been discarded, along with archaic forms of the verbs. Conscious of the differences between American and British English, a British edition has been prepared which "reflects the comparatively few differences of significant idiom and of spelling" (Preface, p. viii).

To sum up one's impression after spending some time with this translation, the New International Version is a product of careful and conscientious scholarship. While still too closely tied in form to the underlying Hebrew and Greek structures, it is nonetheless a significant [p. 196](#) achievement, and its appearance is an occasion for rejoicing.

The irony of the situation is worth pondering: had this translation appeared in 1952 it would have been bitterly denounced as a perversion, a devil's masterpiece produced by people with a low view of Scripture.

I, for one, hope this Bible is carefully read and studied by many people for many years to come.

Dr. Bratcher is Translation Research Associate of the United Bible Society. He was the main translator of TEV (N.T.) and Charmani of the panel for TEV (O.T.). [p. 197](#)

A Consideration of the New International Version of the New Testament

by a Special Committee commissioned by the Council
of the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical
Churches (UK)

Reprinted from Foundations (November 1978) with permission

The New International Version (NIV) was published in the USA in 1973. It is the first translation into English in the 20th century compiled by a team of scholars who are “*all committed to the full authority and complete trustworthiness of the Scriptures, which they believe to be God’s word in written form*” (Preface).

It has been adopted by the Gideons for distribution in schools in the UK and is in increasing use by evangelicals. Our concern has been to consider whether the translation itself lives up to what its users should expect from translators holding an evangelical view of Scripture.

The task is, to say the least, extensive. If there are about 8,500 verses in the Greek NT and an average of 30 words and textual or grammatical issues in each verse then the translators have been faced with a quarter of a million decisions to make. Although our Committee considered the whole of the NT, some parts were studied in more depth than others. Our conclusions are given here, each followed by further notes on the basis for our views.

THE ORIGINAL TEXT

In our view no translation should be disregarded solely because it is based on an original text which departs from the Textus Receptus. The NIV text does so depart from the TR but does not slavishly follow any one alternative text.

Notes The Committee approached this intricate and controversial subject with some care, conscious that our brief summary may oversimplify the issue.

Among many ancient manuscripts available to translators of the NT there is one copy found by Tischendorf at Sinai known as “*Aleph*” and another in the Vatican known as “*B*”. The so-called “*traditional text*” (Textus Receptus—TR) is the form of Greek original underlying the AV of 1611.

The NIV has been strongly criticised for its failure to adopt the TR. The critics argue that TR represents most closely the original and that texts such as Aleph and B contain variants introduced deliberately to weaken the doctrines of the Trinity and the Deity of Christ. [p. 198](#)

Evangelicals have not universally subscribed to this argument. Donald Macleod’s article in the June, 1972 *Banner of Truth* quotes Warfield, Machen, Cunningham and Spurgeon in support of an “*eclectic*” text, that is, one compiled from all available sources. It is clear that no strictly Biblical argument can be advanced for the primacy of any text. Nor does Scripture give the Church the authority to confer upon any text the status given for instance to the Vulgate Latin by Roman Catholics.

The principal argument for the use of an eclectic text is that, since no one text is sacrosanct, the use of established textual criteria is indicated to obtain the most authentic text. The NIV proceeds on this basis. This means in practice that in some cases NIV uses Aleph B texts in preference to TR. In other cases it uses TR rather than Aleph B. That is, NIV does not systematically attack TR but adopts each reading on its merits. The Committee did not, however, agree with all the textual conclusions of NIV, notably in [Matthew 5:22](#); [Mark 1:2](#); [Luke 2:43](#) and [John 1:18](#). While respecting the concern felt by the advocates of the primacy of TR the Committee believe that to dismiss the NIV on the basis of its use of an eclectic text is unjustified.

FOOTNOTES

The NIV footnotes are not always helpful. The textual evidence is treated inconsistently and in our view sometimes wrongly.

Notes It seems unnecessary to be told so often that “*Christ*” means “*Messiah*” or that “*evil spirits*” is literally “*unclean spirits*”; in the latter case it would seem better to translate as the footnote.

More important is the textual evidence. In Matthew and Mark together there are only 43 footnotes drawing attention to MSS variations whereas the RSV has 80. (Moreover the textual variants might justify even more.)

One particularly misleading footnote is on [Matthew 5:44](#) which says, “*Some late MSS add, ‘bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you’.*” But another clause, “*those who spitefully use you and*”, has as much MSS support as the two clauses mentioned; two of the MSS referred to cannot be classified as “*late*” and the “*some*” masks the fact that almost all Greek MSS include these words.

ENGLISH STYLE

In general the accuracy of translation renders the original meaning in [P. 199](#) good, flowing modern English, giving special help with difficult passages.

Notes The narratives of the Gospels read well and there are many good and helpful renderings, e.g. [Matthew 1:19](#), “*did not want to expose her to public disgrace*”, and [Matthew 3:14](#), “*But John tried to deter him*”.

The doctrinal reasoning of the Epistle to the Romans comes through well, e.g. the first and second Adam in [5:12–21](#), the two natures in chapter [7](#) and the debate about practical issues in chapter [14](#).

Typology is handled in clear fashion, e.g. Melchisedec in [Heb. 7](#). Down-to-earth clarity brings us face to face with the essential issues for application to our present day in the faith and works debate in [James 2](#).

The Committee acknowledges that the NIV use of “*you*” for God would limit its usefulness among some at the present time but does not consider this factor justifies its rejection.

LIBERTIES TAKEN

In narrative passages particularly, more liberty is taken with the original than we consider to be justified.

Notes The preface tells us the translators “*have striven for more than word-for-word translation*” and this has led to a greater freeness than seems warranted, e.g. [Mark 3:6](#) omits “*immediately*”, [Matthew 1:20](#) and elsewhere omits the dramatic effect of “*behold*”. [Matthew 21:33ff](#) the same word is translated “*farmers*” and then “*tenants*”. [Matthew 6:25](#) the word “*important*” is added. [Matthew 15:9](#) “*teaching as doctrines the precepts of men*” becomes “*their teachings are but rules made by man*”.

Many more examples could be given and of alterations of sentence structure. Singly they are often not vital but taken cumulatively they indicate a freer handling of the text than might have been expected.

Our review also produced examples of places where the translation of verb tenses can be faulted, e.g. [Acts 19:18](#) “*confessed*” (past for present), [Romans 4:2](#) “*had*” (past for present), [Romans 11:7](#) “*sought*” (past for present).

CLOSER ACCURACY IN THE EPISTLES

In the Epistles and Revelation less liberty is taken and the closer rendering retains the necessary theological precision. **P. 200**

Notes NIV retains for the most part the accepted English theological terminology such as justification, atonement, reconciliation, wrath etc. An exception is “credited” for “imputed” in [Romans 4](#) but this seems reasonable. “Sinful nature”, is an improvement on “flesh” in [Romans 7](#) and [8](#). So is “slaves” for “servants” in [Romans 6](#). It is difficult to find any NIV rendering of the meaning of terms for which there is not some justification. Passages in the AV which can cause readers to lose the thread are rendered more clearly without loss of accuracy, e.g. [Romans 2:25–27](#); [5:12–19](#).

In the great majority of instances NIV is an improvement on AV in the matter of tenses, e.g. [Acts 2:47](#) “who were being saved” (*pres. part*), [Romans 6:4](#) “we were buried” (*aorist*), [Romans 5:12](#) “all sinned” (*aorist*), [Romans 9:17](#) “I raised you up” (*aorist*), [Romans 10:3](#) “they did not submit” (*aorist*), [1 Cor. 1:18](#) “are perishing, are being saved” (*pres. part*), [1 Cor. 2:6](#) “are coming to nothing” (*pres. part*), [Rev. 1:5](#) “him who loves us” (*pres. part*).

DOCTRINAL PURITY

No major doctrinal issue is raised by any deviations we could discover from the original text used by the translators.

Notes In fact their choice of original text is not dictated by doctrinal considerations. See para. 1 above.

There are deviations from the Greek which the Committee would criticise as we have indicated. But we could find no renderings of root meanings or choice of tenses which seemed motivated by an heretical doctrinal position.

The absence of the term “propitiation” will disappoint some, but “atoning sacrifice” which replaces it retains the necessary objective reference lacking in other modern translations.

An overall study of the NIV NT would not bring the reader into heresy. Under the blessing of the Holy Spirit it could bring him to believe in Him who said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples” [John 8:31](#). **p. 201**

The Manger and the Inn: The Cultural Background of Luke 2:7

Kenneth E. Bailey

Reprinted from Theological Review (November 1979) with permission

This significant article shows how the cultural and theological assumptions of the Church throughout the centuries have influenced the interpretation of the text of Scripture. It calls us to a more critical examination of our assumptions. We offer this article not because Dr.

Bailey has proved his case, but because of the value of his exegetical method and the enrichment it brings to our understanding of the amazing peasanthood of the incarnate Christ. Its implications for the crass commercialisation of Christmas are devastating.

(Editor)

Why would Joseph “of the lineage of David,” in the city of his family’s origin, have to seek shelter in an inn and be turned out into a stable? Recently this question was put to me here in Beirut. This paper presents an answer. In this brief study I will attempt to demonstrate that Jesus was born in a private home and that the “inn” of [Luke 2:7](#) is best understood as the guest room of the family in whose house the birth took place. Recent studies have primarily focused on Luke’s theological interests.¹ Our concern here is the Palestinian cultural background of verses [6–7](#) which we understand to be traditional material. Indeed, a more precise analysis of that background is critical for both a clearer understanding of the original tradition as well as for any interpretation of its use within the Lucan framework.

The Palestinian background of the entire text (vs. [1–7](#)) is clear and strong. Five striking Middle Eastern details mark the passage. First, the [p. 202](#) author reflects an accurate knowledge of Palestinian geography when he has the Holy Family “go up” from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Second, the custom of “swaddling” infants is a Palestinian village custom which is observable as early as [Ezekiel 16:4](#) and is still practised today. Third, the extended family of David is referred to in the oriental fashion as a “house”. This is then amplified for the non-Middle Eastern reader with the fuller phrase, “house and lineage of David”. Fourth, a Davidic Christology informs the text. Finally, Bethlehem is given two names, “city of David” (which presupposes some knowledge of Old Testament history), and “Bethlehem”. Given the Palestinian nature of the material we will attempt to examine the Middle Eastern cultural background of the story with care.

CULTURAL ASSUMPTIONS OF THE TRADITIONS OF THE CHURCH

The cultural assumptions of this text are particularly critical because the story comes to us through a long Church tradition. Most modern versions of that story are as follows: the Holy Family arrives late in the night. The local inn has its “no vacancy” sign clearly displayed. The tired couple seek alternatives and find none. With no other option, wearied from their journey, desperate for any shelter because of the imminent delivery, they spend the night in a stable where the child is born. But the cornerstone of this popular pageantry is flatly denied in the text of Luke. Popular tradition affirms that the child was born the night the family arrived. But in [2:4](#) we are told that Mary and Joseph “went up” to Bethlehem. The verse assumes their arrival. Then in verse six we are told, “And *while they were there*, the days were fulfilled for her to be delivered.” Thus the text affirms a time lapse between the arrival in Bethlehem and the birth of Jesus. Mary “fulfilled her

¹ M. Baily, “The Crib and Exegesis of Luke 2, 1–20,” *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, 100 (1963), 358–376; R. E. Brown, “VI. The Birth and Naming of Jesus,” in *The Birth of the Messiah* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1977), pp.393–434; J. D. M. Derrett, “The Manger: Ritual Law and Soteriology,” *Theology*, 74 (1971), 566–571, and “The Manger at Bethlehem: Light on St. Luke’s Technique from Contemporary Jewish Religious Law,” in *Studia Evangelica*, VI, edited by L. A. Livingston (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1973), pp.86, 94; C. H. Giblin, “Reflections on the Sign of the Manger,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 29 (1957), 87, 101; M. D. Goulder and M. L. Sanderson, “St. Luke’s Genesis,” *Journal of Theological Studies*, 8 (1957), 12–30; H. L. MacNeill, “The Sitz im Leben of Luke 1:5–2:20,” *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 65, (1946), 123–130; R. M. Wilson, “Some Recent Studies in the Lucan Infancy Narrative,” *Studia Evangelica*, 1 (Berlin: Akademie, 1959), 235–253; P. Winter, “Some Observations on the Language in the Birth and Infancy Stories of the Third Gospel,” *New Testament Studies*, 1 (1954–55), 111–121.

days” in Bethlehem.² We can easily assume a few weeks, perhaps even a month or more. Thus the birth took place in shelter found by Joseph during those weeks. Was Joseph so totally incompetent that he could provide nothing by way of adequate housing after a significant number of days of searching? Was Bethlehem so hard-hearted that, after days and days of intense negotiation, a man [P. 203](#) with a pregnant wife is turned out by everyone? Surely not. How then is the text to be understood? Two questions emerge: Where was the manger? and What was the inn? These questions will be discussed in turn.

For centuries large sections of the Church have assumed that the manger was in an animal stable. Three questions here overlap and of necessity must be discussed together. These questions are:

1. Was the place a cave?
2. Was it a stable or a private home?
3. Was it inside or outside the village?

I will try to demonstrate that the place was likely a private home in the village and that it may have been a cave.

In the second century Justin tells us that Jesus was born in a cave outside the city of Bethlehem. The problem is not the cave as such, but rather Justin’s placing of it “outside the village”. Many Palestinian village homes are built into caves.³ Yet Justin’s overall statement seems less than reliable. Due to the influence this text has had it will require examination. The statement reads,

But when the child was born in Bethlehem, since Joseph could not find a lodging in that village, he took up his quarters in a certain cave near the village; and while they were there Mary brought forth the Christ and placed Him in a manger, and here the Magi came from Arabia and found Him. I have repeated to you ... what Isaiah foretold about the sign which foreshadowed the Cave.⁴

The Isaiah passage alluded to is [Is. 33:16](#) which in its LXX version reads, “He shall dwell in a high cave of a strong rock.” One is obliged to suspect that Plummer is right where he accuses Justin of a tendency to “turn prophecy into history”.⁵ Indeed, all through his dialogue Justin tries very hard to convince his antagonist that Jesus is the Messiah by citing proof texts from the Old Testament. The above passage is no exception. We see the same methodology in his dealing with [Gen. 49:11](#) which talks of tying a colt to a vine. In his commentary on Luke’s account of the passion in [19:30–33](#) suddenly a vine appears. Justin writes, “For the foal of an ass stood bound to a vine at [p. 204](#) the entrance of the

² A single Greek text from the sixth century (Bezae) gives an interesting variant to [6a](#). It reads, “As they arrived the days were completed,” rather than “It came to pass while they were there the days were fulfilled.” The Bezae text has no support from any earlier Greek texts and none from the early versions. It would seem that Bezae has been accommodated to the myth of a late arrival on the night of the birth. The transcribers of the Bezae text were more consistent than we are. Our text denies a late night arrival theory and yet we manage to maintain it.

³ Dalmann has a diagram of just such a house from a village near Jerusalem. In this particular instance the entire one room house is in the cave. Cf. Gustaf Dalmann, *Arbeit und Sitte in Palästina*, Vol. VII (Gütersloh: Hermann Werner, 1940), plate n.40.

⁴ Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, LXXIX. Cf. *The Writings of Justin Martyr and Athenagoras*, trans. by M. Dodds, G. Reith and B. P. Pratten (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1868), pp. 195–196.

⁵ A. Plummer, *The Gospel According to St. Luke* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1922), p.54.

village.”⁶ Yet in another place Justin uses the same Old Testament verse but applies his allegories in a different fashion and the vine disappears.⁷ Thus it would appear that tradition is created or at least shaped to fit “prophecy”.

On the positive side we note that the late-night-arrival story is nowhere present. Justin has taken seriously the fact that the text clearly affirms an extended presence in the village before the birth. But the reader is left with two problems. First, the phrase “while they were there” is applied to the cave outside the village rather than to the village itself (as in [Luke 2:4](#)). Secondly, we are told that Bethlehem turned them out and thus they turned to a cave outside the village. The latter is very problematic on two counts. Mary’s relative Elizabeth, whom she has just visited ([Luke 1:39](#)), lives somewhere near by in the “hill country of Judea”. If Joseph is rejected in Bethlehem, and if he has no remaining family in the area, he can turn to her family and easily find shelter. Then secondly, Luke tells us that the shepherds visited the baby and were overjoyed at all that they had heard and seen ([Luke 2:20](#)). As Middle Eastern peasants they surely would have noticed the accommodations offered the Holy Family. If they had been inadequate, as good villagers they would immediately have helped the family make other arrangements. The text gives no hint that anyone was displeased. Thus Justin’s exegesis and his direct and indirect violation of the clear statements of Luke lead us to have grave suspicions regarding the accuracy of his account of a birth outside the village in spite of its antiquity.

At the same time, the cave tradition itself may be historical. As we indicated, many peasant homes in Palestine in the past were or began as caves. Thus Justin’s “cave” and Matthew’s “house” ([Matt. 2:11](#)) could be the same place. The manger is not a problem, as we will see. The same cave tradition (again outside the village) is repeated in the *Protoevangelium of James* along with the addition of the late-night-arrival myth. In the *Protoevangelium* the “days were fulfilled” not in the cave but *along the way*. Joseph and Mary have to stop because, as Mary says, “the child within me presses me, to come forth.” They are in a desert and Joseph finds a cave (17:3–18:1) where the child is born and a number of gynaecological wonders take place.⁸ Here we have clearly moved from typology to exaggerated p. 205 myth. Among other things, the hill country of Judea is hardly a desert. (The pressure in both texts to have the birth take place outside of Bethlehem may be theological as we will observe.) Thus, having judged the outside-the-village tradition as textually inaccurate and historically unreliable, and having found no objections to the cave, we turn to an examination of the internal evidence of the text itself.

EVIDENCE FOR THE BIRTH IN A PRIVATE HOME

All of the internal cultural evidence from the story points to a birth in a private home. This data is of two kinds: the first is the make up of the Middle Eastern extended family, and the second, the physical structure of the Palestinian peasant home.

In [Luke 2](#) we are told that Joseph is returning to the village of Bethlehem from which his family originated. The Middle Easterner is profoundly attached to his village of family

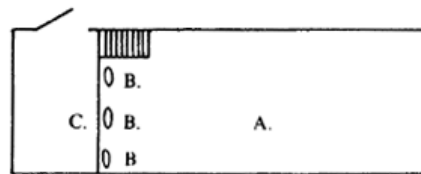
⁶ Justin Martyr, *The First Apology of Justin* 1:32; cf. *Op. cit.*, p.34.

⁷ Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, LIII; cf. *Op. cit.*, p. 155.

⁸ O. Cullmann, “Infancy Gospels: the protevangelium of James,” in *New Testament Apocrypha*, Vol. 1, ed. by E. Hennecke and W. Schneemelcher (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), pp.383–388.

origin. Indeed, his home village is an integral part of his identity.⁹ A man need not have been born in the home village. Even if he has never been there he can appear suddenly at the home of a distant cousin, recite his genealogy and he is among friends. Joseph need only say, “I am Joseph, son of Jacob, son of Matthan, son of Eleazar, the son of Eliud,” and the immediate response must be, “You are welcome. What can we do for you?” If Joseph does have some member of the extended family resident in the village he is honour bound to seek them out. On the other hand, if he does not have family or friends in the village, *still*, as a member of the famous house of David, for the “sake of David,” he will be welcome in almost any village home. Yet, if we reject both of these alternatives and assume that Joseph did not have family or friends, and that he did not appeal to the name of David, even if he is a total stranger appearing in a strange village—still he will be able to find shelter for the birth of a child. Indeed, the birth of a child is a special occasion in any culture anywhere in the world. The idea that a woman about to give birth cannot find shelter and assistance from the village women in a Middle Eastern village, even if she is a total stranger, staggers the imagination. We are pressed to affirm on the basis of everything we know of Middle Eastern village life that Joseph most likely sought out and found adequate shelter in Bethlehem. This p. 206 shelter, we assume, was an *occupied* private home for it had a guest room that was full (as we will discover). What then of the “manger”?

The text tells us, “She gave birth to her first son, wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger.” The traditional understanding of this verse in the Western world moves along the following path. Jesus was laid in a manger. Mangers are naturally found in animal stables. Ergo, Jesus was born in a stable. However, in the one room peasant home of Palestine and Lebanon, the manger is built into the floor of the house. The standard one room village home is as follows:



- A. Living area for the family (Arabic-*mastaba*)
- B. Mangers built into the floor for feeding the animals (mostly at night)
- C. Small area about *four feet* lower than the upper living area into which the family cow or donkey is brought at night (Arabic-*ka'al-bayt*)

The text of the New Testament itself assumes the one room peasant home in [Matt. 5:15](#) where we are told that a lamp is put on a lampstand so that it “gives light to *all* who are in the house”. Obviously, the house must be one room if one lamp shines on everyone in it. Furthermore, the one room house with a lower end for the animals is presupposed in [Luke 13:10-17](#). The family ox and/or donkey is brought into the house at night and taken out early each morning. Thus everyone knows that every family with any animals carries out this simple domestic chore at the start of each new day. To leave the animals in the house during the day is socially and culturally unthinkable. All of this is presupposed by the text. Jesus knows the head of the synagogue has untied his animals that very morning and led them out of the house. With calm assurance Jesus can announce to his face that he *did* in

⁹ Naboth and his famous vineyard ([1 Kings 21:1-14](#)) is a classical example of the peasant attachment to the inheritance of his fathers. This same attachment is why Palestinian refugees in the current Middle East cannot simply move elsewhere.

fact lead his animals out that very morning, confident that there will be no reply. Were animals kept in a separate stable the p. 207 head of the synagogue could have saved face by asserting firmly, "I never touch the animals on the Sabbath." But if he tries to claim that he leaves the animals *in the house* all day the people in the synagogue will respond with loud ridiculing laughter! In short, no one will believe him. Thus the debate ends simply, "As he said this, all his adversaries were put to shame" (v. 17). Thus, in the case of [Luke 2:7](#), any Palestinian reading the phrase, "She laid him in a manger," would immediately assume that the birth took place in a private home, because he knows that mangers are built into the floor of the raised terrace of the peasant home.

This assumption is an important part of the story. The shepherds are told that the presence of the baby in a manger is a sign for them. Shepherds were near the bottom of the social ladder and indeed, their profession was declared unclean by some of their rabbis.¹⁰ Many places will not welcome them. In many homes they will feel their poverty and be ashamed of their low estate. But no—they will face no humiliation as they visit *this* child for *he* is laid in a manger. That is, he is born in a simple peasant home with the mangers in the family room. He is one of them. With this assurance they go with haste.

The fact of the one room peasant home with its manger in the floor has not gone unnoticed. William Thomson, long term Presbyterian missionary in Lebanon, Syria and Palestine, wrote in 1857,

It is my impression that the birth actually took place in an ordinary house of some common peasant, and that the baby was laid in one of the mangers, such as are still found in the dwellings of farmers in this region.¹¹

The two leading twentieth century authorities on Palestinian life and the New Testament are Gustaf Dalmann and E. F. F. Bishop. Bishop comments on v. 7 and writes,

Perhaps ... recourse was had to one of the Bethlehem houses with the lower section provided for the animals, with mangers "hollowed in stone," the dais being reserved for the family. Such a manger being immovable, filled with crushed straw, would do duty for a cradle. An p. 208 infant might even be left in safety, especially if swaddled, when the mother was absent on temporary business.¹²

Dalmann, in his study of the same verse, records,

In the East today the dwelling place of man and beast is often in one and the same room. It is quite the usual thing among the peasants for the family to live, eat, and sleep on a kind of raised terrace (Arab. *mastaba*) in the one room of the house, while the cattle, particularly the donkeys and oxen, have their place below on the actual floor (*ka'al-bei*) near the door ... On this floor the mangers are fixed either to the floor or to the wall, or at the edge of the terrace.¹³

¹⁰ K. E. Bailey, *Poet and Peasant* (Grand Rapids: Wm. Eerdmans, 1976), 147.

¹¹ William Thomson, *The Land and the Book*, Vol. II (New York: Harper and Brothers, c. 1858, 1871), p.503.

¹² E. F. F. Bishop, *Jesus of Palestine* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1955), p.42. In spite of the passage here quoted, in his volume Bishop offers another alternative, that of a shed attached to a village guest house. This ignores the fact that mangers are in homes and the fact that the Holy Family has been in Bethlehem for some time. In a public lecture in Jerusalem in 1958 Bishop reaffirmed his earlier view that the birth was in a private home.

¹³ Gustaf Dalmann, *Sacred Sites and Ways*, trans. from the German by Paul P. Levertoff (London: SPCK, 1935), p.41.

Dalman himself has nearly a hundred pages of photographs and scale drawings of a wide variety of such peasant homes, all of which fit his two level description given above.¹⁴ Thus a peasant home is the natural place for the Holy Family to have found shelter and the expected place to find a manger. In the case of [Luke 2:7](#) the home which entertained the Holy Family presumably was not expecting a baby and did not have a cradle, but with a manger built into the floor there was little need for one.¹⁵ So why has this rather obvious alternative remained obscured? In some cases it would seem that the cultural assumptions of the exegetes have set it aside.

In spite of the above quotation Dalman defends the traditional “lonely birth in a stable” for culturally revealing reasons. Dalman feels that Joseph could have had space in the inn, but that “no room for them” means “no *suitable* room for the birth” (italics mine).¹⁶ Dalman argues that neither “inn” nor “guest house” nor “private home” would have provided the necessary privacy and thus Joseph must have sought out and found an empty stable. In defense of his views Dalman writes,

Anyone who has lodged with Palestinian peasants knows that notwithstanding p. 209 their hospitality the lack of privacy is unspeakably painful. One cannot have a room to oneself, and one is never alone by day or by night. I myself often fled into the open country simply in order to be able to think.¹⁷

The amazing part of Dalman’s remarkable discussion is the assumption that the Holy Family *wants* to be alone. Rather, it is the German professor who finds the lack of privacy “unspeakably painful,” not the Palestinian peasant. For the Middle Eastern peasant the exact opposite is true. *To be alone is unspeakably painful*. He does *his* thinking *in a crowd*. Naturally, in the case of a birth, the men will sit with the neighbours. But the room will be full of women assisting the midwife.¹⁸ A private home would have bedding, facilities for heating water and all that is required for any peasant birth. Dalman’s Western sense of the need for privacy has led him to misread his own meticulously gathered data. His conclusion that a sense of the need for privacy would have forced Mary and Joseph to reject the option of either inn or home in preference for an empty stable is truly incredible when seen from a Middle Eastern point of view.

Brown observes that in inns people slept on a raised terrace with the animals in the same room. He remarks, “The public inns of the time should not be pictured as snug or

¹⁴ G. Dalman, *Arbeit und Sitte in Palästina*, plates 1–91.

¹⁵ Everyone sleeps on mattresses on the raised terrace floor in the village home so placing a baby there is perfectly natural.

¹⁶ G. Dalman, *Sacred Sites and Ways*, p.41.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Miller suggests that the birth “was probably unattended” because Mary wraps her own child. Cf. D. G. Miller, *Saint Luke* (London: SCM, 1959), p.35. The assumption of Miller’s remark is that the mother in her supposed weakened condition after childbirth would not choose to wrap her own child if she had had assistance. The difficulty with this assumption is that Palestinian peasant women are not physically incapacitated by childbirth. The present writer has heard first hand accounts of Palestinian peasant women caught in the fields with labour pains who gave birth in the fields and then picked up the newborn child and returned to the village with no unusual effort required. The peasant woman is physically quite able to wrap her own child after a birth and it is only natural that Mary would choose to do so. After all, if she were alone, could not Joseph have wrapped the child for her? In short, when Mary wraps Jesus herself, this does not mean she is alone.

comfortable according to medieval or modern standards.”¹⁹ This we grant. But our point is that a room full of people sleeping together with the animals on a lower level in the same room is snug and comfortable in the eyes of the traditional Middle Eastern gregarious peasant, even in modern times. These reservations can be set aside and we can say in summary that all aspects of the story, from the precise requirements of the text, to the structure of the peasant home, to the dynamics of the extended p. 210 family, to the sociology of the peasant village point to a birth in a private home.

CASE FOR THE INN AS A GUEST ROOM

This brings us to the second half of our inquiry. What then was the “inn”? The traditional understanding of [Luke 2:7b](#), “For there was no place for them in the *kataluma*” (inn?), is that Joseph went to the local commercial inn and was turned away and then sought shelter in a stable, perhaps the stable of the inn itself. This understanding is seen here as inadequate, from both a cultural and a linguistic point of view. In this section we will try to demonstrate that the crowded *kataluma* was most probably the “guest room” of the home in which the Holy Family found lodging.

This key word *kataluma*, which in the West is traditionally translated “inn,” has at least five meanings. Three of these are worth considering in connection with [Luke 2:7](#). These are:

1. inn
2. house
3. guest room

Each of these options must be examined in turn.

First is the traditional “inn”. An inn by definition is a commercial establishment for strangers and travelers. Brown feels that some kind of a commercial inn is likely because

In NT times the religious feeling about hospitality to strangers (characteristic of tribal and nomadic cultures) had declined, so that if the traveler did not have friends or relatives in an area, he had to seek more impersonal shelter.²⁰

His only evidence for this remarkable statement is the fact that Romans built stopping places for merchants and that synagogues sometimes provided hospitality. However, the present author’s thirty year experience with villagers in the Middle East is that the intensity of the honor shown to the passing guest is still very much in force, especially when it is a returning son of the village that is seeking shelter. We have observed cases where a complete village has turned out in a great celebration to greet a young man who has suddenly arrived unannounced in the village which his grandfather had left many years before. Naturally differences of language, custom and politics oblige Roman imperialists to make their own arrangements. We grant p. 211 that occasionally overflow Jewish guests must sleep in the synagogue. But this does not detract from the special hospitality that the Middle Eastern villager in past and present extends to guests in general and to one of his own in particular. Thus we can affirm that the presence of Roman *mansions* and the opening of synagogues for Jewish guests in no way demonstrates a significant decline of the Middle Eastern traditional hospitality, especially if the guest claims the village as his ancestral home.

¹⁹ R. E. Brown, p.400.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

But more than this, the very idea of the inn is problematic on many grounds. First, Luke uses *pandokheion* for a commercial inn (cf. [Luke 10:36](#)). This common word for an inn is not found in our text. Second, the only other use of the noun *kataluma* in the Gospels is in [Luke 22:11](#) (and its parallel passage in [Mark 14:14](#)) where it clearly does not mean an inn. Then third, as we have observed, a man returning to his home village insults his family or friends by going to an inn. Fourth, it remains quite uncertain as to whether or not Bethlehem would have had a commercial inn. Jeremiah tells of a company of people who stayed at “Geruth Chimham near Bethlehem” ([Jer. 41:17](#)). The word “Geruth” may well mean a lodging place. But even so, this hardly demonstrates that such a place was still in business and in Bethlehem 500 years later after the area had been overrun by Babylonians, Greeks, Ptolemies, Seleucids and Romans. We are not aware of any evidence for a commercial inn near or in the village after the exile. Inns, then as now, are found on major roads. No major Roman road passed through Bethlehem. Small villages on minor roads have no inns. Brown’s phrase, “the well-known traveller’s inn at or near Bethlehem” is hardly justified.²¹ Fifth, any type of inn is culturally unacceptable as a place for the birth of a child. It is not a matter of privacy (against Dalman), but rather the deeply felt sense that a birth should take place in a home. The text does not say that the *kataluma* was not *fit*, but rather that it was *full*. Thus the *kataluma* was a place where the birth could appropriately have taken place, and an inn is not such a place. Finally, the Arabic and Syriac versions for 1900 years have never translated *kataluma* with the word inn. This translation is our Western heritage. Thus, from many points of view, “inn” is inadequate as a translation of *kataluma*. What then of “house”?

The New English Bible translates kataluma as house. This understanding is an encouraging move in the right direction. With it the [p. 212](#) culturally unacceptable translation of “inn” is abandoned and the Holy Family is assumed to be under the protection and shelter of a private home. Yet the translation “house” creates two unsurmountable problems. First, the manger is *in* the house so why should we be told that Mary is driven out of the place where mangers are located and then be told that she placed her child in a manger? Then second, if they are welcomed into a home, the master of the home will *never* turn an expectant mother out into a stable. These considerations effectively illuminate this option. What then of our third alternative?

In [Luke 2:7](#) *kataluma* is best understood as “guest room”. This is clearly what the word means in [Luke 22:11](#) and [Mark 14:14](#). With external linguistic evidence uncertain, it would seem appropriate to give greater weight to internal evidence. Bishop writes, “If *kataluma* means *guest room* in Mk. and Lk. at the end of the Lord’s life why not at the start in Bethlehem?”²² This suggestion has recently been defended by Miguens.²³ Brown rejects Miguens’ proposal and leaves the problem unsolved. Brown argues first against *kataluma* being a “private home” of some relative because of lack of “some explanation for the lack of hospitality to an in-law about to bear a child.”²⁴ He rejects a “room in a house” because that argument has been attached by some scholars to an unconvincing additional argument about a cradle slung from the ceiling and because the *kataluma* has the definite article. In regard to Brown’s reasoning, we can reply that the private home he suggests may or may not be that of a relative. No unkindness or lack of hospitality is implied when

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² E. F. F. Bishop, p.42.

²³ M. Miguens, “In una mangatoia, perche non c’era posto ...” *Bibbia e Oriente*, Vol. 2 (1960), 193–198. This work, not available to me, is quoted by R. Brown, p.400.

²⁴ R. E. Brown, p.400.

the Holy Family is taken into the main family room of the home in which they are entertained. The guest room is full. The host is not expected to ask prior guests (or a recently married son) to leave. Such would be quite unthinkable and, in any case, unnecessary. The large family room is more appropriate in any case. We grant that the suggestion of a cradle slung from the ceiling is linguistically and culturally unconvincing, but the option of “guest room” for *kataluma* should be separated from it in any case. In regard to the definite article, the “guest room” of [Luke 22:11](#) also has the definite article and there the meaning “guest room” is unmistakable. We would counter that the presence of the definite article reinforces our contention. It is not “a room” but rather “*the* guest room”. Of what? Of the home, naturally. [p. 213](#) This option fulfills admirably both the linguistic requirements of the text, and the cultural requirements of the village scene. This translation allows us to understand the following: Joseph and Mary arrive in Bethlehem; Joseph finds shelter with a family; the family has a separate guest room but it is full. The couple is accommodated among the family in acceptable village style. The birth takes place there on the raised terrace of the family home and the baby is laid in a manger.

The text is cryptic and we long for some additional information. Yet, if we assume a Palestinian reader, the present form of the verse makes good sense. This can be seen as follows:

The author records,

“And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger.”

The reader instinctively thinks,

“Manger—oh—they are in the main family room. Why not the guest room?”

The author instinctively replies,

“Because there was no place for them in the guest room.”

The reader concludes,

“Ah, yes—well, the family room is more appropriate anyway.”

Thus, with the translation “guest room,” all of the cultural, historical and linguistic pieces fall into place.

COULD SIMPLICITY SUPPORT A GUEST ROOM?

This brings us to a further question. Namely, do simple one-room homes have guest rooms? The objection could be raised that a one-room home is surely too simple to have a guest room. The assumption behind such a question is that of course no one *wants* the animals in the house, and anyone who could build a guest room would surely first build a stable and get the animals out of the house. But such is not the case. The traditional Middle Eastern farmer lives close to nature and in fact does want the animals in his house for at least two reasons he can verbalize. First, the animals help heat the house in winter.²⁵ Second, when they are in the same room the villager sleeps assured that they will not be stolen. Surely the head of a synagogue in [Luke 13:15](#) could be classed socially a bit above the [p. 214](#) average farmer. Yet as we observed, the text assumed that he has animals in the house. It is we in the West who have decided that life with these great gentle beasts is culturally unacceptable. The raised terrace on which the family eats, sleeps and lives is unsoiled by the animals. These animals are taken out each day and the lower level cleaned. Their presence is in no way an offence. Furthermore, Dalmann gives a number of detailed drawings of village homes which precisely document our point. In his plate n.31 the family

²⁵ This is a possible partial solution to the energy crises in the Western world that perhaps should be given some consideration!

room is a great long room requiring three sets of pillars to support the roof. Still, the home is one room with the family living-room terrace (*Wohnterrasse*) and a lower level (*Hausboden*) with mangers (*Futtertröge*) built into the floor of the former. This same house has an adjoining special guest room (*Gästehaus*). Such a home precisely fits the requirements of [Luke 2:7](#).²⁶

This leads us to ask whether or not this option has been considered by modern scholars other than Bishop, Dalmann, Thompson and Miguens.

Scholarship for a long time has noted “guest room” as a primary meaning for *kataluma*. Moulton and Milligan suggest “lodging place” for [Luke 2:7](#) and observe, “Elsewhere in Biblical Greek, e.g. [I Kings 1:13](#) (sic. [1:18](#)), [Mk 14:14](#), it has rather the sense of ‘guest room’.”²⁷ Plummer long ago questioned the translation “inn” for *kataluma*. He writes, “It is possible that Joseph had relied upon the hospitality of some friends in Bethlehem, whose ‘guest chamber’ however was already full when he and Mary arrived. See on xxii. 11.”²⁸ Leaney translated with “lodging house” but does not discuss the question.²⁹ Marshall and Danker reject “inn” in preference to “room in a house,” but then affirm the birthplace to be some place for animals.³⁰ Brown leaves the question unsolved and translates “lodgings” for [p. 215](#) *kataluma*.³¹ In short, Luke’s own meaning of “guest room” has long been recognized but not used in translations due to an inadequate understanding of the wider cultural background of the Palestinian village home with its mangers in the family room.

INFLUENCE OF THEOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS

This brings us to an important final question which is, how has the text been understood in the Middle East itself? Presumably the culture surrounding the text would be understood here in the Middle East and reflected in translation and commentary. What then do we find?

We have observed that Justin allows for time spent in the village and then insists that Joseph found nothing and resorted to a cave outside the village. The cave tradition we have accepted. But why the insistence by Justin and the *Protoevangelium of James* that the birth took place outside the village rather than in it as Luke simply states? After reading a number of Arabic and Syriac fathers on the question, one has the distinct feeling that there is an unspoken subjective pressure to understand the birth as having taken place without witness, because of the sacred nature of the “mother of God” giving birth to the “Son of God”. Even as the sacraments are consecrated in utter seclusion behind an altar screen,

²⁶ Dalmann, *Arbeit und Sitte*, plate n.31. His plate n.60 is a second example of the identical type of arrangement, only in this case the family room and the guest room are identical in size, indicating the importance of the guest in the village mind. Certainly every village home did not have a guest room. The home where the Holy Family stayed did, but it was full.

²⁷ J. H. Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. Eerdmans, c. 1930, 1963), p.329.

²⁸ Alfred Plummer, p.54.

²⁹ A. R. C. Leaney, *A Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Luke in Black’s New Testament Commentaries* (Second Edition; London: Adam and Charles Black, 1966), p.93.

³⁰ Frederick W. Danker, *Jesus and the New Age* (St. Louis: Clayton Publishing House, 1972), p.25:1. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1978), p.107.

³¹ R. E. Brown, p.400.

that the eyes even of the faithful might not look on the holy event, even so Middle Eastern Christology, Mariology and piety seem to combine to insist that the birth take place where no eye beholds the divine mystery. For this to be possible the story *must* take place *outside* the village in some secluded spot. Is it not possible to assume Justin's outside-the-village account coming from this kind of theological pressure? We can add to this the early allegorization of the text of the New Testament, where attention is focused on the mystical and allegorical meanings behind words and the exegete is not interested in the humanness of the incarnation in its Palestinian setting. A revealing retelling of Justin's account, combined with elaborate allegory, can be seen in the great twelfth century commentator of the Syriac church, ibn Salībi. He interprets [Luke 2:7b](#) by saying,

Spiritually interpreted, the wrapping with cloths and wraps signifies that the Christ bore our sins and that He was nailed to the Cross in order to cleanse the old man by His blood. Also the cloths and wraps are a sign of poverty and freedom from this world and its goods. He allowed Himself to [p. 216](#) be put down in a manger so that He could arise on behalf of the human race which is like beasts and animals in that it committed the crime of base rebellion. Thus Christ endured all of this to return us to Himself and to give us the power of life and the drink of the wine of joy.

It is said that the manger refers to the tomb because the master will die and be buried in a tomb that looks like a manger. Luke explains the placing of the Christ in a manger by saying that there was no place for Mary and Joseph in any of the lodging places or houses because of the many travelers from the house of David coming for the registration. So the two of them were obliged to go to a cave near Bethlehem which was a shelter for animals³² (my translation).

Here we enter an entirely different exegetical world. This venerable father's account is rich in the spirituality of his age and his tradition is well worth reading. It is of little help, however, in our attempt at recovering the original Palestinian intent of the material. The Arabic and Syriac versions, like Brown, have opted for neutral words, such as "lodgings," as their traditions focus on the allegories of the medieval period. What then does all of this mean for the faithful as we look forward to the recollection of the miracle of the incarnation?

We all face the enormous weight of church tradition which surrounds us with the "no room at the inn" mythology. If our conclusions are valid, thousands of good Christmas sermons, plays, film strips, films, poems, songs and books will have to be discarded. But is the traditional myth of a lonely birth in a stable a help or a hindrance to the reality the text proclaims? Surely a more authentic cultural understanding enhances the meaning of the story, rather than diminishing it. Jesus is rejected at His birth by Herod. But the Bethlehem shepherds welcomed Him with great joy, as do the common people in later years. The city of David was true to its own, and the village community provided for Him. He was born among them, in the natural setting of the birth of any village boy, surrounded by helping hands and encouraging women's voices. For centuries Palestinian peasants have all been born on the raised terraces of the one room family homes. The birth of Jesus was no different. His incarnation was authentic. His birth most likely took place in the natural place where every peasant is born—in a peasant home.

We can and should theologize on the glorious resurrected Christ who meets us in the Eucharist. But a proper understanding of the [p. 217](#) story of His birth forces us to not lose

³² Dīyunīsiyūs Ya'qūb ibn al-Salībī, *Kitāb al Durr al-Farīd fī Tafṣīr al-'Ahd al-Jadīd* (Cairo: n.p., 1914), Vol. II, p.44.

sight of the One who “took upon himself the form of a servant and was found in the likeness of man.” And, after all, it is still possible for us to sing,

Ox and ass before him bow,
For He is in the manger now,
Christ is born to save,
Christ is born to save.

Dr. Kenneth E. Bailey is Professor of New Testament, Director of the Institute for Middle Eastern New Testament Studies, Near East School of Theology, Beirut, Lebanon. p. 218

Parabolic Preaching in the Context of Islam

Martin Goldsmith

Published with permission

Why has the art of story telling remained an unexplored frontier in cross-cultural evangelism? The author demonstrates his answer from his own experience of relating the message to the medium in a particular cultural context.

(Editor)

The European mind is frequently accused of being unduly concentrated on conceptual thinking, whereas Middle Eastern cultures tend rather to a more pictorial approach. The Bible therefore generally stresses teaching through a more pictorial form, although the N.T. with the increasing influence of Gentile thought includes much of a more conceptual nature. God’s revelation of Himself in the O.T. is fundamentally through His acts in history which are then recorded in verbal form. The language of the prophets is graphic, full of imagery and vibrant with activity—it is in form and character poles apart from our traditional works of conceptual systematic theology. Ezekiel in particular uses under the guidance of God acted visual forms.

In the N.T. also the message of the Word is taught not only with direct verbal communication, but also through visual signs and miracles. The structure of John’s Gospel interweaves the visual sign and the preached word. The vital significance of the visual is further exemplified in the Book of Acts, which today’s scholars see not only as a book of history but also as a doctrinal teaching treatise.

JESUS THE PREACHER AND TEACHER

Jesus Himself taught both by his deeds and also by his words. However, it is important to note that his words were again not merely conceptual, but also conjured up visual imagery and were often in the form of stories and parables. In the context of Asian and Middle Eastern peoples we may need to follow the teaching pattern of Jesus in speaking through such pictorial language. In many Asian languages proverbs and stories form the basis of

communication. In English too we use such expressions as “out of the frying pan into the fire” without the need to explain in detail the significance of such a proverb. In Asian languages there is liable to be a far greater use of such expressions and we need to learn to teach, preach and express ourselves more in this way. [P. 219](#)

Jesus particularly used the parabolic form for some of his preaching. He actually states that this was in order that some might not understand! His parables allowed those with ears to understand, while those with closed minds failed to grasp what he was saying. Likewise his use of the expression “Son of Man” for himself was open to two interpretations. His followers could discern the deeper meaning in the context of Daniel, while his opponents might only see it in the context of Ezekiel where it is merely another way of saying “a man”.

The N.T. has in fact two different ways of preaching—the one is parabolic and open to differing interpretation; the other is clear and unequivocal. Where people are hungry spiritually and some are open to the Gospel of Christ we are to use clear preaching. Paul often prayed and asked for prayer that he might “make the Gospel clear as he ought to speak” ([Col. 4](#)). But where hearts are hardened against the Lord and his Gospel we are instructed not to cast our pearls before swine lest they trample our message under foot and also attack us personally. The need for such parabolic teaching is however not only to prevent the Gospel being blasphemed and ourselves being attacked, but also for the sake of our hearers. If they are unprepared for the reception of the saving message of Christ, they can only reject it. Rejection of Jesus and his Gospel is a hardening process—the more people are put into a position where they have to reject the Gospel, the more difficult it becomes for them to receive Christ later.

I would like to suggest that in hard Muslim areas we may be wise to use this parabolic approach to the preaching of the Gospel. It has at least three pragmatic advantages as well as being a biblical form of preaching.

a) Such preaching does not cause anger, opposition and rejection of the Lord. Even in the most fanatical Muslim society there will be no objection to our telling attractive stories which do not in any way refer to the name of Jesus Christ or to specific Christian doctrine, but which may nevertheless introduce people to the sort of questions which will lead to Christ. There is therefore no reason why such preaching should not be engaged in even in core Muslim lands where our traditional forms of preaching would be illegal and impossible.

b) Parabolic preaching suits traditional story-telling cultures. The Christian may thus gain for himself a reputation as a story-teller which will be quite popular. People will then travel considerable distances just to hear his stories and they will then repeat those stories far and near. In this way he may be able to permeate the whole society with [p. 220](#) a “*praeparatio evangelii*”.

c) Parabolic preaching is ideal for teaching fundamental religious ideas which are the foundation on which the Gospel is built—e.g: the nature and character of God, God’s basic desires for man, heart religion as distinct from mere externalism etc. It is impossible for a man to be truly converted to Christ without some basic idea of such fundamentals as God, sin, eternal life, etc. God patiently waited for many centuries before sending his Son to earth in order to lay a true foundation of basic religion in the life and thought of Israel—surely we too can be patient and willing to impart basic religious concepts before we present the full message of Jesus Christ, his death for sin and his resurrection unto new life?

I personally have used this approach and found it helpful. Let me now share two such stories which I have used often and particularly enjoy! I like to use biblical stories but I Islamicise them and do not say that they come from the Christian Bible.

THE WIDOW'S MITE

Two Muslim men went to pay their *zakat*. One was very rich and from his abundance he gave £10,000; the other was very poor, but was nevertheless keen to give something to God and therefore gave the last cent/pence which he still had in his purse. I like to describe the two men in considerable detail with plenty of humour and local colour—and Muslim men join in with gusto in response, for they recognise the rich man's description as apt for some of their particular local figures! Both proud wealth and abject poverty are fun to describe and lead to real rapport with one's audience. Having told the story I ask which gift God was pleased with. The standard answer is that God is no fool and surely prefers £10,000 to a mere one pence! Materialistic men love then to joke about the advantages of £10,000. My story telling has not in any way betrayed my own opinion as to the correct answer. But I then ask the men further: "Might not God be interested in the motive of the giver's heart rather than the sum of money involved? Does God actually need our money?" The hardhearted and materialistic hardly hear that question and merely leave us with lots of laughter about money and about the particular characters described in the story. Those with open hearts begin to examine themselves and see what their motives are in their religion and how much they actually love God. Some of these come back to the storyteller to ask what really lay behind the story; some will confess that they really don't love God much and their religious motives are poor. **P. 221** They may then ask for a solution to their need. This is actually a confession of sin in its full depth of meaning, whereas so much of our preaching merely touches sins, not sin. But we have come to this stage without any actual mention of Jesus or anything specific to the Christian faith—actually even Islam has its doctrine of the intention of the heart, so we are not in any way going against Islam.

THE PUBLICAN AND THE PHARISEE

Two men went up to the mosque to pray. One was a good Muslim who knew all the right actions for his ritual lustrations; his Arabic was perfect (I used to tell these stories in lands where Arabic was a foreign language!) and he was accomplished in the words and movements of the *salat*. He therefore went confidently to the centre of the mosque and prayed, but his mind wandered to think about the pretty girl next door! The men enjoy this and there are often many remarks about the various pretty girls in the vicinity—and also comments that some of the proud religious men of the area probably actually think about such things when they pray so piously! Much laughter and banter may ensue! The second man was a real sinner who had led a rather corrupt life (easily described!) and had not prayed for many years. He could not remember how to perform the lustrations and therefore just gave his face and hands a quick wash. He also could not remember in detail how to perform the *salat*, so he was shy to enter the mosque. On doing so however, he went diffidently behind a pillar, squatted down and began to pray in his own words: "O God, forgive me; I have made a complete mess of my life, but I long now to follow and serve you ..." Local people recognise the characters of both men as typical of the hearts of many around them and they make suitable comments! I then ask the biblical question as to which man's prayer God approved of.

In practice I find that unless Muslims have had considerable contact with Christian thought they tend to give the wrong answers to both these stories. Naturally God prefers thousands of dollars to one penny. And likewise God approves of prayers which are according to the pattern he has ordained through Mohammed. Again one suggests that it

would be of interest to ask whether God is actually more interested in the intention of the heart than in mere externalisms.

THE RESPONSE OF THE HEART

Audiences can be divided in reaction. Again some will be so busy laughing at the characters involved and comparing them with local [P. 222](#) folk that they do not get the point at all. Such people would have reacted violently however to “clear preaching”, for their hearts are hardened and unspiritual. At least with “parabolic preaching” you have spared them any hardening rejection of Christ and you have spared yourself the indignity and pain of being stoned! Such people have enjoyed your stories and will come again for further “entertainment” and one must trust that eventually God’s Spirit will open their hearts to become receptive to the Gospel. But others in the audience will begin to get the point and the Spirit will give them no peace as they wrestle with the issues—how can I pray with a clean heart? Does God approve of me and my doings? What are the intentions of my heart?

In strongly Muslim communities I always suggest to seekers with such vital questions that they look for the answers first in Islam. I tell them that as a Christian I know there are solutions in Jesus’s, but as Muslims they should look deeply at Islam first before they think more of Christianity. I usually suggest they ask the local imam/mullah for the answers, but I warn them not to be fobbed off with trite inadequate answers and then I give them the usual typical answers in Islam and show why they are not adequate! Personally I am convinced that Islam does not have adequate answers to the deep religious questions of the heart and I trust the Holy Spirit to go on convincing men of sin until they find the answer in Jesus Christ. But if converts to Christ have not examined Islam first, they are very liable to backslide under the intense pressures imposed on all Muslims who convert to the Christian faith. The worst possible testimony is an apostate who reverts to Islam—it is better that such a person should never have professed faith in Jesus Christ.

I believe that pictorial and parabolic methods can be used in every form of Christian communication from serious theological training through to basic evangelistic literature. In evangelism we westerners are sometimes too keen to give all the answers at once; we might do better to tell the sort of stories which provoke deep questions and then ask people to write in for more answers if they want. We are also sometimes too quick to abandon the form of stories, parables and pictorial language in favour of the more scientifically precise conceptual language. Can we therefore learn to teach theology in nonconceptual manner? Also in worship we may well find that the visual and pictorial, for example, the sacraments, baptism and the Lord’s Supper, will move the heart to love and worship more than forms based only on the conceptual word.

Martin Goldsmith teaches at the All Nations Christian College, near London, England. He was formerly a missionary in South-East Asia. [p. 223](#)

Lines to a Rickshaw Puller

Chandran D. S. Devanesen

I pass you every morning
on my way to the station.
The light is raw and the wind is keen.
All around you the city is stretching its limbs
and wiping the sleep from its eyes.
The raucous voice of the crow is everywhere.
But you hear nothing, you see nothing.
You lie curled up in your rickshaw
with sprawling limbs and inert body
like some tired animal.
Some mother must have cradled you
pressing you against the soft comfort
of her warm breasts.
But now you shape your body
to fit the wooden embrace
of the hard sides of your rickshaw
for its walls are your home, your rented home
Your intimacy with it is very great.
Your worldly possessions are in the box
under the seat with its torn fibre cushion
keeping company with your oil lamps,
the battered old *topee*
you wear on rainy days,
and a few *beedis*.
The shafts are worn smooth
by the contact of your forearms.
The rickshaw and you—
you belong together.
I have passed you by at other times—
when you were not asleep
and something of your life
has trailed after me.
I remember the laughter of your fellows
as you twitted the grain seller
who sits by the rickshaw stand
until the old hag exposed Her gums
in a toothless grin ...
I have watched you fight with your creditors [p. 224](#)
with the ferocity of a trapped beast
over pitiful sums, the price of a packet of fags.
I have heard you whine for a fare
when the day's earnings were poor.
I have seen you resentful and bitter
when you spat on the ground
and talked unconscious communism.
I pass you by like a hundred others
who also pass you by—
and the road may be the road

from Jerusalem to Jericho for all we know.
I would like to put my hand on your shoulder
and say to you, "Comrade,
there is One who died for us
and dying made us blood brothers."
But I am filled with the cowardice of the well-dressed—
for clothes are by no means flimsy
when it comes to erecting barriers
between man and man.
I am afraid you will wake with a start
and betray resentment in your eyes
as you see in me what I really am—
your well-dressed enemy.
And then you will acknowledge defeat
and put on your mask of patient stupidity.
You will jump up and dust the seat
and grin and point to it with a flourish of your hand.
You will want us to sell our brotherhood
for eight *annas*.

Day after day I pass you by,
you the man by the roadside
and I the priest and the Levite rolled in one,
passing you by.

Dr. Devanesen is Director for the Institute for Development Education, Madras, India. He was formerly Principal of Madras Christian College, Madras, and Vice Chancellor of North East Hill University, Shillong, Assam. p. 225

The Challenge of African Independent Churches

Andrew F. Walls

Reprinted from Occasional Bulletin, April 1979 with permission

"In the end the history of African Christianity will be a single story, in which the missionary period is only an episode". Is Professor Andrew Walls right in thinking that the distinction between the "older" and the "independent" churches will become meaningless?

Editor

We are just beginning to understand the complexity of African Christianity. Twenty years ago, while one could find missionaries and churchmen complaining of the activities of "sects", the African independent churches were not a subject of general interest. There was Bengt Sundkler's seminal study *Bantu Prophets in South Africa* (1948, revised 1961),

and there were one or two area studies (notably Efraim Andersson's *Messianic Movements on the Lower Congo*). Terminology was very loose, words like "messianic," "separatist," "millennial," "syncretistic," and "prophetic" being used with great abandon as though they were interchangeable; indeed it was a great merit of Sundkler's book that he distinguished what he called "Ethiopian" from "Zionist" movements. Ten years later the situation had changed. On the one hand, H. W. Turner's two volumes on the Church of the Lord (Aladura) (*History of an African Independent Church and African Independent Church*, 1967) had given us not only a full and sympathetic account of one of these movements, but in the process the fullest account yet published of the life and worship of *any* group of African Christians. Partly by his influence, and aided by an International Missionary Council study (V. E. W. Hayward, ed., *African Independent Church Movements*, 1963), vocabulary was being tightened up. The phrase "independent churches" was now being widely used for those new movements that were recognizably Christian, by contrast with "older churches" (i.e., those that had maintained their mission connection); and Sundkler's earlier distinction (which had been designed for South Africa only) between "Ethiopian" and "Zionist" movements was being sharpened and p. 226 made more widely applicable by the use of "prophet-healing" as a category. No longer could it be said that the subject was a minority interest: such floods of articles appeared that there was a real danger that the solid block of African Christianity that could not be comprehended within the "independent" category would be neglected. The significance of the movements as vehicles of national identity excited some students; their significance as a bridge with the old religion attracted others. Among observers with a "missiological" interest, there was a notable change of attitude (compare Marie-Louise Martin's hardline *Biblical Concept of Messianism and Messianism in Southern Africa* (1964) with her *Prophetic Christianity in the Congo* (1968), and later, her *Kimbangu* (1975); and D. B. Barrett attempted a continent-wide survey (*Schism and Renewal in Africa*, 1968) producing on the one hand tables of the variables that one might think could be used to predict the appearance of new movements scientifically, and on the other a religio-theological explanation of many of them in terms of (generally missionary) "failure of love."¹

NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS

We are now, I think, in a new situation, where we must consider, first, What is the place of these movements within the history of religion as a whole? and second, What is their place within African Christianity? In both considerations, Turner has been a pioneer. In a series of studies less noticed than his African contributions, he has shown that the new religious movements in Africa, of which the independent churches are a part, have their analogues elsewhere—in North and South America, in Oceania, some in Asia, even a few in Europe. He has produced a carefully circumscribed definition: "a historically new development arising in the inter-action between a tribal society and its religion and one of the higher cultures and its major religion, and involving some substantial departure from the classical religious traditions of both the cultures concerned, in order to find renewal by reworking the rejected traditions into a different p. 227 religious system" (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1975, "Tribal Religious Movements, New"). His Project for the

¹ "The root cause common to the entire movement of independency may therefore be seen in this single failure in sensitivity, the failure at one small point of the version of Christianity brought in by the missions to demonstrate the fulness of the biblical concept of love as sensitive understanding towards others as equals, together with the dawning African perception from the vernacular Scriptures of the catastrophic nature of this failure" (D. B. Barrett, *Schism and Renewal in Africa*—London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1968—pp. 269f.).

Study of New Religious Movements in Primal Societies, within the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Aberdeen, has identified and documented thousands of such movements.

The worldwide nature of the phenomenon of new religious movements in primal societies should not, however, blind us to the fact that the distinction between the independent churches—which represent some of the many forms of new religious movements—and other forms of African Christianity can be exaggerated. It is worth considering Turner's definition again. "A historically new development arising in the inter-action between a tribal society and its religion" on the one hand, and an invader culture and its religion on the other, involving a substantial departure from both and a reworking of rejected traditions into something new—something like this is bound to happen whenever the Christian faith is effectively planted across a cultural frontier. Where it is thoroughly at home, where it has repaired the rent fabric of a shattered pattern of community life, where it is not simply an undigested "foreign body," African Christianity is likely to be a "new religious movement," reworking the old and the new. If this is true, the distinction between "independent" and "older" churches may be of decreasing value. We may also suspect that, when viewed as an aspect of Church history, the "historically new" movements are not "qualitatively new" but are new manifestations of "old religious movements" identifiable elsewhere in the Christian story.

It is perhaps necessary once again to indicate that "new religious movements" is a term much wider than "independent churches." Some of the movements are essentially renewal or adjustment movements within the old religion; one or two (even some called "churches") are abstractions from a romanticized tradition, patronized by intellectuals, attempts at a reformulated "intellectual" traditional religion; a good number are what Turner calls "Hebraist," making a clear and conscious break with vital aspects of the old religion, but without Christ holding any such place in their scheme as to enable them to be regarded as clearly Christian manifestations; a few (like Bayudaya of Uganda, who moved from mission Christianity via a "Hebraist" movement to a recognizable form of Judaism) represent developments into other major religions. Indeed it is vital to remember that motion is of the essence of movements; countless histories illustrate how new movements develop, sometimes toward a classical type of Christian affirmation, sometimes away from it. [p. 228](#)

FROM PARA CHURCH TO CHURCH

We are concerned here only with those movements that are churches—organized expressions of Christian faith or practice—whether or not they originated as such. Along with these it is sensible to group the "para-churches," movements that do not claim to be churches but have the feature of churches. Many important independent churches began in this fashion: not with a conscious desire to set up a new church, but with a society or movement within the old one. The Aladura churches of Western Nigeria spring from the Precious Stone Society—within the Anglican church until the church authorities took action on account of the members' views of infant baptism. On the other hand, the Martha Davies Confidential and Benevolent Association of Sierra Leone has remained throughout its substantial history, and despite its possession of a separate building, a supplement to the life of Freetown churches rather than a substitute for them. The *Kereke ea Mosheshoe* of Lesotho perhaps represents a transitional phase, a (well-established) movement in process of becoming a separate church; while the complex history of Kimbanguism in Zaire reflects one large church, the Eglise de Jésus-Christ sur la terre par la Prophète Simon Kimbangu (EJCSK), emerging, with some smaller ones, from the much more diverse

Ngunzist movement, and effectively claiming legitimacy as the sole lawful legatee. It would not be hard, of course, to find parallels for each of these situations in Western Christian history: the history of Methodism and of the Salvation Army—each of which in its time was abused by churchmen as roundly as any African independent church has been—spring readily to mind.

CONFUSING TERMINOLOGY

Even accepted terminology, which has been so helpful in sorting out past muddles and making clear distinctions, is now facing new strains.

First, what is an “independent” church? Nowadays most African churches are independent in the sense that their leadership is African, their ministry overwhelmingly African, and missionary direction minimal. Except, perhaps, in countries with white settlement, there seems therefore no longer any obvious reason for “Ethiopian” secessions: virtually all African churches are now “Ethiopian.” It has long been the case that life in the so-called “African” churches of Yorubaland (United Native African Church, Native Baptist Church, etc.) is virtually indistinguishable from that of the “mainline churches from p. 229 which they sprang: they are “new religious movements” only in a historical and no longer in a qualitative sense at all. (The end of the Ethiopian motive does not, of course, imply the end of schism, or even of ethnically or communally based schism—but that is another question.)

Second, the term “independent” must not obscure the fact that many (not all) “independent” churches consciously maintained a missionary legacy; they are often “mission-derived” churches as fully as the “older” churches. Some even claim fidelity to a particular form of missionary tradition as their *raison d’être*.

Again, with the passage of time, we now have independent churches with a substantial history. Many “independent” churches, with roots in the prodigious religious development of 1916–1930, are now in fact older than many “older” churches, some of which have achieved real independence of missionary control only in the last few years.

CHANGING CONDITIONS

Present conditions help further to reduce the qualitative gap between “older” and “independent” churches.

The period when anyone desired complete assimilation to western cultural norms is now well past. One effect of this is to enhance the appeal of the independents, or of what they stand for, to *évolués* and intellectuals who in former times would have been embarrassed by any association with “primitivism.” Partly for this reason, partly through a “routinization of charisma” in many older independent churches, the constituency of the independents is changing; some are institutionalizing, and developing along the well-known lines of the older churches.

Further, the search for African identity, and the question of continuity of the African Christian present with the traditional African past raised by that search, are exercising younger leaders of the “older” churches. Some are evincing sympathy and respect for the independents as better reflecting or maintaining that continuity than some churches of the main line.

RÔLE OF SACRAMENT AND WORD

But the most cogent factor working toward the reduction of the differences between “independent” and “older” churches is the presence in both of Word and sacrament within the same general cultural contexts. **P. 230**

The sacrament, indeed, has not been a prominent feature of many African independent churches; but it is also true that it is not prominent in African Christianity as a whole. This results from the fact that the mission churches, Catholic and Protestant, have insisted on the practice of their countries of origin, that only a priest or minister is permitted to officiate at the sacrament: and there have never been enough of these to make sacramental worship more than a periodic experience for most African Christians. In some areas a further feature has been that church discipline in conflict with local marriage custom restricts the Communion in practice to a minority,² often an older minority, of the congregation. It is not surprising if the independents have often taken the sacrament—and the creeds—as something that is part of being a church, part of tradition, but not as something near the heart of religious life. The EJCSK in effect kept the Communion service in cold storage for years: and then installed it, with great solemnity and an indigenization of the elements. But the communal meal, long prominent in African societies, has blossomed independently of the Eucharist. For instance, South African Zionists will break the Lenten fast with joy and gusto on Easter morning: but without the bread and wine or the words of institution. The Eucharist came to Africa without emphasis on its aspect as a communal meal, and the Christian communal meal has gone on, in older and independent churches alike, developing without the Eucharist.

The Word, however, has been central to African Christian experience. The independents have been marked above all by a radical biblicism—daring Christians in effect to live by what the Bible says. The Word is even visibly present when the charismatic person speaks, led by the free Spirit. Its visible presence is exalted even among groups who can barely read it; and more than one notable spiritual man has been anxious to demonstrate that, although illiterate, he can quote the Bible accurately and appositely. In some ways, the radical biblicists among the independents may be compared to the Anabaptists in Western Church history: the same wild variety, the same strong cohesion as “people of God,” the same insistence on following the Word as they hear it. **p. 231**

This concern for the Word has perhaps been the main “catholicizing” factor for the independents, giving them a point of reference (and thus a potential source of change) and a recognizable common ground with the other churches. African Christianity has been from the beginning book-religion. The most effective bridge-building between independents and others has probably been in the area of shared Bible teaching—and is it coincidental that Mennonites, successors of the Anabaptists, have been so prominent in this? At this point, at any rate, the independents have simply heightened a feature which is common to most forms of African Christianity.

SOME CONVERGING DISTINCTIONS

Where, then, are the differentia between independents and older churches? Many external features of the independents come to mind when someone is asked to

² Cf. J. V. Taylor’s words about one Anglican area: “The rubric in the Prayer Book concerning the exclusion of the ‘open and notorious evil liver’ is applied to 87 per cent of married men in the church, and about 80 per cent of married women, and this quite irrespectively of the fact that in almost all peoples the congregation is not the least ‘offended’ by what they have done.” (*The Growth of the Church in Buganda*—London: SCM, 1958—p. 244).

characterize them. We take here an arbitrary selection of them, and ask how far these are characteristic of African Christianity in general.

Other sources of revelation: A prominent feature of the independents has been the use of vehicles of revelation other than Scripture. Indeed, part of their appeal has been the accessibility of a direct personal “Word of God” to the enquirer. The background of this can be sought in two factors: the use of mediumistic trance in indigenous culture, and the presence of prophecy and revelation among the gifts of the New Testament.

A study of the “revelations” given in some churches, however, suggests that they are less integral to the life of the church than might be supposed. Most have a formal, stereotyped character, even though uttered in ecstasy or received after rolling in the sand or some other technique for heightening the consciousness (and after all, did not the Old Testament prophets sometimes also employ techniques for the purpose? Cf. [2 Kings 3:15](#)).

Dispute over the sources of revelation has been a regular feature of Christian history: and often enough the gap in practice between the “literals” and the “spirituals” was narrower than one would guess from the vituperation on the topic. In the early fourth century A.D. Phrygia (another culture where spirit mediumship was entrenched) developed, in Montanism, an indigenous form of Christianity. The orthodox fulminated against Montanus and his prophetesses. But they had reluctantly to admit that they used the same Scriptures as themselves. And when we try to find out what was done as a result of [p. 232](#) the New Prophecy nothing more dramatic is alleged against the Montanists than the institution of some supernumerary fasts.

As for dreams, certainly they are prominent in any profile of independency, and their interpretation is much sought after in African societies from any proficient person. But as Bishop Sundkler has illustrated,³ dreams are important in the mainline churches too; countless of their priests or ministers first recognized their vocation in a dream in which they saw themselves robed, at altar or pulpit according to their tradition. And the independents point those who demur at these direct forms of revelation to the stories of Joseph or Daniel or other biblical examples.

Marriage: It is commonly said that the members of independent churches are fugitives from older churches with stricter discipline on marital matters, but it is hard to prove this. In fact, some independents, notably the EJCSK, preach monogamy as rigorously as anyone, and there must be few who consciously encourage polygamy. It is simply that the subject is not high on the agenda; they accept the facts of African married life as they are. Childlessness and its causes will rank higher in the minds of most couples. Now the older churches themselves are reappraising their own discipline amid changing economic circumstances. It is unlikely that the marriage question will long be an unbridgeable gulf between churches.

Healing: In traditional Africa, healing was usually performed in a religious context; the time and manner in which medical missions developed prevented (in most areas) a smooth transition from the old religion of healing to the new. It was the independents who made the logical connection; If the Christian was to trust Christ and not entreat the old Powers, should he not trust Christ for all the things for which he once entreated the Powers? But there is again nothing here that is incompatible with the life of the older Churches. What the independents have done time and again is to challenge the half-Christian who goes to church respectably, but then in secret, and with guilty feelings, goes off to the diviner to seek the cause of sickness and the way of healing. The earthiness of African life demands that African salvation shall be as solidly material as biblical salvation.

³ B. G. M. Sundkler, *The Christian Ministry in Africa* (London: SCM 1960), pp.25–31.

Examination of a whole range of other features of independents might be revealing, if followed by search of the same features in other forms of African church life. The sacredness held to attach to certain places and objects is strange—until one remembers that the same strictness of observance may attach to, say, many an Anglican sanctuary p. 233 in Africa, where no lay person, above all no woman, may sit beyond those rails. The prescriptions laid down by independents often seem a strange mixture of African tradition and Levitical law (and indeed very often it is African tradition reasserted on the basis of the Levitical law). But in how many African Anglican or Methodist or Presbyterian churches are women simply quietly absent from Communion during the menstrual period, or do men in effect observe the rules of ritual purity laid down in the Old Testament?

One of the remarkable features of the independent churches for a westerner is their combination of the ritual and hierarchical with the charismatic and spontaneous. The West knows both types of religion, but—at least until recently—identifies them with different traditions: the independents combine them in the same tradition. But both features are part of African life. African life is ordered, has a sense of the appropriate time, place, and person; but it is also spontaneous, improvisatory, responsive. What is both more ordered and more spontaneous than the dances of Africa?

In the end, the history of African Christianity will be a single story, in which the missionary period is only an episode. The judgment of the churches of Africa will not be whether one can denominate them “older” or “independent”—that distinction, I believe, will in time, and perhaps soon, become meaningless. Their judgment, like that of all the churches, will be by the Lord of the Church on the basis of his Word.

SOME IMPORTANT BOOKS

Barrett, D. B. *Schism and Renewal in Africa. An analysis of Six Thousand Contemporary Movements*, London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1968.

Ed. *African Initiations in Religion*. Nairobi: East African Publishing House 1971. (Note especially section 3, on renewal movements and independent churches.)

Daneel, M. L. *Old and New in Southern Shona Independent Churches*. 2 vols. The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1971–1974.

Haliburton, G. M. *The Prophet Harris. A Study of An African Prophet and His Mass Movement in the Ivory Coast and the Gold Coast, 1913–1915*. London: Longmans, 1971; New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1973.

Martin, Marie-Louise, *Kimbangu. An African Prophet and His Church*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1975; Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1976.

Oosterwal, G. *Modern Messianic Movements as a Theological and Missionary Challenge*, Elkhart, Ind.: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1973.

Peel, J. D. Y. *Aladura. A Religious Movement among the Yoruba*. London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1968. p. 234

Sundkler, B. G.M. *Bantu Prophets in South Africa*. 2nd edn., London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1961.

Zulu Zion, and Some Swazi Zionists. London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1976.

Turner, H. W. *African Independent Church. The Life and Faith of the Church of the Lord (Aladura)*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967.

History of an African Independent Church. The Church of the Lord (Aladura), Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967.

“Tribal Religious Movements, New,” in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th edn., 1975.

Webster, J. B. *The African Churches among the Yoruba, 1888–1922*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964. (“Ethiopian” type churches in Nigeria.)
Welbourn, F. B. and Ogot, B. A. *A Place to Feel at Home, A Study of Two Independent Churches in Western Kenya*. London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1966.

Andrew F. Walls is Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Aberdeen, Scotland.

The attention of readers is drawn to an excellent survey article of the literature on primal societies in Africa, “The Study of New Religious Movements in Africa, 1968–1975” by Dr. Harold W. Turner in *Religion Journal of Religion and Religions*, Vol 6, Spring 1976. Dr. Turner is also of the Department of Religious Studies, University of Aberdeen. [p. 235](#)

The CLADE II Letter

To the Evangelicals of Latin America

Beloved Brothers in Christ:

May the grace and peace of the triune God be with each one.

Ten years after the celebration in Bogotá, Colombia, of the First Latin American Congress on Evangelization, 266 participants coming from different sectors of the evangelical church in Latin America gathered in Huampani, Perú, from October 31 to November 8, 1979. Our purpose has been to consider together the task of evangelization that we are called to fulfill in the coming decades in our historical context.

We came to reflect on our mission, in subjection to the supreme authority of the Sacred Scriptures, the sovereign direction of the Holy Spirit, and the lordship of Jesus Christ, in an atmosphere of fraternal love. In this spirit we reaffirm our adhesion to the Declaration of the First Latin American Congress on Evangelization and the Lausanne Covenant of the International Congress on World Evangelization celebrated in Lausanne, Switzerland, July, 1974.

We are profoundly thankful to God for our evangelical heritage and for the endeavour and sacrifice of the pioneers, both national and foreign. We have determined to renew our pledge of loyalty to the Gospel and of faithfulness to the task of evangelization in the context of the Latin American people. At the same time we are moved to respond to the missionary challenge which on a worldwide scope represents the millions of people who do not know Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

We have heard the Word of God who speaks to us and who also hears the cry of those who suffer. We have lifted our eyes to our continent and contemplated the drama and tragedy in which our people live in this hour of spiritual unrest, religious confusion, moral corruption, and social and political convulsion. We have heard the cry of those who hunger and thirst for justice, of those who are destitute of that which is essential for their subsistence, of marginated ethnic groups, of destroyed families, of women stripped of their rights, of the youth given to vice or pushed to violence, of children who suffer hunger,

abandonment, ignorance and exploitation. On the other hand, we have seen many Latin Americans giving themselves to the idolatry of materialism, subjecting the values of the spirit to those p. 236 imposed by the consumer society, according to which the human being is valued not for what he is in himself, but rather for the abundance of goods he possesses. There are also those who, in their legitimate desire to regain the right to life and liberty, or to maintain the present order, follow ideologies which offer only a partial analysis of the Latin American reality and lead to diverse forms of totalitarianism and the violation of human rights. At the same time vast sectors are enslaved by satanic powers manifested in various forms of occultism and religiosity.

It is a dismal scene which the Latin American reality offers us. In the light of the Word of God we see it as an expression of sin, which radically affects man's relation to God, to his neighbour and to creation. In everything which stands in opposition to the Lordship of Jesus Christ we perceive the spirit of Antichrist which is already active in the world.

We praise the Lord, nevertheless, because in the midst of this situation the Spirit of God is manifesting himself powerfully. We are encouraged by the testimony we have shared in CLADE II of the marvellous work God is performing in our respective countries. Thousands have given their lives to Jesus Christ as Lord, finding liberation in Him, and becoming members of local churches. Many churches have been renewed in their life and mission. The people of God are growing in their understanding of the meaning of radical discipleship in a world of constant and sudden changes.

All of this is fruit of the Gospel which is the message of salvation, and hope in Jesus Christ to whom all things are in subjection. Encouraged by this hope, we have determined to intensify our evangelistic action. In addition we dedicate ourselves with renewed earnestness to the study of the Word of God, to listen with humility and a spirit of obedience to what He has to say in this critical hour of our history.

We confess that as the People of God, we have not always paid attention to the demands of the Gospel we preach, as is demonstrated by our lack of unity and our indifference to the material and spiritual needs of our neighbours.

We recognize that we have not done all that, with the help of the Lord, we might have accomplished in benefit of our people. But we purpose to depend on the transforming power of the Holy Spirit for the complete fulfilment of the task which awaits us. We believe that in the coming decade the Lord can singularly bless our nations, integrally save multitudes of our people, consolidate or restore our families and raise up a great community of faith which will be a preview, in word and deed, of the Kingdom in its final manifestation. p. 237

As a contribution to this our task, we present the "Strategy Document" prepared by all the participants of this Congress. We recommend its use in keeping with each situation.

In the love of Christ we urge our brothers in the faith to echo these longings and to join ranks in dedicating ourselves to the mission of God, inspired by the hope of the risen and triumphant Lord, whose coming we await.

Yearning for God to fulfill His purpose in the world, in His church, and in our lives, and for the nations of Latin America to hear His voice, we commend each one to His grace and extend a fraternal greeting.

Second Latin American Congress on Evangelization
(CLADE II)

Congreso Latinoamericano de Evangelización (CLADE II) was sponsored by the Latin American Theological Fraternity. The Director was Prof. Samuel Escobar and the Coordinator Rev. Pedro Savage. [p. 238](#)

Heirs of the Reformation

Emilio Antonio Núñez

Published with permission

In the providence of God, we are beginning our Second Latin American Congress on Evangelization on the day dedicated to commemorate the sixteenth-century religious Reformation. There is no doubt that October 31, 1517, is a date of transcendental importance in world history.

It is true that not all the groups that make up the Evangelical Church in Latin America show the same enthusiasm for the celebration of this anniversary. It would seem that we Evangelicals prefer to underline the fact that our historical roots go deep into God's written revelation, especially in the pages of the New Testament. Nevertheless, we are conscious that the Reformation came about in order to emphasize biblical truths that, in general, lie at the very foundation of our evangelistic message. In one way or another, all we Evangelical Christians are heirs of the Reformation. It would be helpful, therefore, to continue studying in our respective church groups the essence of our heritage.

The Reformation was a movement with profound cultural, social and political repercussions. In this Congress, however, our concern is to emphasize the theological foundations of the Reformation, and especially the soteriology of the Reformers. To fulfill our purpose, we will refer to the four great affirmations of the Reformation—Grace alone, Christ alone, Faith alone, Scripture alone. Without studying in depth the significance of these affirmations for the Reformers, we will simply take them as the starting point of our meditation, attempting to apply them to the Latin American situation.

GRACE ALONE

The Reformers taught that the sinner is justified by the grace of God alone, through faith in Jesus Christ. In this case, grace is that divine favour that man does not deserve, but that God in his sovereignty and goodness has wanted to bestow. Salvation is the work of God, not of man. Paul says, "*For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God—not because of works, lest any man should boast*" ([Eph. 2:8, 9](#)). "*But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace*" ([Rom. 11:6](#)).

Man is not able to give, but God makes him able to receive. Man holds out an empty hand in order to receive, not a full hand in order [p. 239](#) to give. He has nothing that he can give to pay for his salvation. Nor can he co-operate with the divine grace in order to save himself. He is dead in his trespasses and sins ([Eph. 2:1–3](#)). The only thing he can do is to receive God's favour.

The idea of *grace alone* deals a hard blow to man's pride. There is no room here for self-sufficiency, nor for the arrogance that attempts to save oneself and others through endeavours that appear noble or heroic in the eyes of society in general. The idea that man is good by nature and that he can liberate himself and raise himself to heaven by his own boot-straps crumbles in the face of the revelation of the doctrine of God's grace alone, a doctrine that brings us face to face with our own spiritual and moral bankruptcy.

The social sciences speak of *homo sapiens*, of the economic, political and social man, of the man who works and who has created a marvellous civilization by the work of his own hands. The Bible tells us that man is a sinner, in need of God's grace for his complete liberation. He is a sinner by inheritance, a sinner by nature, a sinner in thought, word and deed; a sinner as an individual, sinner as a social entity, creator of corrupt and perverse structures, placed at the service of the demonic forces that operate in this universe. Society is sick because individuals are sick, with a mortal illness. This is the sombre and depressing picture that we must keep in mind in order to grasp fully the significance of the grace of God and to preach the Gospel faithfully.

On the other hand, let us remember that grace also reveals the immense value of man in God's eyes. In the light of Scripture it is possible to speak both of the misery and of the greatness of man. Biblical anthropology does not allow itself to be influenced by the empty optimism of the humanists, nor to be seduced by the funeral dirge of the pessimists. It is a realistic anthropology. Man has his origin in God and bears the image of his Creator, although affected by sin. This gives him a special dignity. He possesses faculties that raise him far above other creatures in the world and enable him to exercise dominion over nature. He is, above all, the special object of God's incomparable love ([John 3:16](#)). He has fallen deep into sin, but, as Paul affirms, "*Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more*" ([Rom. 5:20](#)).

God is always "*the God of all grace*" ([1 Peter 5:10](#)). He manifested his grace in Old Testament times especially through his covenants ([Deut. 7:12](#); [Jer. 31:3](#), etc.). Salvation always has been, is, and will be by grace: but this grace comes in all its fullness in the person of Jesus Christ ([John 1:17](#)). Christ is God's inexpressible gift to the world ([p. 240](#) [2 Cor. 9:15](#)). Man can be saved in Christ, but not apart from Christ. Thus we come to another distinctive theme of the religious Reformation of the sixteenth century.

CHRIST ALONE

The Reformers' message was Christological and Christocentric. Ours should be likewise. Jesus said, "*I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me*" ([John 14:6](#)). And according to the Apostle Peter, "*... there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved*" ([Acts 4:12](#)).

It is incumbent upon us to listen again to these declarations that are so radically opposed to every attempt at syncretism or universalism. Whether we like it or not, the New Testament Gospel is inclusive and exclusive. It includes all those who accept Jesus Christ as the only mediator between God and man; it excludes all those who reject the grace of God. We have no right to include what God has not included, nor to exclude what God has not excluded. *Christ alone saves.*

But, which Christ? We definitely are not speaking here of the Christ of man-made dogmas, nor of the Christ of ancient or modern statuary, nor of the Christ of Latin American folklore, nor of the Jesus Christ super-star of the wealthy societies of the North Atlantic, nor of the Christ of the powerful economic and social interests on our continent, nor of the Christ of the modern ideologies; we are speaking of the Christ who is revealed

in Scripture, the Christ rediscovered by many pious souls in the darkest days of the Middle Ages and in the brightest times of the Protestant Reformation, the Christ who has found us and whom, by the grace of God, thousands and millions of us Latin Americans have found.

Christ our God! He is the eternal Logos, a member of the trinitarian council, eternally associated with the Father and with the Spirit; Creator and Sustainer of heaven and earth; Lord of life and history; King, now and forever; Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, whose origin is from old, from ancient days; Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the one who is and who was and who is to come, the all-powerful Lord.

The historic Christ! Revealed in time and space, at a precise date in God's calendar, in the course of human history, in the context of a certain geographical location, a certain people, a certain culture, a certain society. [p. 241](#)

The human Christ! Conceived by the Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, sharing the life of flesh and blood, "made man", completely identified with mankind. Christ the total man, the man for others, who lives among man "full of grace and truth" ([John 1:14](#)).

The poor Christ! Born in a stable, residing in a village, known as "the carpenter", son of a carpenter. The proletarian Christ, the one with the hands calloused by hard work, the one with his forehead sweaty with the day's labour! He was born, he lived and died in abject poverty, like the other poor of his people. Nevertheless, he never capitalized on the social resentment of his contemporaries to deepen the gulf between man and man, between class and class, or between nation and nation. He never asked his followers to raise the flag of hate and vengeance. Instead he spoke of forgiveness and of brotherhood. He gave himself up in sacrifice to abolish in his cross the enmities and to break down the dividing wall that separated one human being from another. Furthermore, his presence is inevitably a sign of contradiction for those who oppress the poor and turn their backs on human misery.

Christ the prophet! Herald of God the Father, interpreter of the Deity, revealer of the divine will for his people and for all humanity! His word, aflame with fire from heaven, is the consolation and the hope of those who are humble in heart, and the warning of unavoidable judgment for those who work iniquity.

Christ the Lamb of God! He who takes away the sin of the world; the one who makes the ultimate self-sacrifice on Calvary for our redemption; the one whose precious blood cleanses us from all sin.

Christ the living one! Through his death he destroys the one who held the power of death, and triumphs over the grave on the glorious day of his resurrection.

Christ the priest! The one who is seated on the right hand of the Majesty on high and "is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them" ([Heb. 7:25](#)).

Christ the coming King! The Glorifier of his Church. The Judge of the living and the dead "by his appearing and his kingdom" ([2 Tim. 4:1](#)). The Messiah awaited for the blessing of all nations. The King of kings and the Lord of lords. Christ, the one who affects total renovation.

Who are those who are saved by the Christ thus revealed in the Scripture? The answer to this great question leads us to another affirmation of the Reformation—the sinner is saved through faith in Jesus Christ alone. [p. 242](#)

FAITH ALONE

Saint Paul affirms *“But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law ... the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe”* ([Rom. 3:21–22](#)). Faith is reckoned for righteousness to the sinner who trusts in Jesus Christ ([Rom. 4:5](#)) and God declares him righteous, giving him peace ([Rom. 5:1](#)). Martin Luther’s great discovery in the Scriptures was that *“the just shall live by faith”* ([Rom. 1:17](#)). This Biblical truth came to be the battle cry of the Reformation.

Someone has said that faith is the hand that receives the gift of God in Jesus Christ. Indeed, for St. John the Evangelist, to receive Christ seems to be the equivalent to believing in Him ([John 1:12](#)). Through faith we make ours the benefits given by the crucified and risen Christ. It is in these benefits that our eternal assurance of salvation rests.

But the faith through which we are justified is not blind, nor is it mere credulity. Jesus declares *“And this is eternal life, that they know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent”* ([John 17:3](#)). And the Apostle Peter says to his Master, *“And we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God”* ([John 6:69](#)). Believing and knowing go hand in hand when it comes to salvation. *“But how are men to call upon him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher?”* ([Rom. 10:14](#)).

Faith is never a simple agreement with revealed truth. It is much more than a mere intellectual exercise. To have faith is *to trust*, to cast oneself completely into the arms of Jesus Christ, recognizing the enormity of our guilt and our complete inability to free ourselves from sin by our own resources. It is to admit that human merits are useless to procure justification; it is to lay hold of the infinite value of the person and the work of the Son of God. To have faith in Jesus Christ is to allow oneself to be saved by Him.

Faith also implies obedience. In Acts we read that *“a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith”* ([6:7](#)). Paul, for his part, points out that not all those who hear the Gospel obey it ([Rom. 10:16](#)), and that the Lord will return to give the deserved payment to the disobedient ([2 Thess. 1:8](#)). When a man believes that the Gospel is the truth, he is under the obligation to obey it.

Furthermore, the person who believes what the Scripture says in regard to the punishment for sin and the pardon offered in Jesus ^{p. 243} Christ repents and is converted to God. The Lord Jesus called the men of his day to repent ([Mt. 3:2](#)) and instructed his disciples to announce repentance and forgiveness of sins to all nations ([Luke 24:47](#)). In obedience to the master’s command, Jews and Gentiles have been called to repent, believing in the Gospel ([Acts 2:38; 17:30–31](#)). Repentance is an internal change that is manifested in some way in the conduct of the believer in Christ. John the Baptist spoke of *“fruits that befit repentance”* and pointed out concrete changes that should take place in the lives of those who accept the message of the Kingdom ([Luke 3:8–20](#)). It is God who grants *“repentance unto life”* ([Acts 11:18](#)). The repentant sinner returns or is converted to God ([Acts 3:19; 26:20](#)).

According to Reformation doctrine, the sinner is justified by faith alone, but the faith that justifies does not remain alone. It is not a sterile faith, and much less a dead faith. James’ teaching ([2:14–26](#)) is in complete accordance with that of Paul, who affirms that we are not saved *by* good works, but that we are saved *for* good works which God has prepared for us ([Eph. 2:8–10](#)). These good works are the fruit of salvation, not the cause. They are not simply works that are liturgical in nature; they are closely related to our personal, family, and social life. The person who has been justified by having believed in Jesus continues demonstrating his faith, not only in words, but also in actions that glorify God and benefit his neighbour and society.

To believe in Jesus Christ means, as well, to make a serious commitment to Him, to his Church and to society. We do not accept Jesus Christ in order to avoid our moral

responsibilities and to live as we please, once we have obtained an insurance policy for all eternity. There are serious ethical demands inherent in the Gospel.

The Lord Jesus was careful to warn people about the difficulties along the way that he proposed. He did not hesitate to spell out the demands of discipleship ([Mt. 10:34–39](#); cf. [Mark 8:34–38](#)). No one could complain that he had deceived him with an offer of “cheap grace”. His main concern was for the quality, not the quantity, of his followers.

When Jesus was in Jerusalem, at the Passover feast, many believed on his name, having seen the signs that he did; “*but Jesus did not trust himself to them, because he knew all men ...*” ([John 2:23–24](#)). He was very cautious about keeping the statistics on those who were converted. His miracles captivated the people, but Jesus did not take advantage of his extraordinary powers to attract people who were not truly willing to follow him. When many of his disciples left him, [p. 244](#) offended at his teaching, he did not beg them to return. He asked the Twelve, “*Will you also go away?*” Faith had triumphed in them. They decided to remain ([John 6:60–69](#)).

We need much wisdom from above in order to present to the people of Latin America the ethical demands of the Gospel on the lives of those who profess to believe it, without twisting the biblical concept of salvation. We will find the necessary equilibrium in our proclamation in God’s written revelation and in the ministry of his Spirit.

Salvation is by *grace alone, in Christ alone, through faith alone*—a faith that does not remain alone. On what do we base this conviction? On nothing less than the Word of God, which we have cited many times in this message. This brings us to another of the great affirmations of the Reformation: the supreme authority of Holy Scripture.

SCRIPTURE ALONE

It may be stated that it was basically on this declaration that the Reformers and the official church of their day came to a parting of the ways. The leaders of the Reformation accepted the supreme authority of the Scripture, not only in regard to the doctrine of justification by faith. They determined to submit their faith and their life to the final authority of the biblical canon, and to no other authority, whether that of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, that of natural reason, or that of the impulses of the heart. They accepted and proclaimed the Scriptures as their objective, final authority.

On making this transcendental decision, the Reformers were simply continuing a long tradition that comes from Old Testament times and the days of Christ and his apostles. The Old Testament prophets appealed to the written law as their final authority. Christ authenticated his ministry before the people by appealing to the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms ([Luke 24:44](#)). His apostles also supported their message with the authority of the Old Testament. The primitive church accepted both Testaments and thus had a more extensive canon to which to appeal as the basis of their decisions of faith and practice. The Reformers made the “*thus says the Lord*” and “*it is written*” resound powerfully throughout Western Christianity.

Throughout the centuries the principle of *Scripture alone* has been threatened and challenged by natural reason, by pietistic sentimentalism, by ecclesiastical pressures (both Catholic and Protestant), and by the presumption of leaders who consider themselves authorized [p. 245](#) to impose their private system of interpretation on the people of God.

In this critical hour in which we as Evangelical Christians have been called to live and take on serious responsibilities, we must frequently ask ourselves exactly what is our supreme authority in faith and practice, in the face of the intricate problems presented by our people, in the light of the new solutions we hear proposed in theological circles and

in the socio-political field. We must decide, as well, where the final authority lies, in the face of our own tendency to look exclusively to the past, or to live in the future, in some future eschatological time, ignoring the present moment, in order to preserve outworn traditions, interpretations, and practices that are our own additions to the sacred text and not the Word of God itself. We must remember that the Reformed church must constantly be reformed, in the light of the written revelation of God, under the power of the Holy Spirit.

If we have decided to accept the supreme authority of Scripture—recognizing that it is totally inspired by God and infallible—it behooves us to use the best available text and to interpret it according to accepted rules of biblical exegesis, in order to arrive at our theological conclusions. This implies making an effort to derive from the text the significance that the sacred writers wanted to communicate within a certain cultural context. Then we will make every possible effort to apply this meaning to our own lives and to the Latin American situation, asking the Text what it has to say to us in our particular socio-cultural context. We will also bring to the Text the questions raised by our contemporaries, allowing the Word itself to answer these questions, without trying to force the text to say things that will put a sugar-coating on the answer we give, or to support our own theological peculiarities. Dr. Cecilio Arrastía has said very accurately that “*we must not make a coup d’etat to the Text*”. The Reformers advocated the free examination of the Scriptures, but not free interpretation. The universal priesthood of believers—another of the great doctrines exalted by the Reformation—does not authorize anyone to twist and distort the biblical text.

In order to achieve the contextualization that does justice to the Text and at the same time answers adequately the questions raised by Latin Americans, two factors are indispensable—serious exegetical study of the Text itself, and a thorough knowledge of our socio-cultural context. But above all we must re-affirm our confidence in the integrity and efficacy of Holy Scripture; we must renew our commitment of obedience to biblical authority; we must depend on the ministry of the Holy Spirit, who will lead us into all truth and keep us within the community of the saints, so that we may be instructed, [p. 246](#) exhorted, and edified by our brethren in the faith, who also have the Word of God and in whom also dwells the Spirit of truth and love. Let us not attempt to be “lone rangers” galloping here and there through the rugged paths of theological reflection.

If we do not embrace the objective normativity of the Scriptures, if we do not submit to the lordship of Christ, if we are not in tune with the Holy Spirit, if we withdraw from the community of faith, we will easily fall prey to subjectivism or to relativism, or we may innocently fall into the trap set by some ideology, of whatever shade it may be.

We are conscious of the serious hermeneutical problem that we are facing today in Latin America. We do not pretend to close our eyes to the difficulties that exist along the way in biblical interpretation. But we are convinced that for us as Evangelical Christians the problem will be even greater if we retreat before hermeneutical systems that approach Scripture with rationalistic or existentialistic presuppositions, tacitly denying the supernatural nature of the Word of God.

In the second and third chapters of the second letter to Timothy, there are two basic exhortations concerning the Scriptures. The Apostle instructs his disciple Timothy to *persevere* in the Word and to *preach* the Word. The reasons for these exhortations, which also can be of help to us, are found in the text itself. To a world disoriented morally and spiritually and confused by the ambassadors of error, what we must announce, in season and out of season, is the Word of God. But we cannot be faithful spokesmen of this Word if we do not persevere in it, holding it in high regard, recognizing its divine inspiration,

and trusting in its efficacy for the salvation and spiritual growth of those who receive it as the revelation of the Lord.

If we do not persevere in the Scriptures, we will find ourselves perplexed, lost in the labyrinth of doubt, confused by the false teachers; we will turn our ear away from hearing the truth, and we will be attracted to the myths or fables that they propagate.

In one of his books, Dr. Frederick Huegel relates that one day Admiral Byrd, who was engaged in scientific investigation at the South Pole, stepped out of his ice hut for a breath of fresh air. He was alone. Suddenly he stopped, frightened. He had strolled too far. Turning around, he realized that it was impossible to see his hut. He could see nothing but snow. He understood that if he set out to find his hut and if he did not locate it on the first attempt, he would lose all sense of direction and would have no fixed point by which to orient himself. He had a stick in his hand. He stuck it into the ice. “*Here*” he said, “*is my centre, and I will not leave it until I have found* p.247 *my house.*” He then walked in several directions, without losing sight of his stick. At last, after several attempts, he found his hut and was safe.¹

Dr. Huegel uses this story to illustrate his point on the central place that the cross of Christ occupies in the plan of redemption. But Admiral Byrd’s experience also makes us think of the written word of God, which should serve as a guide for us in the midst of the confusion that reigns in the world. Let us be sure that our post—the Word of God—is firm and erect; let us hold it as the point of reference in our theological pilgrimage and, without losing sight of it, let us continue to explore confidently, without fear.

Only thus will we have assurance for ourselves and confidence to point out the way for others to follow.

The Reformers desired to have the Scriptures as the basis and authority for every doctrine that they believed and taught. Whether they achieved this aim in every case is the subject of additional study. What is certain is that this zeal for the supreme authority of the Bible is part of the great inheritance that we have received from the Reformation.

We Latin American Evangelical Christians have also desired to be the people of the Book, proclaimers of the Christ revealed in that book, and the followers of the ethical principles that that book teaches. We admit that we still have a long way to go in studying, comprehending, and obeying its contents; but we still hold it fast, and will not let it go. It is in this stance that we are pre-eminently heirs of the Reformation. We may be in disagreement with one or another of the doctrines, or with some particular emphasis of the Reformers, but we can never take issue with their firm determination to exalt “*the living and abiding word of God*” (1 Peter 1:23).

May this Word be the norm for our thinking and our feeling during this Congress that we are inaugurating today, and in the difficult but glorious task that we have ahead of us in our Latin America.

Dr. Emilio Antonio Núñez is President of the Central American Seminary, Guatemala. He gave the keynote address *Heirs of the Reformation* at CLADE II on Reformation Day, October 31, 1979. p. 248

¹ Frederick Huegel, *La Cruz sin Velos*, Buenos Aires, La Aurora, 1947.

Development: Its Secular Past and Its Uncertain Future

Tom Sine

Published with permission

The World Evangelical Fellowship is embarking on a historic journey by initiating this first consultation on a Theology of Development. In preparation for beginning this important journey together it is critical that we: 1) Analyze the essentially secular origin and values of western development; and 2) anticipate the challenges of an uncertain future that are likely to confront development specialists in the eighties and beyond.

DEVELOPMENT: ORIGIN AND VALUES

Before we attempt to articulate a Christian Theology of Development we must understand the essentially secular “Theology” of contemporary development, its origins and implicit values. Only then can we begin to give expression to a statement that reflects a uniquely divergent Biblical perspective. In order to surface these implicit values the following questions will be asked of western development. What are the implicit images of: The Better Future? God and His Universe? The Nature of Persons? The Pathway to the Achievement of that Better Future?

What is the Implicit View of the Better Future in Western Development?

Western development is a child of the European and American Enlightenment. It is based on the implicit belief that human society is inevitably progressing toward the attainment of a temporal materialistic kingdom. In fact, the certain belief that unending economic and social progress is a natural condition of free persons has become the secular religion of the west.

Somehow the millennial expectation of the inbreaking of a new transcendent kingdom was temporalized and secularized into the expectation of a future of unlimited economic and technological growth. In Francis Bacon’s book *The New Atlantis* we are shown the first vision in western history of a technological paradise achieved solely through the instrumentality of man. [p. 249](#)

Implicit in this progressive view of the future was the firm conviction that economic progress would automatically result in social and moral progress. Here then is a view of the better future that is primarily economic focusing largely on human activities of production and consumption. Not surprisingly the “good life” became synonymous with self-seeking and one’s ability to produce and consume goods and services.

The expansive nature of the Western dream of progress motivated westerners to go beyond their own national boundaries in search of both resources and markets as the Industrial Revolution began. The realization of the American dream was made possible by the appropriation of enormous areas of land and the resources they obtained from Native Americans. The great leap forward of industrial and economic growth in the west would not have been possible without the abundant relatively inexpensive resources acquired through colonization of countries in the southern hemisphere.

One of the realities that we as Christians must realize is that “missionary activity has gone hand in hand with colonization for almost two millenia. No matter how we interpret the underlying relations between the two orders, it is self-evident that political expansion

and the church's expansion in the world have covered the same ground, geographically and chronologically."¹

Since the church's expansion went hand in hand with western economic and political expansion the question with which we must struggle is: To what extent have the values of secular western development permeated Christian development?

As a point of information Marxist ideology was born out of the same Western ferment and also sees society moving towards a temporal future that is singularly economic and political. The intention of the Marxists is to ensure that all peoples participate in this future and they believe in its inevitability.

As we enter the eighties virtually no one any longer believes in the inevitability of economic, technological and social progress other than Marxists. The events of the seventies have sounded the death knell for the Enlightened belief that humankind could achieve a utopia here on earth. In spite of this new sobering awareness the essential image of the better future implicit in contemporary development has not significantly changed since the beginnings of western expansion. At the very core of contemporary development is a p. 250 notion that the better future is synonymous with economic growth. The "better life" of persons is really defined principally in economic terms. Nations which have experienced major economic and technological growth are described as "developed"; those which haven't are characterized as "underdeveloped". In spite of the growing awareness of the negative human and environmental consequences of unrestrained growth, the "developed" world has become a showcase of the "ideal" future for the "underdeveloped" world. The apparent superiority of the "developed" image of the ideal future has directly influenced the definition and goals of contemporary development. Thirty years ago the primary goal of western development in the Third World was "maximization of GNP per capita". Today the goal has been broadened to increasingly focus on "basic needs" to raise the economic level of the world's poorest people.²

John Sommers argues that "it has become increasingly clear that economic well-being is not sufficient goal and the measuring of development on the materialistic basis of per capita gross national product is inadequate and often misleading."³ He goes on to advocate that development should be defined in spiritual and cultural terms as well as economic. There are some non-Western models that are based on a broader understanding of the scope of development.

For example, Gandhi had a very different vision for the future of his people than the one that is implicit in the western model. "The Mahatma was wholly opposed to those who argued that India's future lay in imitating the industrial technological society of the west. India's salvation he argued lay in 'unlearning what she has learned in the past 50 years'. He challenged almost all of the western ideals that had taken root in India. Science should not order human values he argued, technology should not order society, and civilization was not the indefinite multiplication of human wants, but their limitation so that essentials could be shared by all."⁴

Gandhi's image of the better future for India was a nation of 600,000 decentralized villages which were highly self-sufficient units in which traditional culture, religion and

¹ Walberg Buhlmann, *The Coming of the Third Church* (New York: Orbis Books, 1977), p.42.

² Morawetz, David, *Twenty-five Years of Economic Development* (Washington, D.C., World Bank, 1977), p.7.

³ Sommers, John, *Beyond Charity: U.S. Voluntary Aid for a Changing Third World* (Washington, D.C.: Overseas Development Council, 1977), p.3.

⁴ Collins, Larry and LaPierre, Dominique, *Freedom at Midnight* (New York: Simon Schuster, 1975).

family life were strengthened. While longing to see grinding poverty ended, he opposed development which would create material affluence, because he was p. 251 convinced that affluence would lead to cultural erosion and moral bankruptcy. His vision for the future gave primacy not to economic development, but to the development of the inner spirit and the reinforcement of positive values within traditional culture.

What is the Implicit View of God and His Universe in Western Development?

Western views of development are not only tied to singularly secular notions of the better future, but secular views of God and His universe as well ... that have their origins in the Enlightenment. In sixteenth century England Francis Bacon drew a historic line between the “words of God” and the “works of God”. By that act he gave major momentum towards a new dualistic view of the universe. Essentially all in the natural order that can be experienced through the senses was lumped into the “works of God”. The revelational and spiritual aspects of existence were pigeon-holed under the “words of God”.

Not only was the Creator seen as passive but His creation was also seen as a passive realm, a grab bag of physical resources available for the taking. This dualistic view of God and His universe has resulted in a desacralization of His creation. Westerners learned to think of the world around them as nothing but resources to be exploited to enable them to achieve their materialistic dreams for the future.

Jeremy Rifkin asserted, “Faith in the liberating power of materialism carries with it one critical assumption, the belief the earth possesses unlimited abundance. The formulators of liberalism, the men of the Age of Reason and the Enlightenment, had no doubt that the earth would yield more wealth than could possibly be used ... In the 1600’s the new world, the greatest frontier known, was just opening up for exploitation. By the beginning of the next century, industrialism had begun. Wherever people looked it seemed that the world held more—more wealth, more prosperity, more productivity, more knowledge to be used in the service of humanity. The obvious contrast with the unchanging order of the Middle Ages was proof to all persons of reason that the new age was superior to all that had come before.”⁵ This secularized view of God and His universe was foundational to the economic growth and expansion of an age of western development.

The dualism of Bacon and his followers has borne its fruit in our p. 252 age. In contemporary development as in much of western culture there is no belief that God lives and acts in history. The world and its future are perceived to be solely in the hands of man. Contemporary development theory is premised on a thorough-going secularization of the natural and human orders. In reading contemporary development literature not the slightest consideration is given to the possibility that God is, or that He has any influence on human affairs. In fact, the literature tends to deny even the existence of any realm beyond human sensory experience. It is assumed in development theory that “developed” peoples have the responsibility through rational, development planning, to enable as many of the world’s “underdeveloped” people as possible to join the inner circle of economic growth and prosperity.

The massive exploitation of global resources has brought us to a new reality. The *First Report to the Club of Rome* in 1973 called to everyone’s attention that new reality ... that the earth is not infinite, it is finite. This new reality more than any other contemporary insight has put to rest the western belief in both the inevitability and indeed the possibility of all people fully participating in the western dream.

⁵ Rifkin, Jeremy and Howard, Ted, *The Emerging Order: God in the Age of Scarcity* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1979), p.25.

Far from being simply a passive malleable resource as Bacon had suggested ... we have recently discovered that for every act we take against God's world it seems to have a capability to counter-punch. We can no longer thoughtlessly exploit the natural order. We are being forced to consider the consequence of every act we take. We are being forced to perceive ourselves as stewards not of passive resources but of a vast, active fragile planetary system. Recent development literature is beginning to belatedly reflect this new view. Unfortunately transnational corporations are slower to espouse this new awareness.

What is the Implicit View of Persons in Western Development?

Closely related to the image of God and His universe implicit in western development is the image of humanity. When Francis Bacon divided the natural and the sacred realm he unwittingly divided body from soul. Even as the universe was reduced to nothing but the sum of its physical properties ... many in the west learned to view persons as nothing but the sum of their biological components ... in a universe freed from divine presence and purpose, human beings were increasingly seen as alone. Their lives were seen as having no sense of divine intention or innate worth.

In an essentially economic world-view their worth was seen as largely derivative. To the extent that the individual contributed to the p. 253 collective economic growth, to that extent the individual was viewed as having worth. Therefore one of the primary characteristics of persons in western culture is to identify themselves and indeed derive significance and meaning for life from their ability to produce and consume.

Self-interest and self-seeking became the basis of this new society of economic progress and growth. It was widely assumed during the Enlightenment that if individuals pursued their own private self-interest it would work for the common good. John Locke was the archapostle of this new doctrine. He condemned the American Indians for living on land filled with abundant resources and not exploiting them in order to live lives of personal affluence.

"With Locke, the fate of modern man and woman is sealed. From the time of the Enlightenment on, the individual is reduced to the hedonistic activity of production and consumption to find meaning and purpose. People's needs and aspirations, their dreams and desires, all become confined to the pursuit of material self-interest."⁶

Man's sense of meaning, identity and worth are derived from his ability to successfully participate and compete in an essentially economic world. Increasingly Americans have learned to derive their very identity from what they produce and what they consume. Those in western culture not able to fully participate in the economic rat race are seen as a threat to the entire system. Persons are reduced to their economic value to the larger technocratic order. Pope John Paul has declared that capitalism reduces persons to consumptive things and communism reduces them to economic things.

The seventies have accurately been characterized as the "me first" decade in America. The self-seeking encouraged by Locke and Jefferson has in contemporary western culture become an absolute mania. The good life for the individual is strongly oriented towards acquisitive, consumptive and status-seeking behaviour ... even among Christians.

Modern development conceiving this world as primarily an economic realm tends to talk about human personality, human activity and human goals in largely economic terms ... such as human resources, beneficiaries, etc. Therefore, modern development activity tends to foster a reductionistic view of human personality and activity. p. 254

What is the Implicit View of the Pathway to this Better Future in Western Development?

⁶ Rifkin, p.33.

Even though the proponents of western progress believed in the inevitability of the attainment of a materialistic paradise on earth, they also believed it would only be achieved through the initiative of rational man. The instrumentality of man, not the initiative of God was essential to create this new age.

Bacon proclaimed that he had discovered a new promethean power that would enable humankind to fashion a new technological utopia. That power was the rational human ability to empirically examine the natural world. Empirically derived knowledge was new power that would enable humankind to subdue a passive nature and create a new materialistic utopia.

Locke, believing that all human activity is based on materialistic self-interest, encouraged self-seeking as yet another pathway to achieve this enlightened paradise. Thomas Jefferson incorporated in the "Religion of America" the Lockean life goal of the individualistic pursuit of happiness ... as a cardinal doctrine.

Adam Smith, building on the philosophy of Locke, created a new economics of growth that became an essential pathway to the temporal kingdom of progress. He removed any sense of morality from economics. Essentially he postulated that individuals should have complete freedom to pursue self-interest in the quest for economic gain. He maintained that if they were given that freedom that the invisible hand of natural law would ensure that the common good would be achieved through private selfishness. This is the premise of capitalism.

"Smith championed the cause of a growing class of manufacturers who saw their interests stifled by government monopolies and the closed ranks of the mercantilists. Just as Locke had promoted the social interests of bourgeois merchants and traders, Smith appealed to 'natural laws' based on Newtonian-Baconian science to legitimize the economic interests of the new industrial entrepreneurs."⁷

Since contemporary advocates of development no longer view progress as inevitable and since there is no God even to lend endorsement, even greater responsibility has been shifted to human initiative to set the world right. Until recently it was believed that global development could be best achieved through the intervention of high technology and advanced science. With the publication of p.255 Schumacher's classic *Small is Beautiful* in 1973, people began to shift their attention to smaller and more appropriate technological responses to development needs in the Third World. Science and technology are still seen as a primary pathway to the better future. All that has changed is the realization of the importance of appropriate application whether we are talking about community health, sanitation or agriculture.

The laissez-faire economics introduced by Adam Smith are still alive and well and provide the foundation for most contemporary development planning. This model based on a belief that private selfishness will secure the common good has, however, fallen on hard times in many sectors. During the past 70 years a host of socialist régimes have sought to demonstrate another pathway of planned economics ... that elevate the common good above private gain. Marxist ideology opposes western economics and development planning as obscuring the real problem of the overthrow and replacement of unjust structures.

More recently the disastrous environmental and human consequences of global corporate expansion has seriously challenged the premise of Adam Smith's economic model causing many to call for a new economic order. Even so most western development activity tends to accept this model of economic growth as given and it is seen as a primary pathway, in its diverse expressions, to a better economic future.

⁷ Rifkin, p.34.

As long as the better collective and personal future is defined almost exclusively in economic and physical terms, contemporary development has no pathways to that future other than the appropriate application of science and technology, growth economics and utilitarian education.

DEVELOPMENT: AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

To effectively articulate a biblical theology of development we must not only understand its secular origins, we must also anticipate its uncertain future. Every indicator seems to suggest that the final two decades of the 20th century are going to be filled with dramatic change that will have its greatest impact on the planetary poor. The eighties will be the decade of the poor.

By 1955 virtually all Third World countries secured their political independence from the colonial systems of the past. Between 1955 and 1975 this planet experienced the greatest period of economic growth in the history of civilization. During this unprecedented p. 256 period of economic growth the gap between rich and poor within nations widened at a dramatic rate. This growing inequity motivated the "Group of 77" (now comprised of more than 100 Third World countries) to make a presentation in the United Nations in 1974 calling for a New International Economic Order. While the nations of the north have, somewhat reluctantly, consented to discuss their proposals for a more just international economic order, they have not been willing to adopt any significant reforms in the present system. Therefore, it can be reasonably expected in light of this resistance that as the northern hemisphere continues to pursue a course of maximum economic growth, much of that growth will come at the expense of the southern hemisphere. And the gap between rich and poor will continue to expand through the eighties.⁸

This relentless commitment by the west to unrestrained economic growth and the projected growth of global population to six billion persons by the year 2000 puts our planet under mounting stress. The U.S. Office of Technology Assessment predicts that the projected levels of combined economic and population growth will seriously threaten the carrying capability of our finite planet through: massive pollution of air and water, deforestation, creation of deserts, elimination of natural areas of wildlife habitats, depletion of fish stocks, progressive simplification and homogenization of nature. They concluded that these pressures on the environmental system will contribute to at least double digit inflation world-wide for the foreseeable future. Of course those who will be most dramatically impacted by high inflation will be the poor.⁹

To further compound this situation many transnational corporations are consciously involved with altering customs and tastes of persons within Third World culture. Their intention is to redefine the nature of good life for persons in all cultures in order to expand the global market for Coke, Twinkles, Nabisco crackers and a host of other western consumer products. This transnational economic activity is expedited by the growing control of a broad range of communication networks and technologies by transnational corporations. A "communication industrial complex" is being formed which controls everything from satellite communication systems to a growing number of television and

⁸ McLaughlin, Marlin, *The United States and World Development: Agenda 1979* (New York: Praeger Publishing, 1979), p.25.

⁹ Technology and Population, United States Office, of Technology Assessment, 21 August, 1978, p.2.

media networks within Third p. 257 World nations.¹⁰ The consequences of this conscious effort to change culture for the sake of market expansion and the use of media to expedite this process is likely to foster widespread cultural destabilization and westernization throughout the southern hemisphere in the future.

Beyond cultural imposition “global corporations exploit their superior bargaining power in weak disorganized societies to carry out a series of activities which can offer exceptionally high profits for the world-wide enterprise, but which often promote economic and social backwardness within countries: the manipulation of transfer prices rob the countries of foreign exchange and reasonable earnings from exports. The technology transferred by multinationals, which is usually designed for the home market in a developed society, is inappropriate to the needs of poor countries. It often displaces jobs and is overpriced. The products manufactured in poor countries are beyond the reach of the majority of people who lack the money to buy them. Such products are consumed by local élites in enclaves of affluence or they are exported. The export-led model of development of which the multinational corporation has been the major engine has meant crippling debt and increasing dependence on rich countries, their private banks and the international lending agencies which they control. Because of their superior control over capital, technology, and marketing, global corporations can dominate local economies and pre-empt the power to plan for the society.”¹¹ Therefore as multinationals increase in their influence and power in the economic life of the southern hemisphere they will also increase their control over the societies in which they do business.

Not only are the poorer people of this planet likely to lose in the competition for economic resources; they are also likely to be compromised by increasing competition for arable land. As we approach six billion people on our small spaceship the land on which we grow food is dramatically shrinking. In the United States and Western Europe thousands of acres of prime agricultural land is lost every year to parking lots, freeways, suburban sprawl and urban development. In the Third World desertification, deforestation and urban expansion is also devouring large quantities of land that had been used to p. 258 produce food and fuel. The consequence of this situation is that the affluent western consumer is increasingly competing with his neighbour in the southern hemisphere for food grown on his land. This has resulted in land in Guatemala, Haiti and Costa Rica being taken out of domestic food production to provide North Americans with between-meal snacks. Evidence indicates that increased beef exports from Central America to the United States have contributed to the growth of malnutrition and hunger in those regions.¹²

The issue of the just use of arable land is likely to become a major discussion focus in the eighties as the problems of hunger and the dependency of the global poor on imported food both increase. Michael Harrington in his book *The Vast Majority* states that there are 70 million people on this planet in imminent danger of starvation, 400 million who are chronically malnourished and fully one billion who don't get enough to eat. Forecasts suggest that the number of hungry people in the world will more than double by 1995.

¹⁰ Hamelink, Cees. *The Corporate Village: The Rôle of Transnational Corporations in International Communication* (Rome: IDCC Europe Dossier Four, 1977), p. 11.

¹¹ Barnet, Richard J. “Multinationals and Development: Jegen, M. E. and Wilber, C. K. (Ed) *Growth With Equity: Strategies for Meeting Human Needs* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979).

¹² Keene, Beverly, “Export-cropping in Central America,” Background Paper §43, January 1980. Bread for the World, New York.

Add to this reality the fact that the poor nations are becoming increasingly dependent upon imports of food staples ... the countries of South Asia, for example, which imported five to six per cent of their food in 1960 and eight to nine per cent in 1975 will need to import 17–18 per cent of their food by 1995 if historical trends continue.¹³

Given the energy inputs required to produce those staples in the west and escalating cost of that energy, it is altogether possible that countries will not be able to afford to purchase the food they will need to offset their growing domestic deficits in the future. What we are belatedly discovering as population continues to explode is that the earth's resources are not infinite. They are finite. Increasing competition for land, food, energy and minerals will continue to benefit the world's wealthy at the expense of the world's poor.

Perhaps no other area of population growth is going to place greater stress on human and environmental systems in the eighties and nineties than the overwhelming growth of Third World cities. "By the end of the century three quarters of all Latin Americans and one third of all Asians and Africans will ... be living in cities."¹⁴ Mexico City is projected to become the world's largest city growing p. 259 from its present population of 11 million to more than 31 million persons by the year 2000. Sao Paulo, Brazil is forecast to be second in size with 25 million.¹⁵ The extent of peril for persons in these areas of urban explosion can scarcely be exaggerated. These populations are expanding with virtually no comparable expansion in basic life support systems in food, water, sanitation and housing.

One cannot look at the planetary future without considering the political, spiritual and social dimensions of societal change. These are much harder to predict, but still merit discussion. In the political realm the dramatic expansion of global arms expenditures from \$350 billion in 1976 to \$425 billion in 1979 has significantly increased the danger of conflict while using vast planetary resources that could be used for human development. The widespread availability of nuclear and other megadeath weapon systems will also increase the risk of their use.¹⁶ Some futurists believe that the possibility of polarization between the northern and southern hemispheres is even greater than the present chill between east and west.

At any point in history the principalities and powers are in a life and death struggle with the forces of light. Human society generally and the Church specifically is going to be faced with an avalanche of human problems, rising deprivation and threatened persecution. In addition there are going to be significant changes within the Church. For example, Buhlmann predicts in his book, *The Coming of the Third Church*, that over half the Christians in the world are going to be living in the southern hemisphere by the year 2000. This new reality was influential in the Pope's recent decision to visit Latin America. It means that the centre of power of the Church is likely to shift from the northern to the southern hemisphere. Western development agencies need to come to grips with this shift and reexamine their relationship with the Church in the southern hemisphere. In view of growing global inequity there will probably be an increasing struggle between those who

¹³ Enzer, S., Drobnick, R. and Alter, S. "World Food Prospects: The Next Twenty Years," *The Futurist*, 1978, p.288.

¹⁴ Tinberger, Jan (Ed), *Rio: Reshaping the International Economic Order* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, Inc., 1976), p.31.

¹⁵ "Hemisphere Trends," *Americas*, January 1979, p.17.

¹⁶ Sivard, R. L. "World Military and Social Expenditures," Background Paper §21, February 1978, Bread for the World.

see the Gospel in largely personal terms and those who see it primarily in terms of liberation from unjust economic and political structures.

The growing political conservatism of the west, double digit inflation and the erosion of the discretionary income among contributors in western nations are likely to combine to reduce the amount of money available for development. If Christian organizations don't [p. 260](#) design intentional systems of co-operation we are likely to see a decade of increasing interagency competition for a shrinking financial resource.

How should the people of God generally and Christian development agencies specifically respond to the anticipated challenges of the next two decades? Should we give up on the poor? The future? The mission of the Church? Thousands of American Christians caught up in an eschatology of escape have done just that. In view of their eschatology they genuinely believe that they can't make any difference in their world. They hold absolutely no hope for the future other than their own personal escape. This great escape mentality in reality becomes an incredible cop-out from all that God calls us to be and to do. Believing the human future to be hopeless they often buy into the secular religion of the west using their resources to get a piece of the corpulent consumer pie while the getting is still good. The consequence of this latter-day fatalism and consumptive lifestyle is devastating to the mission of Christ's Church. Incredible quantities of resources that could be used in the mission of the Church in development, evangelism and church planting are squandered in the pursuit of a different dream.

Instead of allowing the anticipated challenges of the next two decades to immobilize us into a non-biblical fatalism ... we need to see them as opportunities to be the People of God in a way we have never been before. Frankly, a "business as usual" approach in our Christian organizations and churches will not begin to impact the human challenges facing us in the future. Only a new radical biblical offensive, beginning in our own lives, churches and organizations, has the possibility of effectively responding to these kinds of challenges. Christian development agencies need to dramatically increase their capability to respond to the anticipated needs of the eighties before they become critical.

Therefore, I propose that we:

1. Develop an ongoing capability to anticipate new areas of human deprivation and crisis before they arrive ... in order that we have time to mobilize resources and design development responses;
2. Draft a biblical theology of development that will enable us to more compassionately and aggressively respond to the anticipated challenges of the future ... striving to achieve God's intended future for all peoples;
3. Redesign our total agency development activities so that they are fully congruent with our biblical theology ... from approaches to [p. 261](#) health care to servanthood management models;
4. Create a process to co-operatively design a broad spectrum of imaginative new biblical responses to the anticipated challenges of the eighties and nineties in areas such as economic development, multinational accountability, cultural development, etc.;
5. Establish new co-operative relationships between Christian agencies to reduce competition, duplication and more effectively use God's resources to expand into new areas of human need; plus developing a global strategy to co-operatively address the escalating deprivation of the eighties.
6. Challenge believers and Christian organizations in the west to promote the just use of global resources through seeking to dramatically simplify personal and institutional lifestyles to free many more resources of time, gifts and money for the work of God's kingdom among the poor;

7. Commit western development agencies and their staff to leading the western Church into patterns of voluntary simplicity through:
 - a. Dramatically reducing overhead by decorating offices simply, exclusively using budget hotels, restaurants and transportation, significantly increasing the use of volunteers at all levels and seeking to reduce all overhead that isn't absolutely essential to mission;
 - b. Seeking separate funding for all agency overhead expenses so that the full amount of contributed dollars can be directly used in Third World development;
 - c. Making a commitment to a lifestyle of voluntary simplicity a condition of employment (leaving it to the individual to find God's direction as to how to pursue simplicity in his own life);
 - d. Providing regular seminars within agencies on biblical discipleship, Third World mission and voluntary simplicity;
8. Use the resources that are freed through voluntary simplicity and co-operation to significantly increase our ability to respond to those anticipated areas of greatest urban and rural needs in the eighties.

In view of the anticipated human needs of the next two decades, Christian development agencies need to take the initiative in challenging the church to mobilize all of its resources and creativity to significantly increase its capacity for global mission. We have absolutely no idea of the change God could bring in a world of escalating need [p. 262](#) if we were to fully commit ourselves and our resources to seeking first His kingdom of justice, righteousness, reconciliation, peace and love ... in anticipation of that day when it fully comes.

Dr. Tom Sine is Consultant in Futures Research and Development Planning for World Concern, Box 33000, Seattle, Washington, USA 98133.

This paper was given at the consultation on *Theology of Development* sponsored by the WEF Theological Commission's study unit on Ethics and Society and was held 11–15 March, 1980 at High Leigh, Hodderson, England. [p. 263](#)

Beyond Relief, Development and Justice

John Alexander

Reprinted from The Other Side with permission

RELIEF IS VITAL, BUT ...

Your response to world hunger grows out of your picture of what causes it. One picture is that hunger is caused by disasters—hurricanes, droughts, earthquakes, wars. The appropriate response is *relief*: send food and medicine, build homes, fly the orphans to the States.

This picture is good—as far as it goes. Relief is vital. Cambodia needs it now because of the war there and the Dominican Republic needs it because of Hurricane David.

But that picture does not go far enough. It does not explain the long-range hunger in countries like Zaire, Haiti, Bangladesh. The danger of the relief picture comes when we apply it to long-range hunger and do little more than ship food. Sending food is crucial in the Dominican Republic at the moment, but it is grossly inadequate in a country where hunger is perpetual. It does not enable people to feed themselves. In fact, in that kind of case, relief often makes things worse by lowering the prices of local food and making it harder for farmers to earn a living.

TECHNOLOGY MAY BE APPROPRIATE, BUT ...

So we need another picture. That picture is of people who are hungry partly because they don't know how to farm and don't have the right technology. The appropriate response to this picture is to ship technology and experts—experts who can teach farming.

Let's call this *technological development*. It's an effort to get at causes. You know: give people a fish and you feed them for a day; teach them how to fish and ...

But the track record of this kind of development is not unduly inspiring. One problem is the possible bad effects of Western technology on the environment. (Is chemical fertilizer really better than manure?)

But even ignoring that, transferring things from one culture to another is always tricky. And Western experts transferring things from an "advanced" culture to a "primitive" one are bound to think they know everything. They are almost certain to be arrogant and paternalistic. Believing they have the answers and local farmers don't p.264 know how to farm, they won't get much further than a return trip home.

But even if they get beyond the kind of cultural imperialism that chuckles at the "ignorant natives," such development is still tricky. Our schemes tend to be too grandiose to help little people. We set up a model farm of a hundred acres to show poor farmers better methods. But their farms are only two acres, and our lovely big farm has no relevance to their needs.

Or we advocate tractors, forgetting that only the wealthy can afford tractors. So the wealthy buy them—and need fewer labourers or tenant farmers. And the poor are worse off than before. Or we advocate seeds that require irrigation, forgetting that often only the wealthy can afford irrigation. So the wealthy irrigate and increase their yields enormously. Crop prices drop because of abundance, and the poor farmer is so broke he can't even buy the abundant food.

In other words, even if transferring Western technology got beyond paternalism, it is simply too expensive to help the poorest people. Take hospitals, for example. Here Christians have done fine work. But hospitals are so costly that they can treat only a few of the poorest people: their income has to come from patients who have some money.

Of course, if the hospital is heavily subsidized, it can treat the very poor. But to subsidize hospitals for the billion poorest people would cost billions, and in the long run trillions. Such money is not available.

And even if we got beyond paternalism and even if we could pay for the technology, this kind of development often does not meet the most basic needs of the poor. In the area

of health, the greatest needs of the poor are not hospitals or even doctors or nurses. What they need is food, clean water and sanitation.

What can a hospital do about starving children? It can take a few in and feed them, but as soon as they go home they will begin to starve again. Hospitals can treat people for the various diseases caused by poor sanitation and unsafe water, but it would be far better to prevent the diseases in the first place.

Finally, even when poor third world people are given Western technology and it is meeting their real needs, they often seem unable to use and maintain it. This causes Westerners extreme exasperation and makes us think the people are hopelessly incompetent.

But what would you expect to happen if an outsider comes and tells people they have a problem and then offers a complex, foreign [p. 265](#) solution? They aren't likely to buy in, are they?

The recognition of a problem and its solution must come to a large extent from within or it will never be appropriated. What is more, if the technology is given to them and they don't have to work for it, they are even less likely to value and maintain it.

So technological development may be of value, but the value is mainly for those who are already Westernized and relatively wealthy. It is unlikely to do much for the poorest people. For that we need a different picture.

COMMUNITY ENCOURAGES SELF-RELIANCE, BUT ...

We need a picture of the causes of hunger which acknowledges that the poor lack know-how but which nevertheless emphasizes their competence. This picture does not encourage dealing with hunger by technology and pouring in money. It encourages enablement instead. Our rôle is at most to enable the poor to formulate for themselves what their problems—and the solutions—are. This is *human development or community organizing*.

Instead of providing social services, food, and technology, community organizers call the poor together. They can be facilitators as the poor analyze their own problems and find their own solutions. Since money and technology are not promised, the poor will have to come up with ideas that are not costly. They will suggest things like credit unions, producers' co-operatives, and demanding services the government is supposed to provide.

As a group they can do things they can't do separately. They are more likely to be able to insist that laws be enforced fairly. They can buy in bulk. They can be more effective in resisting landlords who are cheating them. And so on.

All of this encourages self-reliance and independence and self-respect rather than dependence and self-hatred and a welfare mentality. It is also so inexpensive that it can be duplicated all over the world. (If the organization is ever given a large amount of money, it must be for something they see the need for themselves. It must also come after they are well-established, so that they exist on their own and are not just there to receive money.)

So community organizing or human development goes a long way toward meeting the needs of the poorest people.

STRUCTURES MUST BE CHANGED, BUT ...

But it doesn't go far enough. So we need another picture. That picture [P. 266](#) is of hunger caused partly by political and economic oppression. The appropriate response is the

changing of political and economic structures. This picture is not the whole picture any more than the others are, but it is an important part of it.

One cause of hunger is that in many third-world countries half the land is owned by a handful of people. Many of the rest have too little land to earn a living, or else they are tenant farmers who have to give half their crops to the landlord. What these people need is land redistribution. Until then, development will do them precious little good. But land redistribution is a political and economic problem.

What is more, the wealthy landowners soon discover that they can earn more money by growing things for export than they can by growing food for local people. So they begin growing orchids, coffee, tea, sugar (luxurious junk) and bananas for the West.

Of course, that means less nutritious food in the world and particularly in the third world. And that means more hunger, but it happens anyway because our economic system is more concerned about increasing profits than about decreasing human hunger. And those with the profits use it for more luxurious junk—cars, oil, televisions, fancy houses, and armaments—to keep the poor under control.

Of course, many more people are poor than are rich, and in time they get organized. (Community organizing can be of enormous political and economic importance.) But just about when they are ready to bring basic change, the Marines arrive, and the wealthy stay in control.

At least that is what used to happen. These days the West and its local allies are more sophisticated. They rarely allow the poor to get organized in the first place. Union-breaking, death squads, torture, and the banning of opposition parties make successful organizing difficult. If it does happen, the West can choke the country with economic sanctions.

So in addition to relief and development, the third world needs political and economic change. It needs justice. And justice can come to the third world only if the West changes. We eat the food that the third world needs and we provide a large part of the muscle that keeps oppressive elites in power in the third world. That is, we see to it that the third world doesn't solve its own political and economic problems.

So if you want to fight world hunger, you shouldn't be in too big a hurry to teach farming in the third world. You are needed at least as badly to teach about justice in Washington and Peoria.

Besides, going overseas lacks grace. How can you travel thousands [p. 267](#) of miles to teach development to people whose problem is at least as much that your own country is oppressing them? Why not stay home and teach justice here? The simple fact is that the third world is not seriously short of food. The problem is that they export it to us. Hunger is caused partly by our luxurious junk.

So we must fight for justice. That picture is good—as far as it goes. But it does not go far enough. It does not deal with the spiritual and moral roots of hunger. It is a good secular analysis of hunger, but it is secular. Christians must do more. We must have a bigger picture.

EVANGELISM HAS PRIORITY, BUT ...

Secular ideas on how to work for social change are vital, but they are inadequate. From a Christian point of view, the cause of hunger is sin. And the appropriate response to sin is evangelism and new lives.

And if that is true, then the most important thing Christians can do about world hunger is *evangelism*. We must see that eating imported luxury junk foods is taking food out of

the mouths of the hungry. And that is sin. So we must call on people to repent, be forgiven, and lead new lives.

We must say it is a sin for Western politicians to support third world régimes which grind the face of the poor, and it is a sin to vote for politicians who do so. So we must call politicians to repent of supporting murderous, repressive régimes, and we must call voters to repent of voting for politicians who support such régimes. The message is repentance, forgiveness and a new life.

If we want to do something in the third world, we should send missionaries to the bloody dictators. And the missionaries (or better yet, prophetic nationals) must call the dictators to repentance, just as Elijah did when Ahab seized Naboth's vineyard. They should go to big landowners and tell them to repent and show fruit worthy of repentance. Salvation will lead the wealthy to redistribute their land. (John the Baptist told the Pharisees that salvation would lead them to redistribute their coats.)

But Christians rarely combine evangelism and justice in this way. Some of us evangelize, and some work for justice. A few of us even do both. But we rarely do them at the same time. More and more Christian agencies are beginning to see injustice as a major cause of hunger, and so they are spending part of their money on teaching people in the West about injustice. They call this justice education. That is a good thing, but it is a whole lot less than calling people to repent. [p. 268](#)

Or a few agencies are starting to put some of their time and money into lobbying in Washington for a more just foreign policy. That's a step forward, but a whole lot less than telling legislators and those who vote for them to repent for the kingdom of God is at hand.

The failure of most Christian development groups to combine their development and evangelism is especially striking. But the truth is that we just don't know how to do it. We rightly want to avoid using development as a *bait* for evangelism. We're beyond Skid Row missions that will feed only those who make a profession of faith.

But that can't mean separating evangelism from helping people. Certainly we can't make helping people depend on their accepting the message, but that need not stop us from vigorously working at the same time on evangelism *and* justice.

To do less will be ineffective because supporting justice is a costly thing. To support relief only costs a little money. You see a photo of an innocent, hungry-looking orphan and begin sending a few dollars a month for food. You can even get letters from the child. Helping someone is fun. it makes you feel good.

But justice is another matter. It requires you to change your life—how you eat, how you spend money, what you do for a living. That isn't always fun. What is more, it makes you see yourself not as the handsome prince rescuing helpless children but as a marauding beast from whom children must be rescued. And most of us don't care for that picture.

So education and lobbying are going to be inadequate. Something more powerful is necessary if people are going to see themselves as oppressors and then repent and lead new lives. They'll need the Spirit working in their lives; they'll need to be born again; they'll need a new world view with happier values. In short, nothing less than evangelism will do.

BUILDING CHURCH COMMUNITIES IS IMPORTANT, BUT ...

So evangelism is good—as far as it goes. But it doesn't go far enough. We need another picture. Sin is deep and powerful and insidious. It isn't something you repent of once and for all when you're saved. Repentance of sin is, or should be, a permanent state of mind.

So we need a picture of the *church*. And I don't mean a building or a hierarchy or even a preacher. I mean a group of people who are together to support each other, love each other, nurture each other, challenge each other. The church is people using their gifts to serve one another. As we jointly use our gifts to build each other up, we will bear fruit fit for repentance. Then we will begin to overcome the [p. 269](#) sin in our lives. That doesn't happen in a blinding flash the moment we decide to follow Jesus.

That means that at the very heart of any deeply Christian work must be church or community building. Whether we emphasize evangelism or development or justice, we are not doing it in a Christian way unless part of what we are doing is forming a community of believers.

The Bible repeatedly makes it clear that this is central to God's plan for our age. Consider what Paul says in Ephesians: "His gifts were for equipping the saints in the work of serving and in building up the body of Christ. That way we can attain mature adulthood, the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. When each part is working properly, the body grows and builds itself up in love" ([4:11 a](#), [12](#), [13b](#), [16b](#)).

So if we want people to grow to maturity, we will have to get beyond relief, technological development, community organizing, and work for justice. We will also have to evangelize and build church-communities.

WHAT THEN SHALL WE DO?

But even all these pictures combined will not be enough. They are good—as far as they go. But we must go farther.

We must recognize that we are not adequate to solve the problem ourselves. Our own sinfulness and weakness are too great—not to mention the enormous forces arrayed against us. We are hopelessly outnumbered and outfinanced. What chance do we have against massive corporations like G + W, McDonnell Douglas, Castle and Cook? Against brutal dictatorships sponsored by the Kremlin or the Pentagon?

We have no chance. And that is grounds for despair—except for Christians. For us, it is grounds for hope, for that is when God chooses to act. Any work among the poor must *expect God to act* or it is not deeply Christian. Work for development or justice which does not expect God's intervention is practical atheism even if it is done by Christians.

Of course we are outnumbered. But so was Israel when the Syrians surrounded Elisha's city: "His servant said, 'Alas, my master. What shall we do?' Elisha said, 'Fear not, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.' So the Lord opened the eyes of the young man and he saw; and behold the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire" ([2 Kings 6:15b](#), [16](#), [17b](#)).

All we need to do is to open our eyes.

John Alexander is a co-editor of *The Other Side*, a magazine designed to help Christians grow in their commitment to justice rooted in discipleship. [p. 270](#)

Our Evangelical Social Responsibility: A Personal Response

By Bruce J. Nicholls

PREAMBLE

The WEF Theological Commission Study Unit on Ethics and Society sponsored a consultation on Theology and Development at the High Leigh conference centre at Hoddesdon, England 10–15 March, 1980. Forty evangelical theologians, relief and development agency executives, church leaders and practitioners drawn from every continent met to seek God's guidance in a fresh understanding of their social responsibility. During the last night of the consultation I prepared a statement to express what I believed was the intention of the participants and which for me was a personal response. At the request of others I share it with you recognising that it bears the marks of the anguish of the moment.

STATEMENT

As members of the body of Christ set apart for the ministry of evangelism, service and justice we sought to identify ourselves with the world's poor and oppressed whose numbers and degree of suffering is increasing year by year. We are appalled at the estimate that seventy million are in imminent danger of starvation and another 400 million chronically undernourished and at the forecast that the number of hungry people in the world will double by 1995.

We are distressed at the massive unemployment throughout the world resulting in severe hardships, a spirit of hopelessness and despair and the fact that the drift to the cities is resulting in deterioration of basic life support systems in food, water, sanitation and housing. For example, we are told that the population of Mexico City, now 11 million, is expected to grow to 31 million people in the next twenty years.

We feel our hopelessness before the dramatic expansion of global arms expenditure which has risen from \$350 billion to \$425 billion in the last three years, increasing the danger of global conflict while using vast planetary resources that could be used for human development.

As participants we feel the shame of the greed of the rich industrialised nations, mostly Christian, whose wealth and exploitive power is growing at the expense of the poorer nations. We feel the pain of learning that during the recent tragic famine in Sahal, Africa, the export of food to the West actually increased, and again that the increasing beef exports from the Central American countries to the U.S.A. have contributed to the growth of malnutrition and hunger in these regions. [p. 271](#)

As evangelical Christians we confess our lack of compassion for the suffering of mankind and our lack of holy indignation at the injustice and selfishness of our so-called Christian societies. Further, we acknowledge our tacit support for ruthless dictatorships particularly in countries in Latin America, our unbiblical eschatologies that lead us to fatalism and selfish escapism.

We confess that all too often we have allowed the world's spirit of consumerism and easy believerism to penetrate our Christian thinking and in closing our eyes to suffering and injustice we have caused many to block their ears to our preaching of the Gospel.

We not only confess and repent before God of these our sins of omission and commission but resolve in faith to dedicate ourselves afresh to our high calling in Christ Jesus.

The intent of our consultation is to call for a theology of servanthood and to take up the Cross to which our Lord calls us, even unto death. By God's grace we covenant together "to love God with all our heart, mind and soul and to love our neighbours as ourselves". We have heard afresh our Lord's call to incarnate our service for the poor, the sick and the hungry, the orphan and the widow, the depressed and the oppressed and to witness openly and faithfully to Christ as the Saviour, liberator and Lord in word and deed, doing all to the glory of God. We have been stirred to identify with the ministry of God's prophets, with Moses, Jeremiah and Nehemiah and with our Lord himself in denouncing sin and rebuking all manifestations of evil and demonic power in the lives of individuals, communities and nations. We join together with all believing Christians in seeking through our service to restrain evil men and institutions of power and in working together to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with our God.

We intend personally and together with our churches, missions and development agencies and through the ongoing structures of this consultation to study the Scriptures as the Word of God in the context of our culturally conditioned situations. We will give special attention to the Bible's teaching on God's concern for the poor and oppressed, on the cosmic work of Christ, in creation and redemption and on the Biblical patterns of *diaconia*, and socio-political justice and the relationship between them. Accepting the Word of God as normative we are especially concerned to understand the Bible's teaching of the effect of Christ's victory on the Cross and his resurrection from the dead for the life and work of the Church as the people of God and the implication of Christ's work in the world outside of the Church, but without blurring the distinctions between salvation p. 272 and ethical righteousness and falling into the errors of universalism in salvation.

We desire to understand the significance of the relation of Law and promise as fulfilled in Christ for our social responsibility and the relationship of judgement and grace in society. Further, we desire to seek afresh the teaching of Scripture on the sovereignty of Christ in the world over all principalities and powers in the context of every appearance of sin and evil in our respective societies.

In the Spirit of the Lausanne Covenant's affirmation on Christian social responsibilities we desire to bring the totality of our life styles, our ambitions for our work and institutions under the Lordship of Christ. We affirm the centrality of the Church in all social service and political involvement and resolve in mutual interdependence to share our resources of life, goods and talents in the service of the Gospel and the expansion of the reign of God's kingdom.

In our relief and development programmes we will not act independently of God's people in the vision that God has given us nor establish structures that weaken the independence of the churches and fragment their unity. We are grieved to learn that in one state in India, for example, there are "more than 120 church-related agencies each voicing its own missiological triumphalism". We will endeavour by God's grace to resist all temptations to cultural and material imperialism, paternalism or empire building for self-gratification. We will identify with God's people so that the church may truly become the sign of the Kingdom of God on earth in judgement and hope.

We give thanks to God for the outstanding contribution of evangelical relief and development agencies in situations of great need and for the dedication and identification of their workers with suffering people. We pledge to support their ministries and to work together as partners in the Gospel. But we also recognise that sometimes our development programmes have become agents of secularising the life of our churches, resulting in divisions and malpractice in the handling of funds and have weakened the churches' evangelistic vision. Therefore, we will give greater priority to the regular evaluating of our projects, and to the ministry of education in our churches in the socio-economic and

political realities of our lands, in understanding the violation of human rights and religious freedom and in the exercise of the gifts of the Spirit in the several ministries to which the Church is called. We will support the Christian education programmes of our churches and agencies and those theological associations committed to evangelism, social service and to socio-political [p. 273](#) justice. We will seek to evaluate the means we use to bring about social change in the light of the Word of God and we will reject using resources that have been accumulated unjustly or that have led to increasing suffering of the poor through economic power structures.

We will support the programmes of local churches both rural and urban that seek to develop training programmes in vocational skills, trades and farming in order to alleviate unemployment, to restore human dignity and to create true community and interdependence. We will support comprehensive development programmes that effectively relate evangelism, social service and the use of appropriate technology in development and that result in justice in society. We are encouraged and challenged by models of such programmes in Chaco, Argentina and Chhatarpur, India that were described to us. We will explore new programmes, such as providing legal aid to protect the poor and powerless against the misuse of law by unjust and corrupt men. We will encourage those whom the Lord is calling to exercise political power to do so in dependence on God and in ways that do not lead to a loss of spiritual vision and power.

Above all we declare our intention to be subject to one another in the bonds of love, to be motivated by the glory of God alone and in love and holiness to proclaim and live the Gospel and in every project and programme to look to the Spirit of God for guidance and power to persevere to the end ever looking for the coming of the Lord. [p. 274](#)

Christian Response to Gay Liberation

A Statement by the Evangelical Alliance, Victoria, Australia

Reprinted with permission

The pastoral concern of this issue of the Review is the restoration of homosexuals to the will of God for their lives. The statement of the Evangelical Alliance and the concerns of the group of students call for clarity on the scriptural teaching on human sexuality, courage to resist pressure groups in the church and in society and compassionate counselling for those enslaved by sin and guilt. In the next issue we will make available information on counselling services and literature.

Editor

The rise of “gay liberation”, by which the right is claimed to practise and propagate homosexuality as a legitimate life-style, represents a serious challenge to Christian faith and morality. Of particular concern is the development of “community churches” catering largely for practising homosexuals (both male and female). The first such “church” was formed in Los Angeles in 1968. Subsequently more than one hundred have been formed

in seven countries including several in Australia. Such disturbing developments call for both clarity and courage on the part of Christians.

Some confusion arises because the term “homosexual” is used loosely and with differing connotations. Originally it denoted those who had an unnatural attraction to those of the same sex. In current parlance the word may cover the whole range of those who find pleasure in the company of their own sex to people who practise homosexual acts. What Scripture condemns is the practice of homosexual acts; while it commends loving relationships like those of Naomi and Ruth, and David and Jonathan.

What we need to ask is: “What does the Bible say about the practice of homosexual acts?”, “How does this relate to the Biblical revelation as a whole?”, and “How may we better live to convey God’s way for His people with love and effect?” We ask these questions not to denounce as persons those who practise homosexual acts or to single out their sin for particular condemnation. Indeed we deplore the ridicule often displayed towards homosexuals. But to take seriously the Biblical call to holiness of life and faithful and obedient discipleship demands that the claims of “gay liberation” be answered and its incompatibility with the Christian life demonstrated. [p. 275](#)

THE BIBLICAL TEACHING

The following passages should be carefully studied in context and in the light of overall Biblical truth:

1. [GENESIS 18:20, 19:1-13](#) (the sin of Sodom)
 - i. Lot regarded the proposed action of the Sodomites as “wicked” (v.7). What was the proposed action?
 - ii. It is clear (v.8) that their wickedness included the sexual abuse of men and women. It is true that in pursuit of the men who had come to Lot’s house the Sodomites were ignoring the eastern custom of courtesy and hospitality towards strangers but that sin was incidental in this case.
2. [LEVITICUS 18:22, 20:11-16](#)
 - i. Homosexual practice is specifically prohibited ([18:22](#)).
 - ii. The penalty for such practice is death, the same penalty being prescribed for adultery and incest. All such behaviour was taken extremely seriously because God regarded these acts as high treason against the continuing life of His people.
3. [ROMANS 1:18-32](#)
 - i. This passage tells of the idolatry, lust and sensuality of men and women in defiance of the revelation of God in creation. Both male and female homosexual practices are specifically denounced in verses [26](#) and [27](#). Those who engage in such practices identify with the completely degenerate (verses [28-31](#)).
 - ii. If even natural revelation should make people aware of a higher call than sensuality, how much more should the saving work of our Lord Jesus Christ? The New Testament letters abound in exhortations calling Christians away from pagan practices so destructive to God’s plan for them ([Galatians 5:16-26](#)), [Colossians 3:5-11](#) etc.).
4. [1 CORINTHIANS 6:9-11](#)
 - i. Note the obvious sinfulness of the matters in this list, which includes homosexual practice, and the loss of inheritance in the Kingdom of God for those who persist in these sins.

- ii. But Christ is able to save from all these, as indeed some of the Corinthian Christians had personally experienced. p. 276 Now they must not be enticed back to their former state.
5. [I TIMOTHY 1:3-11](#)
- i. Note the warning against false teachers who do not use the law lawfully but who speculate from the Bible in order to pander to human pride, and whose teaching does not foster love out of a pure heart, a good conscience and a genuine faith.
 - ii. One purpose of the Biblical law is plainly stated to be for the rebuke of sinners. A long list is given which includes those who practise homosexual acts. All these offenders are to be rebuked as their practices are contrary to sound teaching.
6. [II PETER 2](#)
- This passage leaves no doubt about the character of the sin of Sodom. There is also warning against the false teachers who lead professing Christians into various forms of corruption.

THE BIBLICAL TEACHING QUESTIONED

The Biblical teaching is clear and consistent, yet there are professing Christians who seriously qualify or even reject this teaching. Following are grounds most commonly put forward:

(a) That Biblical cultural backgrounds were different from ours and that Biblical teaching on a particular subject is not necessarily applicable to us. Whatever differences there may have been, the cultures of first century Rome and Greece appear to have been like our own in terms of sexual immorality, including both male and female homosexual practice. Further, the sexual sins are as old as humanity almost regardless of culture. Differences of culture cannot be put forward as an excuse for denying basic elements of Biblical teaching on sexual morality.

(b) That Biblical writers were in error in condemning the practices of male and female homosexuals because they did not understand the problems these people face. Homosexual orientation appears to be caused more by parental and community failure accentuated by false "Christian" teaching and a general permissiveness than by genetically determined inclination. Indeed Dr. John Court (Department of Psychology, Flinders University, South Australia) affirms, "There is no longer any scientific support for the concept that sexual deviations p. 277 and especially homosexuality are genetically determined; there is now overwhelming evidence that sexual behaviour is learned." The problems faced by homosexuals still call for care and understanding on our part, but not to the extent of denying God's best for all His people.

(c) That strict Biblical laws on sexual morality should be set aside in face of the overall Biblical law of love and the forgiveness of God. This follows the so-called "new morality" view that regards the love of God as permissive. The "new morality" wrongfully denies that a holy and loving God would plainly indicate what are the actions that belie His love and alienate His people from Himself. In stressing the forgiveness which God extends freely through Christ, which is effective for those who believe in Him, it is necessary to affirm that forgiveness presupposes a recognition that people need forgiving. To receive forgiveness is to acknowledge sin. All sin is to be shunned by the Christian.

(d) That Biblical injunctions against homosexual practice do not apply to all homosexual relationships but only to those involving idolatrous worship or deviation by heterosexuals. The analogy sometimes suggested between Christian marriage and "committed and

exclusive” homosexual relationships is false in that marriage is plainly commended in the Bible (e.g. [Genesis 2:24](#), [Matthew 19:3–9](#), [Ephesians 5:21–32](#)) whereas the practice of homosexual acts is mentioned only to be condemned in the plainest terms.

A LARGER PROBLEM

We live in an unnatural society; a society in which humanity is debased by the use of the physical and material in an idolatrous and self-willed manner; a society in which sexuality and concerns about sex are artificially stimulated and exploited from base motives; a society in which there are strong pressures for “sexual liberation”. It is understandable then that some will say, “All right, but we’ll do it OUR way”. And the way homosexuals do it is not in every respect more sinful than other sexual sins such as fornication, adultery, rape or incest. The homosexual problem is thus part of the total problem of a sexually sick society.

FULFILLING GOD’S WILL

God reveals His will to us and offers us His mercy and grace. He calls for a courageous response in terms of faithfulness and obedience to His will. In the face of moral permissiveness in our society, Christians **P. 278** are called to affirm the sanctity of marriage and the institution of the family as special God-given relationships. The gift of full sexual expression belongs only within marriage which is the God-given setting for its discipline, its joy, its creativity and its place in the building up, rather than the breaking down of community. This relationship is the context in which the human race is propagated and children find the experience of loving community. Further, parents are meant to raise their children in such a way that they understand clearly what it means to be a boy or a girl. Thus understood, marriage plays a vital rôle in the nurture and building up of the people of God and society as a whole.

But what of the unmarried? Throughout the Biblical period, it was anticipated that people would normally find their vocation in marriage. Nevertheless the Bible recognizes that for various good reasons some people do not marry. The Bible does not say it is abnormal to be single. Our Lord Jesus Christ was no less a man because He did not marry. So Christians should be careful not to suggest that those who remain unmarried are in any way inferior, unfulfilled or morally culpable. The cause of our Lord owes a great deal to those who have been free from personal responsibilities and so able to devote themselves entirely to the work of God. Not all have remained celibate because of any specific call to deny themselves marriage. For many marriage simply has little attraction and there is a preference to develop friendships at a different level, while for others, the opportunity to marry never materializes.

The call or decision of a Christian to be celibate need not involve living alone. Celibacy, as marriage, has to be seen within the context of the Christian fellowship. Extended families and celibate households and communities may form part of the fellowship of the Church and should be encouraged. Such make for a deeper togetherness and a more effective witness in a lonely and divided world where sexual perversity is too often the resort of those seeking a substitute for genuine belonging. With regard to homosexuals, there are resources in saving grace and the fellowship of Christians which, combined with sensitive and skilled counselling, offer them an authentic and truly liberating life-style. This we believe to be God’s plan.

Faithfulness within marriage and continence outside marriage are essential bulwarks against permissive trends in any age. It is only as Christians maintain such high ideals that

we can have the moral right to challenge the pagan concepts of sex which abound in our society and unrestricted so readily permeate the lives of some professing Christians, as was also the case in the first century. p. 279

CLARITY AND COURAGE

The Church needs clarity concerning what the will of God is, and concerning the life, purpose and belonging that He offers us in Jesus Christ. We need such a clarity so that we are not prepared to approve for ourselves or for others anything less than God's best.

The Church also needs courage; courage "to speak the truth in love". It is easy to profess a love or a compassion that obscures truth. Love like that is not love at all for it unjustly denies the truth that sets men free. The love of God does not condone sin yet is so great that it brought His Son to die for our sins. His love saves us from death and brings us to life. The love we profess has to be of that quality. This is the love of God we owe to homosexuals and, more urgently, to those who profess to be Christian.

God makes His way clear. May He grant us grace to accept His way in our own lives and courage to point others away from conformity with this world to a transformation by the renewal of their minds, that they with us may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect ([Romans 12:1-2](#)). p. 280

Counselling the Homosexual

Students at Talbot Seminary

*Reprinted from The Christian Counsellor's Journal (Winter 1979/80)
with permission*

A wide spectrum of opinions exist concerning the homosexual in our society. In the past a homosexual had basically two choices in which to live. He could hide in a closet and live in loneliness and in fear of rejection and discovery, or he could come out of the closet and join in a gay group. Today, with the liberal attitudes of the late 1960s and 70s and with the popularity of minority groups fighting for rights, the homosexual has come out into the public. With the increasing power of gay activist groups has come increasing acceptance and rights in our society. In some religious circles, homosexuality is no longer considered to be a moral disease.

An important aspect of counselling a homosexual is to understand the view he has of himself. Until recently the homosexual viewed himself as abnormal, different, or less of a human being in comparison to heterosexuals. Today, the trend is toward self-acceptance. The slogan "self-acceptance is the first step to happiness" appeared in a homophile publication a few years ago. The slogan captures the current attempt of not only the acceptance of oneself, but his acceptance in the community. No longer do homosexuals want to remain feeling inferior.

How does a Christian who has a homosexual orientation view himself? A Christian's view will depend greatly on what he believes to be the cause of his homosexuality and on how he interprets Scripture. A person who believes that his homosexuality is genetically

caused, who believes that God made him that way, is left with the only option of accepting himself the way he is. He can remove guilt by rationalising that he does not need to change and, in fact, cannot change. A Christian who accurately understands Scripture and believes that his homosexuality is not God-given but learned (the stance that most research holds) is left with conscious feelings of guilt, but he also has strong motivation to change. Change, however, is not easy. A paragraph of a letter written in the book *The Returns of Love* by Alex Davidson illustrates the frustrations and turmoils of such a person.

Dear Peter,

Can you understand it? This is the impossibility of the situation—what I may have, I don't want, and what I do want, I may not have. I want a friend, but more than a friend, I want a wife. But I don't want a woman ...

The writer strongly desires to live a godly life but finds himself [p. 281](#) physically attracted to Peter. With God's help, he is able to overcome temptation and not act out his homosexual orientation or inclinations.

A Christian homosexual often goes through periods of despair, loneliness, idleness and self-pity. At these times the mind is free to wander, frustrated at not being able to act out his sexual tendencies, realising that they are wrong. The temptation can lead to sin or to obedience. A person who views his homosexuality as wrong and desires to change, can change not only in behaviour but in orientation as well. Many Christian men, by condition homosexual, who seek means of understanding themselves and their obligations before God undergo a positive change in their sexual orientation. Others find a sense of grace and resolution regarding their condition but without a change in sexual orientation.

INADEQUATE EXEGESIS

In supporting their own views and feelings, some people have been guilty of inaccurate exegesis of those portions of the Bible which classify homosexuality as sin. A thorough analysis of their interpretation of Scripture passages is presented in order to give the Christian counsellor the Biblical basis for maintaining that homosexual acts are sin.

[Genesis 19](#) (cf. [Judges 19:22](#)): They attack this passage by observing that the Hebrew verb "to know" in [Gen. 19:5](#) does not usually refer to sexual relations in the Old Testament. The NASB translation, however, uses "have relations" or "have intercourse". The *Midrash* indicates that this verb means to know for sexual purposes, just as Adam knew his wife and she conceived. Clement of Alexandria, a church father of the second century, condemned sodomy and taught that it was the reason God destroyed Sodom. Some people also argue that the sin of Sodom was homosexual rape. But this does not explain why Lot offered his virgin daughters to the men ([Gen. 19:8](#)). Also this view cannot be reconciled with [Jude 7](#).

[Leviticus 18:22, 20:13](#): Some people claim that regulations listed here are not for today, since believers in Christ are no longer under the Mosaic Law. They compare these prohibitions to the eating of rabbit, lobster, clams, shrimp, oysters, and rare steak in Lev. Chs. [11](#) and [17](#). It is clear that "by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin" ([Rom. 3:20](#)). But the second part shows that the Law reveals the sinfulness of men. In [Rom. 7:7](#) Paul made a clear statement of how the [p. 282](#) Law reveals sin: "... I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, 'You shall not covet.' "

[1 Samuel 18](#): Some people use the love between Jonathan and David to argue that God blessed a practicing homosexual. However, there is no statement that any homosexual act

took place between them. The Hebrew word for love in [1 Samuel 18](#) is used for the love between man and woman, but it is also used of the love between a slave and his master and love between neighbours and friends. In discussing the meaning of the word “love” in this passage, Dr. J. A. Thompson attaches political overtones to the word. He writes: “Sensing the certainties of the future, Jonathan was ready even then to acknowledge David’s sovereignty over himself and over the nations.”

[Romans 1:26-27](#): Some people believe that Paul was stating that people should not change their sexual orientation. Someone who is born heterosexual should not try to become homosexual, and likewise, someone who is homosexual should not try to become heterosexual. They also teach that this passage condemns just which is sinful regardless of sexual orientation while homosexual love is just as desirable as heterosexual love.

There is no Biblical or biological basis for the concept of a person’s being a homosexual by birth. God made a man, and when it was apparent that no creature was suitable for meeting his needs, God made a woman rather than another man ([Gen. 2:18-25](#)). The concept of the family consisting of husband and wife and children is found throughout the Bible ([Prov. 18:22](#), [31:10-31](#); [1 Cor. 7](#); [Eph. 5:22-6:4](#); [Col. 3:18-21](#); [1 Pet. 3:1-7](#)). The natural sexual function is carried out through the male-female relationship. [Rom. 1:27](#) clearly describes the sin as males leaving the natural use of the female and then desiring other males. The change of sexual orientation is from heterosexual to homosexual.

Some in favour of homosexuality confuse the issue by stating that homosexual love is desirable. Love, in the Bible, is not only desirable but is, in fact, commanded by Christ. However, the Bible does condemn homosexual lust or physical desires which are consummated. The Greek participle “committing” always expresses the bringing to pass or the accomplishment. Homosexual lust (cf. [Matt. 5:28](#)) and its consummation are sin.

[1 Corinthians 6:9](#) and [1 Timothy 1:10](#): Some people or groups teach that these verses do not condemn homosexuality, but they do condemn homosexual perversion. They quote the *Good News Bible* p. 283 which uses the term “homosexual perverts”. Homosexual perversion is just as wrong as heterosexual perversion. When this argument fails, they say that you cannot take this part of the Bible literally. The Greek word *malakoi* ([1 Cor. 6:9](#)) translated “effeminate” in the NASB, refers to “men and boys who allow themselves to be misused homosexually”. The second Greek word is *arsenokoitai* which is a compound word meaning a “male” and a “bed”. According to J. H. Thayer this refers to “one who lies with a male as with a female.” The correct meaning from the Greek is that homosexuality in any form is a perversion. Even a homosexual act done in love is sinful.

While many years of research have contributed to our understanding of homosexuality, its cause or causes remain controversial. However, it can be maintained that there is no justification for a homosexual to claim that he was born a homosexual or that he cannot change his attitudes and behaviour.

COUNSELLING ATTITUDES

The attitude of the counsellor is especially important when counselling a homosexual. The following list is to help the counsellor to develop the right attitude.

1. Wherever appropriate, the counsellor should *verbally* express *positive* belief that some form of help or change is possible. The counsellee comes with an attitude of hopelessness and it is up to the counsellor to give him hope for his problem.

2. From the outset the counsellor must inform the counsellee that his problem is not solely a sexual one. The counsellee will most often come feeling guilty and that he is just a sexual pervert. The counsellor must tell the counsellee that his problem involves other

aspects besides sex; for example, his relationship with parents and other relatives. This information will help relieve some of the counsellee's guilt.

3. From the outset the counsellor should show support of all efforts the counsellee has made in the past to change. Also, any efforts made by the counsellee which coincide with what the counsellor believes will lead to change should be reinforced at the very time they are made or expressed.

4. Early in counselling, the counsellee should be advised that all homosexual imagery will not disappear and that he should not be discouraged by reappearances of homosexual attractions during counselling and later in life. This will help the counsellee to deal with fantasies and attractions when they come and he won't get discouraged as easily. p. 284

5. The counsellor must treat the counsellee as a unique human being. The counsellor must not force change. Don't expect the counsellee to become "typical man". The homosexual will most likely not become aggressively involved with women or actively involved in sport.

6. The counsellor should treat the counsellee on a man-to-man basis. The counsellor must interpret and discourage the counsellee's attempts at transference and also be vigilant against subtle attempts to shift responsibility to the counsellor.

7. The counsellor should, whenever possible, express belief in the counsellee's capacities for independent, assertive activity. The counsellee will need this encouragement to help him change his effeminate behaviour patterns.

8. The counsellor should not be afraid to express genuine, warm feelings for the counsellee when he has made an effort to master or actually mastered a difficulty. Any non-erotic exchange of warmth can be helpful.

9. The counsellor should support all the counsellee's efforts, past or present, to establish appropriate female contact.

10. The counsellor should support all attempts the counsellee has made, past or present, at avoiding homosexual activity.

How do counsellors help a patient overcome his resistance to change?

1. We must support from the outset the counsellee's desire to change.

2. It is important for the counsellee to understand how he relates to people as he related to his father and mother.

3. The counsellee needs to learn and understand why he withdraws from people who see him as an intact male.

4. People are capable of altering their homosexuality consciously, and the counsellor must reassure the counsellee that he has the freedom to make this change.

5. The counsellor must explore the counsellee's sexual values to better understand how resistant he will be to change.

6. The counsellee's passivity must also be understood and talked about. The more passive, the more resistant to change. Therefore more encouragement is needed.

7. It is also very important, for the counsellor to understand thoroughly any past or present homosexual affairs of the counsellee. These must be discussed so they can be dealt with and understood by the counsellee to better understand how he reacts homosexually. p. 285

8. Any ambivalent feelings of the counsellee must be dealt with. Homosexual change is difficult and takes 100 per cent determination and commitment.

Once we have overcome resistance in the counsellee and he has changed, how do we sustain change?

1. The counsellee must become consciously aware of the degree and the amount of time and energy wasted on homosexual fantasies, impulses and acts.

2. The most important way a counsellor can help to sustain change is to make the counsellee aware of the things which trigger his homosexuality.

3. All homosexual attractions, fantasies, or practices, whether masturbatory or overt contacts, must be traced back to their inception each day. A detailed inspection of each homosexual attraction, fantasy, or impulse that leads to an overt homosexual act results in a counsellee's better understanding of the one or many mechanisms that trigger his homosexuality.

4. The counsellee must constantly be on the alert for methods of short-circuiting attractions to people and situations which trigger his homosexuality.

5. The counsellee must be made to consciously recall and identify trigger mechanisms and to think about them.

CHARACTERISTICS OF MOTHERS OF HOMOSEXUALS

1. More frequently the homosexual child is the mother's favourite child.
2. The mother demanded to be the centre of the homosexual's attention.
3. The mother was domineering.
4. The mother spent a greater-than-average amount of time with the child.
5. She did not encourage masculine activities and attitudes.
6. She discouraged masculine activities and attitudes.
7. She encouraged feminine activities and attitudes.
8. She took the son's side against her husband.
9. She often openly preferred her son to her husband.
10. She was unduly concerned with protecting her son from physical injury.
11. In childhood, the son was excessively dependent on his mother for advice and direction. [p. 286](#)

CHARACTERISTICS OF FATHERS OF HOMOSEXUALS

1. Another child was favoured over the subject.
2. The counsellee was the least favoured child.
3. The father spent very little time with the child.
4. The counsellee did not feel accepted by the father.
5. The father failed to encourage masculine attitudes.
6. The counsellee often knowingly hated and feared his father.
7. The counsellee had little respect for his father and did not accept him.
8. The father did not express affection for the counsellee.
9. The father had less respect for the counsellee than other male relatives.
10. The counsellee did not side with the father in parental arguments.
11. The counsellee found it more difficult to cope with his father than with his mother.
12. The counsellee feared his assertiveness would hurt or anger his father.
13. The counsellee felt that his father did not consider his needs.
14. The counsellee did not feel respected by his father.
15. The counsellee did not regard the father as admirable.

These characteristics are not presented as an excuse for a child who has become homosexual, but they are to be of use in working toward a prevention of homosexuality by both the individual family and the Church. These common causes of homosexuality must be known by the counsellor in helping the counsellee know what type of pressures he will still feel if he is involved with his parents while trying to overcome this temptation.

Some further arguments for the cause of homosexuality and how they affect the homosexual are presented by Clyde Narramore:

Glandular disturbances. This occurs when the sex hormones, estrogen and androgen, are out of balance. Not all homosexuals have this imbalance. Many people who have this imbalance are not homosexuals. Also, individuals who have this imbalance have changed from homosexual to heterosexual.

Genetic causes. Personality factors which lead to homosexuality occur subtly in childhood. This leads to the erroneous conclusion that they were born this way.

Dominant mother. She stifles and belittles her son's masculinity. The child then loses respect for his own sex.

Weak father. The son loses respect for his father and his own sex. p.287 For a daughter, she loses respect for men in general.

Over-indulgent mother. The child develops a strong attachment to his mother which cannot be broken as he grows older. No woman or girl can match his mother, so he does not develop normal heterosexual friendships.

Cruel parents. This may cause the child to develop ill feelings toward others of the same sex as the cruel parent.

Poor parental marriage relationship. One of the most common causes. The child grows up with the attitude that marriage is an unhappy and frustrating institution. Avoiding marriage, he turns to homosexual activity to obtain needed sexual gratification.

A too close relationship with a parent of the same sex. The child is unable to develop healthy heterosexual attitudes. Since the child's early experiences have been almost totally with the parent of the same sex, he is unable to relate to those of the opposite sex.

Lack of sex education. When parents treat sex as a taboo, the child often develops poor sexual attitudes.

These causes are presented to show what factors influence the mental attitude of the homosexual. These factors cause him to find his sexual identity in a homosexual act or rôle. Most children go through a period of "curiosity seeking" where many actions might be called homosexual. But usually these do not carry on past puberty. If they do carry on past puberty, then there is a high chance of homosexual identity being formed.

STEPS IN COUNSELLING

The best method for counselling a homosexual seems to be through the framework of Reality Therapy. The following are steps utilising principles:

1. Become involved! One of the homosexual's problems is that people who can help him won't listen to him.

(a) Do not over-react when he tells you he's "gay".

(b) Honour the trust that the person has placed in you.

(c) Separate the individual from the act.

(d) Be genuinely concerned for the individual and show hope in his ability to change.

He can change.

2. Evaluate the present behaviour. Help him see and evaluate.

(a) Recognise that homosexuality is a sin. That's God's opinion, not just yours.

(b) Condemn the act, not the person. p.288

(c) Stress the positive aspects of living according to God's standards.

(d) Stress the negative aspects of living as a homosexual.

(e) Show the homosexual that Christ holds the answer to sin. *He can change!*

3. Plan. Let him make the plan.

(a) Show the homosexual that homosexuality is a total way of life and that if he really desires to change, he must learn a completely new way of life.

(b) Emphasize the importance of breaking off past associations.

(e) Pray with him for the Holy Spirit's guidance in re-structuring his life so as to avoid his old ways and cut ties in order to discourage returning ("If it doesn't work out, I can always go back.").

(f) Do not allow the person to isolate himself, but encourage participation in mixed group activities.

(g) Encourage Scripture memorisation.

4. Alternatives. Let him make the alternatives.

5. Commitments. Do not accept excuses!

(a) Part of the homosexual pattern is lying.

(b) Beware of lies and excuses.

A counsellor needs to encourage the counsellee to change his sexual identity from homosexual to heterosexual. To do this, the counsellor must provide motivation for the counsellee by helping him plan for meeting his needs in a correct manner. The counsellor must really spend time in prayer and in reliance upon the leading of the Holy Spirit for himself and for the counsellee.

Counselling homosexuals is one of the hardest tasks in counselling. The acceptability of homosexual activity and attitudes of society today makes the job especially difficult. A counsellor cannot expect quick change, but must be ready for a long-term process back to correct living.

This article was adapted from a paper compiled by David Antisdale, Jerry Hamilton, Roger Johnson, Robert Krauss and William Reeves, students at Talbot Theological Seminary, La Mirada, California, USA. p. 289

Asian Christian Communicators Lead the Way

Peggy Bee-Tin Yeo

*Reprinted from Asia Theological Association's Asian Perspective 23,
with permission*

The Asian Christian Communications Fellowship was launched in August 1977 on the recommendation of a special Study Commission set up at the Tell Asia Communications Strategy Seminar October 1977 in Hong Kong. ACCF has an all-Asian Board and serves as a catalyst and co-ordinating body for the concerns of Christian Communicators in Asia. It publishes INTERCOM, a monthly newsletter and an occasional ACCF Journal. For further information including membership write to: ACCF c/o P. O. Box 95364 Tsimshatsui, Kowloon, Hong Kong.

INTRODUCING THE MEDIA

Press a button, turn a dial, flip a switch, lift a receiver, buy a newspaper—and the world is at your fingertips. These are the “miracles” of modern communications technology that most of us take for granted today. Most of the capitals in Asia are linked by a network of cable and satellite communications. Some countries such as India, Indonesia and Japan, have their own satellite systems. The ASIAN countries are working on underwater cable links.

Thus the Christian community gets very excited about reaching the unreached millions in Asia through radio, television, print, films, and so on. Many half-informed but well-meaning and earnest Christians start talking gibberish about satellite communications, others get hooked on the hardware of computers, cameras, studio equipment, etc., and “Christian communications” is the in-thing of the day. Every organisation soon has its own communications department.

But what actually is Christian communication? First, let us look at some facts.

The illiterate population in Asia is on the increase. More than half of the world’s illiterates live in Asia and Oceania, and most of them are women (Unesco report). In some countries, the definition of “literate” is the ability to read and write one’s name. Literacy ranges from 95% in Singapore to 11% in Nepal (1967 figures).

Mass media tend to concentrate on the urban areas, to the neglect of the rural areas. This is especially true of the print media, commercial radio, and media requiring expensive (by rural standards) electronic equipment. About 70% of Asia can be considered “rural”, p. 290 ranging from 94% in Bangladesh to a minimal percentage in Singapore and Hong Kong.

In most Asian countries, the mass media are under government control. Religious broadcasting is sometimes gratis (e.g. Sunday church programmes in Hong Kong and Singapore, Islamic programmes in Malaysia and Pakistan). Sometimes time for religious broadcasting is sold on both government and commercial networks (e.g. Japan, Taiwan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka), but often Christian programmes are beamed in from another country.

Research studies show that there is a wide diversity of opinion as to what media are most dominant and heeded. For example, the most dominant medium in Singapore is the newspaper, in Hong Kong, it is television. In the Philippines, radio is the most accessible and widely used, particularly in the rural areas. India is the most prolific film-producing country in Asia.

A new world economic order has come into being which has radical implications for all media. We live in a world in which the resources are being depleted. We have to acknowledge that some resources are not renewable, for example petroleum and other minerals. There is an increased awareness of and resentment toward the economic discrepancies between developed and developing countries, and the wasteful energy consumption of some of these developed countries, in particular the United States of America. On the other hand, the new petroleum wealth of the oil-producing countries, especially the Arab nations, has direct effect on Islamic missions. We can see at least four implications:

- a) there is a need for resource-sharing in media ministries so as to maximise utilisation of resources.
- b) there is a need to adopt appropriate technologies. One example is Gospel Recording’s development of the GRIP player which is operated by batteries, electricity or by hand-cranking.

- c) there is a need for careful and objective evaluation of existing and prospective projects. What types of performance measures do we have? For example, the point in radio broadcasting is not to broadcast as many hours as we can afford, but to broadcast at the best times to reach the specific people for whom we are programming.
- d) there is a need to be a credible source. The accents we speak with may communicate something undesirable. The faces that appear on the TV screen may convey the message that Christianity originates from the developed world and is yet another subtle form of imperialism. p. 291

DISTINCTIVES OF CHRISTIAN COMMUNICATION

Communication is a process—of sharing, interacting, relating, imparting and receiving. To quote Wilbur Schramm:

“Today we might define communication simply by saying that it is the sharing of an orientation toward a set of informational signs ... Information ... is any content that reduces uncertainty or the number of alternative possibilities in a situation. It may include emotions. It may include facts or opinion or guidance or persuasion. It does not have to be in words, or even explicitly stated ... It does not have to be precisely identical in both sender and receiver ... The ancient idea of transferring a box of facts from one mind to another is no longer a very satisfactory way of thinking about human communication.”

(Schramm, 1971)

Christian communication begins with God who communicates—through His handiwork in creation, His written Word in the Scriptures, His prophets throughout the ages, His Son and Spirit who indwell believers. God made man to be a communicative being—interacting within himself, with God and with his fellow-beings. In the beginning there was perfect communication in all these areas. With the appearance of sin, communication was disrupted. Man fled from the voice of God, creation groaned with suffering, man and wife no longer had perfect harmony, brother raised murderous hand against brother. The work of restoration has begun through the coming of the Incarnate Son of God.

Ours is now the task of communicating that gracious work of God in redemption and restoration. How do we do that?

Let us not be carried away by the idea of mass media. All media are but extensions of man (ref. McLuhan’s “The Medium is the Message”). Basically the task of Christian communication begins with the Christian community in its individual and corporate identity and witness. The credibility of the Christian message broadcast through the air-waves, in print or on the tube, must be substantiated by the life of the Christian community. No amount of technological skill and psychological expertise can take the place of the living out of the truth of the Gospel. When we get carried away by skills and technologies we are like children playing with sophisticated toys.

Christian communication then, is the process of interacting with one’s fellow-beings about the Gospel of Jesus Christ, this process being carried out not only in word but also more especially in life.

Someone has said that there are four dimensions to communication: information, education, entertainment and interaction. In Christian communication, we seek to *inform* men and women of the God p. 292 who desires communication with them. We seek to *educate* both Christians and non-Christians in every aspect of life, for after all, what part of life is not “Christian”? We seek to *entertain*, both as a means of gaining a hearing for the Gospel and as a legitimate expression of the beautiful cultures with which God has blessed

us. And we seek to provide a means of *interaction* with one another on crucial issues of life, both temporal and eternal.

DISCOURAGING FACTORS

Let me first give you the dark side of the picture, then the bright side will be a pleasant contrast.

By and large, Christian communications in Asia is dominated by Western personnel and Programmes. Why is this so?

LACK OF TECHNICAL SKILLS

1. There is a lack of technical skills to operate sophisticated equipment, managerial skills to run complex organisations, and financial support from the Asian Church. What are the reasons for this situation?

It is true that in some countries, the type of training necessary is not generally available. And the Christian population is so small that the Christians who are trained in both the technical and managerial fields are correspondingly few in number. However this is not true of all countries in Asia.

Asian social and family structures and obligations make the financial sacrifice of entering so-called “full-time Christian service” a difficult one. When one enters Christian ministry, one is not only making an individual decision, but that decision affects the whole extended family. This is one factor that many western missionaries do not understand because they do not have to take it into consideration in their own decision-making process. Another aspect of this problem is that in most Asian countries, many Christians do not come from Christian homes, and non-Christian families tend not to be sympathetic with a desire to enter full-time service (although some Christian families react in exactly the same way as the non-Christians).

When the Christian community in Asia thinks of “full-time Christian service”, it thinks of ministry within the local church. Serving God in the area of Christian communications is quite a foreign idea.

In the area of finances, the question is complicated by several factors. First, some countries are very poor economically, because of [p. 293](#) natural disasters, corruption, wars and civil unrest, and so on. Second, in some countries, Christians belong to the poorest classes of people. Third, in some contexts, the Church has not been taught to give but has been too long dependent on foreign subsidies. Finally, mass media are the tools of para-church organisations, and churches tend to be suspicious of groups trying to raise support from among their members, thus siphoning away funds.

OUTSIDE CONTROL

2. Because of the funding problem, much of the control is from “outside”. “He who pays the piper calls the tune.” Naturally enough, those who provide the money would like to see their ideas carried out whether or not these ideas are relevant to the context. In one Asian country, a radio station was questioned about the Western programmes that were broadcast. The manager said frankly, “We need the money they pay us to be able to put on our own programmes.” The pity is that the home-made programmes are often more suitable than the imported ones, but the imports pay for and get prime time.

Another problem that is raised by this “outside control” of media is that Christian mass media can become regarded as a threat to an Asian country’s sovereignty and culture. The

Iranian revolution has underlined this fact that Westernisation is regarded as alien and undesirable. Not all Asian countries are so blunt in pointing this out. Most are more subtle, perhaps because of their dependence on Western economic aid.

There is a failure to learn from past mistakes, and under the cloak of “spirituality” a refusal to evaluate past efforts. There is a lack of proper audience research.

ENTRENCHED LEADERSHIP

3. There is a problem of entrenched leadership. Some missionaries have been too long in the field. Perhaps the title may have been given to a national leader, but as long as the missionary is around, that creates authority and responsibility problems. In some cases nationalisation has failed because the right leader was not found. A man may have technical abilities, but not necessarily administrative or leadership abilities. Sometimes older national leaders fear the threat of rising younger leadership. In some Asian countries, Christian vocation seems to be regarded as a retirement job. This is not to **P. 294** despise the offering of the retired, but to indicate the need for open-minded, creative and imaginative leadership.

COGNITIVE BASIS

4. There is a lack of innovation. On the whole, most Christian communications organisations are fearful of over-stepping the theological lines laid down by Western leadership. But why should we be bound by the theological shackles of the Western Church? To quote Miss Melba Maggay, in her article in the ACCF Journal, Vol. I, No. 2:

“The first (issue) has to do with the use of non-propositional language: the body and the image. (This) prompts us to ask the extent to which the Gospel has been tied to a cognitive style alien to the masses of Asians ... There is no denying the power of symbols in the telling of the Gospel. Is the dominance of the sermon culture truly a Scriptural emphasis or is it simply an outgrowth of the largely Western cognitive bias? ... Since the Reformation, the Faith has assumed a heavily propositional quality ... The rise of industrialism with its bias for the language of the technician also seems to have added to the marked reliance on technical theological statement ... There is clearly a need to come home to the original sight-and-sound ambience of Scripture. This is made more intense by the obvious fact that many Asian cultures are not at all oriented towards the propositional style of much of our preaching ...”

TRANSPLANT FAILURES

5. There is a flood of new groups coming into Asia. Groups which have operated “successful” programmes in their own Western countries think that God has called them to initiate the same programmes in Asian countries. An example of cross-cultural ineffectiveness is that of an outreach magazine, fantastically successful in Hong Kong, but meeting with a luke-warm if not decidedly cool reception in Taiwan. And this happens within two different orientations of Chinese culture!

SUCCESS STORIES

What about the bright side of things? It would not be fair to leave the description of the state of Christian communications in Asia on such a negative note. There are many bright

spots on the scene. Creative groups which are experimenting effectively are found in all the media. **P. 295**

ARTS AND TRADITIONAL MEDIA

The Christian Arts and Communications Service in Madras, India, has had nearly nine years of working in the field of dance-drama evangelism. They have a professional troupe of dancers, an orchestra and singers, and use both the classical Bharata Natyam and the popular folk dance forms. (For a fuller account of 'CACs' ministry please refer to the ACCF Journal, Vol. 1. No. 2). Their dance-drama, "Inbam Naan Petra" (The Joy I Received), has met with enthusiastic response from the largely Hindu audiences, who sit enrapt through the long performance. It tells of a Christian girl trying to persuade a non-Christian would-be suicide that she can find joy and forgiveness in Jesus Christ. Through the narrative in dance and song, using some of the parables and some incidents from the life of Christ, the non-Christian girl slowly comes to an awareness of Christ's love. Finally she repents and rejoices in her new-found Saviour.

The Christian Arts Fellowship in Taipeh, Taiwan, has also been functioning for about nine years now. The original (and continuing) emphasis was to raise the level of Chinese theatre arts, as well as to manifest the glory of God in their presentations. This is an amateur, and volunteer group, but one that is keen and dedicated. Their annual two-weeks' performances have played to full houses and won many awards. One of their most outstanding achievements is to take traditional Chinese folk-tales and retell them to underline an aspect of Christian truth.

RECORDS AND CASSETTE TAPES

Gospel Recordings has developed a record player that can be used with batteries, electricity, or operated by handcranking. This development will greatly benefit all those involved in this ministry in the less developed areas of Asia. The players are being produced in Hong Kong.

Shalom Corporation in Tokyo, Japan, has not only produced cassettes of original Japanese Christian music and encouraged budding-lyricists, composers and singers, but they have also made Bible story cassettes for pre-schoolers. These cassettes (or records) are sold with attractive picture books with helps for the mothers. Another development is their "Life-line" service for churches. This takes the form of a 3-5 minutes' recorded message for would-be suicides that is attached to a telephone-answering device. They have invented a fast rewind so that it can almost immediately be re-used for the next caller. **p. 296**

TELEVISION

One of the most exciting developments in television in Asia is the *Kan Tele Project* (Kanto TV Evangelism Co-operation Group), in Tokyo, Japan. This Project was launched in January 1978. In January through March 1979, a 13-week, 15-minute series was telecast to the Kanto area. This series "Ikiru" (To Live—What It Means) gives the testimonies of Japanese Christians as to how Jesus Christ has transformed their lives. The opening three programmes featured Mr. Genzo Mizuno, a Christian poet who has been totally paralysed since childhood. His joyous poems of praise to God are "written" painstakingly by blinking his eyes when he is shown a letter of the Japanese alphabet that he needs to form a word, since he can see and hear but is unable to speak or move. This series was re-issued in April

through June 1979, and a second series is projected for October through December. One special feature of this project is that apart from an initial Lift of US\$10,000 from Japanese Christians in the U.S.A., the rest of the Y 36 million (US\$180,000) has come from Christians and churches in Japan.

PRINT MEDIA

“Breakthrough Magazine” in Hong Kong is undoubtedly one of the greatest success stories of an outreach magazine. It aims at and reaches the unchurched youth of Hong Kong, dealing with topics and issues that are real concerns. Besides the magazine, there are two other departments—the Counselling Department that handles both face-to-face counselling as well as a telephone “Hot-line”, and an audio-visual department that handles the regular radio programmes and audio visual presentations.

Another publishing venture that has met with overwhelmingly good response is the *United Bible Societies’ “New Reader’s Series”*. This is a series of five graded books containing specially translated Scripture passages, geared for new literates. In the last four years, distribution of these has doubled each year. They are available in 126 languages in the Asia-Pacific region, with 22 more in preparation. The target distribution figure for 1979 was 20 million.

Rather different, but still within the realm of print media, is *the United Christian Publishers Service (Hong Kong) Ltd.* This Service was launched in 1978 by eight publishers in Hong Kong. Their intention is to have joint projects. The first such is a joint warehouse in Tsuen Wan. Bearing in mind the prohibitive cost of land and rented floor-space in Hong Kong, this move indicates wise stewardship of [p. 297](#) resources. Another project underway is that of a joint catalogue. There are others under consideration. This type of co-operative effort is rare enough to merit mention when we think of bright spots on the scene of Asian Christian communications!

RADIO

The Voice of Peace in Chiangmai, Thailand, has pioneered in two areas: (a) the use of Thai Christian music, and (b) enlisting church participation in radio programmes. This participation involves both the financial aspects and the programme production.

China Gospel Outreach in Pingtung, Taiwan, had a weekly half-hour FM programme that was not getting much response—until they changed the format. Since 1977 the programme was renamed “Questions about Life”, and dealt with questions sent in by listeners, covering areas of marriage, family problems, sickness, education, careers, and so on. The programme uses a dialogue format. The response averages 300–400 letters per month. (Note: The China Gospel Outreach has now merged with Gospel News Radio in Taichung, and moved to Taichung.)

FILMS

World Wide Pictures in Tokyo, Japan, a group sponsored by the Billy Graham Association, has worked with a secular film company to produce a film based on the famous Japanese novel, “Shiokari Pass”. This film is being shown not only in churches and by Christians, but also in the public cinemas. The story is a moving and powerful one of a young Japanese man who finds faith in Christ, and sacrifices his life on the eve of his marriage, to save the lives of others.

INTER-MEDIA PROJECTS

The Bangkok All Media Penetration Project in Thailand, is worth keeping one's eye on. This is a special three-year effort initiated by the Southern Baptists to use all appropriate media to penetrate Bangkok with the message of Jesus Christ, confronting every person in the city with Him as a culturally acceptable option.

Space does not permit me to tell more of what is happening in Asian Christian communications. We can praise God for giving us such encouraging and stimulating examples. [p. 298](#)

THINKING THROUGH CRITICAL ISSUES

There is much to be done—not in the sense of much activity, but in the sense of thinking through critical issues that face us, and implementing decisions. I want to suggest six areas that need further thought and development.

THEOLOGY AND ETHICS IN CHRISTIAN COMMUNICATION

What is our understanding of the Commission God has entrusted to us? Do the ends justify the means? How much of our communication technique is manipulative and thus debasing to human personality and integrity? What about our practices? How ethical are they—not judged by secular standards, but by God's standards? Do we indulge in dishonest reporting, exaggerated claims, false advertising? How do we raise money? How do we hire personnel?

We must pray for and aim at becoming communicators who are good theologians (practising not theorising), and theologians who are effective communicators.

INDIGENISING THE MEDIA

For too long the Asian arts have been neglected by the Church. There are many reasons: past association with non-Christian religions, ignorance and neglect, a thoughtless or enforced embracing of Western art-forms arising out of Asia's colonial history. The Asian Church must encourage and stimulate the development of her indigenous arts, not just for cosmetic effect, but to really and truly become a *bumiputra* (son of the soil) movement. How do we as Asian Christians communicate to our fellow-Asians that Jesus Christ is for them and was incarnated to identify with them in the fullest sense of the word? He was incarnated into human culture and human thought-patterns. Can we do less?

RESEARCH THAT IS RELEVANT

There are two types of research that need to be developed. The first is investigative—finding out what are the heart-needs of people, the issues that trouble them, where they are, who they are, and how the people of God can reach out to them. The second is evaluative—what are our performance criteria? How well are we doing our job? What are the reasons for failure or success?

Both kinds of research are threatening. The first may show that we have been wasting our time and resources answering questions that [p. 299](#) no one is asking. The second may show that what we think is a success may not be a success after all, but a misunderstanding of cultural patterns of expression.

DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP

Developing leadership is more than just training a person to do a job. Aspects such as human relations, organising ability and personality characteristics are also important.

Another question is that of cultural patterns of leadership. In Asia, age, social status, family connections are all important cultural factors. Two of the many problems that plague Asia are nepotism and corruption. But as we examine these problems, we see a pattern of social obligations and filial responsibilities emerging. The question is, not how to eradicate the problems by eradicating the social patterns, but how to transform the outworkings of the social patterns into healthy Christian manifestations.

RESPONSIBLE COMMUNICATORS

In the face of increasing government control of media, Christians need to be involved in media—not only at the technical production level, but also at the policy-decision levels. In this way, Christians can manifest the truth of Jesus' statement. "You are the salt of the earth". We need to encourage our journalists, radio script-writers, performers, technicians, and others in their professions and to help them be aware of their Christian responsibility within these areas.

THE INTER-RELATEDNESS OF THE MEDIA

Like it or not, mass media give a common face to all shades of Christianity. The man-in-the-street does not concern himself about the segment of the Christian theological spectrum to which a particular broadcast or publication belongs. To him, it is "Christian", and that is enough. What one group says will have the effect of building or destroying the credibility of other groups—there is no escaping this. What then can we do? How can we work together to present a Christian witness that is not self-contradictory, ambivalent and confusing?

CONCLUSION

The church in Asia is living in critical times. With the upsurge of nationalism and revivals of traditional religions, more and more the church will be questioned as to her validity, relevance, and even **p. 300** right to exist. These are also days of unparalleled opportunity, as people shipwrecked on materialism and its attendant problems, and people made destitute by wars and corruption, search for a lasting meaning to life.

We are convinced that the Lordship of Jesus Christ gives the fullest meaning to human life. May God help us to share that conviction!

Peggy Bee-Tin Yeo of Singapore is administrative secretary with the Asian Christian Communications Fellowship based in Hong Kong. p. 301

Practical Theology and Pastoral Training

Ian D. Bunting

Reprinted from Churchman (No. 2 1979), with permission

In this article, Ian Bunting shares his goal of teaching an approach to pastoral training, in which reflection on practice and on theology complement each other.

Editor.

For seven years a single urgent question has pursued me in my work as a pastoral educator in the context of a theological college. What do we mean by that branch of theology which we describe as 'practical' or 'pastoral'? All sorts of issues relating to the content and method of pastoral training are associated with the question. I conclude that the task of the pastoral educator in the theological college is to teach an *approach to ministry* and to make it clear that this is just a part of the much wider range of practical theology which comprehends the Christian life and mission in relation to God's work in the church and in the world.

THE DEBATE ABOUT MEANINGS

It is helpful first to trace the history of the debate about meanings. In the past century the field has been dominated by Schleiermacher's definition of practical theology as the crown of theological studies comprising 'the method of the maintaining and perfecting of the church'.¹ The purpose of theology was to serve the church, and the application of it to the work of the church was the concern of the pastoral educator. Teachers designed pastoralia courses to equip students in a practical way for their future pastoral and preaching ministry. Many clergy now look back with some scorn upon this period as the 'hints and tips' era when teachers were attempting to impart a method of ministry without delving too deeply into the fundamental questions for the church thrown up by the modern study of theology and the contributions of the burgeoning behavioural sciences.

The next stage in the debate, which dates from the nineteen-fifties, represents a reaction against the 'pastoralia' understanding of practical theology but is in fact a sophisticated development of it. p. 302 Having recognized the impossibility of drawing prescriptive solutions from the results of theological research, pastoral educators turned to those sciences, particularly psychology, which were saying things about man and society on the basis of solid empirical enquiry. The deductive approach of the earlier period gave way to an inductive starting-point which well matched the prevailing theological trend. The educational goal, however, did not change. The objective was to equip the minister, by means of these new scientific insights, for his functional responsibilities. The sphere of practical theology was, in the words of Seward Hiltner, '... that branch or field of theological knowledge or inquiry that brings the shepherding perspective to bear upon all the operations and functions of the church and the minister, and then draws conclusions of a theological order from reflection on these observations.'²

Serious problems have arisen from this understanding of practical theology and pastoral training. In brief, it has been hard to establish the academic respectability of the subject in university theological faculties, and it has been hard to establish the professional standing and competence of pastoral counsellors alongside their secular

¹ F. D. E. Schleiermacher, *Die Praktische Theologie nach den Grundsatzeu der Evangelischen Kirche* (Berlin 1850) p.27.

² Seward Hiltner. *Preface to Pastoral Theology* (Abingdon Press: Nashville 1958) p.20.

counterparts. Whereas in the past the minister had a clear identity and profession as minister of the Word, today he has to search for a recognition which he has yet to be granted.

A polarization has taken place. Those who define practical theology in terms of pastoral care and counselling have tried to develop associations which will validate the skills and expertise of their members as professional practitioners. Those who teach practical theology in university settings have, on the other hand, drawn up new definitions and enlarged the scope of the subject in dialogue with their academic colleagues.³ It is this latter development in the academic sphere to which we must now turn.

Karl Rahner, more than any other, has carried the ball of practical theology into the court of the academic theologians. He argues that it is possible to think of structuring the whole of a theological training programme around practical theology, thus rescuing the subject from the taint of being a sub-discipline. He maintains that practical theology extends to all that the church does and consists of an exact p. 303 scientific investigation into the concrete situation of the church, both interior and exterior, thereby becoming both a challenge to the academics and a unifying point of reference for the study of theology.⁴ This concept of practical theology, as reflection upon practice, is the basis upon which university pastoral teachers have defended their discipline and promoted research. In a recent article Robin Gill has highlighted the distinction between what he calls the 'academic' and the 'professional' models of the practical theologian.⁵ He asks for the 'academic' model, normally adopted in universities, to be accorded the same stress as the 'professional' model which is used, for example, by those engaged in practical counselling. He believes that the one can benefit the other. The 'academic' approach will save the 'professional' from easy assumptions just as the 'professional' approach will save the 'academic' from irrelevance. He contends that practical theologians should forsake the idea that we study the social sciences chiefly for their relevance to pastoral techniques. Rather we will need to value them for their descriptive function which, if duly observed, could benefit the whole study of theology as well as the practice of ministry. We will return later to the place of the social sciences in pastoral training but, in their descriptive functions, the social sciences provide a helpful perspective from which to view and evaluate both the practice of the church and the relation of theology to that practice.

GOALS OF PASTORAL TRAINING

Most practical theology is taught, however, within the environment of a residential theological college and directly relates to the training of ministers. Time, together with other academic pressures, forbids either a rigorous academic or professional approach as described above. Even if he accepts the widening scope of practical theology, the pastoral educator in the college must try to narrow down his educational goal to attainable proportions and decide upon a course-content and method which will enable students to achieve the goal. Pastoral training is, therefore, necessarily a limited enterprise. It can, however, equip every student to ask vigorously throughout his ministry, no matter what

³ See A. V. Campbell, 'Is Practical Theology Possible?' *Scottish Journal of Theology*, Vol.25, 1972, pp.217-27. J. A. Whyte, 'New Directions in Practical Theology', *Theology*, Vol.LXXVI, 197.3, pp.228-38.

⁴ Karl Rahner, 'The New Claims which Pastoral Theology makes upon Theology as a Whole', *Theological Investigations*, Vol 11 (Darton, Longman & Todd: London 1974) pp. 115-36.

⁵ Robin Gill, 'The Future of Practical Theology', *Contact*, No. 56, 1977, pp.17-22.

the field, two questions. First, *what* is happening in this situation? More particularly, what is happening that is [P. 304](#) theologically significant? Secondly, *why* is it happening? With the answers to these questions the minister equips himself to evaluate his existing work and to reassess goals and methods for the future. This is what I mean by teaching an *approach to ministry* today. An example will serve to illustrate the point.

A student, Bruce Petfield, conducted a survey in 1978 of nine sets of parents who had had children baptized within the previous two years in Morpeth. The families were selected at random from the registers. In addition, the student interviewed the three clergy from the parish. The purpose of the study was to ascertain the degree of relationship between the perceptions of clergy and people on the nature of, and preparation for, the baptism of infants in the parish.

The answers elicited from the parents revealed that seven out of nine sets of parents had sought baptism as 'the accepted or done thing'. One parent believed that the church 'laid it down', while the ninth mother believed that baptism was a witness, to the child, of the parents' faith. None of the parents recalled the purpose of the pre-baptismal visit of the clergy beyond a discussion of the mechanics of the service. In no case were the godparents chosen for their Christian convictions. Seven out of the nine families reported that no one had made a follow-up visit. No parent was able to articulate the difference that baptism made to the child, and in six cases the child's baptism had not occasioned any further attendance at worship.

The answers elicited from the three clergy who had baptized the children were revealing when compared with the perceptions of the parents. All three agreed that, basically, the sacrament was for the benefit of the child and they were, in general, prepared to set aside the parents' short-comings. They all made efforts to convince the parents of the meaning of baptism and tried to emphasize the point of commitment to the church. They were prepared to admit that they could press the 'mission' aspect harder with their baptism contacts. The student concluded: 'Perceptions of baptism by consumers do not seem to tie in with the perceptions given by the priests involved.' The priests had, therefore, to live with an unresolved tension because, although they believed that baptism was for the good of the child, the fact was that people maintained no greater contact with the church following the baptism than they did before it.

The survey illustrates the nature of the 'What is happening?' question. Priests and people are working at different levels of understanding and there is no engagement of the one with the other. But there is a deeper theological uncertainty. The three priests perceived baptism as a transition from death to resurrection, from darkness to [p.305](#) light, and, in one case, commitment to membership of the church; but the fact was that the parents did not understand or act upon the consequential implications. Why do they not understand? No one may stand in judgement upon the three priests of Morpeth, but it is a legitimate question for any priest who finds himself in their position—and most of us do. The answer could lead to a change of theology on the one hand or, more logically, a change of policy on the other.

Even if we accept an *ex opere operato* view of baptism, we dare not say that the fruit of that doctrine is of secondary importance. Nor may we rationalize the parents' failure in commitment on the basis of their spiritual blindness when they simply do not hear what we are saying. We need to feel the force of this theological issue that pastoral practice does not match doctrinal conviction and, in the parishes, we need to make changes which bring our practice into line with our theological convictions.

The pastoral educator is trying to challenge his students to ask these hard questions so that they may prepare themselves to hammer out an *approach to ministry* which is probing, flexible and open to change.

Reflecting upon the development of pastoral education in the seventies, a former student wrote:

Theological education and pastoral training are like every other branch of education; suffering from a constantly growing mass which totally threatens any truly educative process. Proliferation of curricula and syllabuses is no way at all to tackle future needs of the pastor. The aim must be to train the person *qua* person to be able, when need arises, to educate himself in the particular subject, skills and areas at that time. Therefore, selectivity is the guiding principle. I believe myself that for pastoral studies this leads inevitably to only two major requirements for the future ministry:

- 1) Training in the area of personal and inter-personal relationships.
- 2) Training in openness and readiness to find out.

This is a heartcry. I am utterly distressed at the apparent inability of many clergy even to consider in any valid way a new idea or thought.

Gordon Watt Wyness is making many good points. The theological college is incapable of producing the complete clergyman. More detailed training is better undertaken within the context of actual ministry. The college can, however, foster by courses and learning experiences the kind of openness which will approach the ministry equipped with tools rather than ready-made solutions. [p. 306](#)

THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

Pastoral educators have welcomed the contributions of psychology and sociology as offering just such tools for ministry. We have yet, however, to resolve the problem of how to integrate them into the programme in a way which will serve the intended aim. Two pitfalls confront the college which introduces these subjects into the college curriculum. First, we shall teach the subjects in a way which fails to reach the educational goal I have outlined. An imported teacher, even if he is a Christian concerned about ministry, is unlikely to be theologically equipped to ask the right 'what' and 'why' questions. Let us say that the teacher offers information on a subject which seems to be related to the needs of ministry: motivation, mental illness, bereavement, class, or education, for example. The students tend to respond with questions designed to gain insight into the context in which they are called to minister and, even more, to gain some skills for their future work. They are not likely, unless prompted, to ask 'what' and 'why' questions about what the church is already doing and how this matches up to their theological understanding. In other words, the insights of the behavioural sciences and theology do not feed back upon each other. One way to overcome this divorce is to use team teaching methods, so that a theologian sits in with the imported teacher with the specific objective of asking searching questions for the church and her ministry.

Recently a psychology teacher was giving a class solid information about the incidence, symptoms and treatment of the mentally ill. In the middle of one session the teacher threw in a question about demon possession and Jesus' handling of the phenomenon. The reactions fell broadly into two predictable camps. Some students concluded that Jesus healed the possessed much as a psychiatrist relieves some forms of mental illness today. Others protested that this was tantamount to a denial of the supernatural. The issue led into a fruitless debate; fruitless because it hardly touched on the church's ministry to the mentally ill or attempted to evaluate what the church was in fact doing in this particular field. Indeed, when the teachers made this point it soon became clear that there was no hard evidence such as was available in respect of the medical treatment of the mentally ill. The class could only discuss the matter on the basis of impressions and individual incidents. We just did not know what was the effect of

Christian ministry to the mentally ill or the possessed. Nor had we any hard evidence about Christian attitudes and behaviour to such people which might, one suspects, have thrown p. 307 some sharp questions against the church's self-understanding on the one hand and her concept of the Christian mission on the other. In brief, the important educational goal of this particular part of the psychology course was not to teach students about mental illness, nor to demarcate the boundaries beyond which they ought to seek professional help, nor to equip them for a ministry to the mentally ill, but rather to give an understanding of what the church could do and ought to do in this field: in other words, an *approach* to this ministry.

The other pitfall which confronts the college which introduces the behavioural sciences into the curriculum is the danger of approaching all practical theology inductively. In an age which has lost confidence in the ability of the Bible to speak to modern issues, this has considerable appeal. We easily slide into the view that the assumptions of sociology and psychology prescribe the sphere and activity of the Holy Spirit. But just as we find it important to place the life and work of Christians under the magnifying glass of the social sciences, so we shall want to weigh that evidence from a truly biblical and theological perspective. One of the greatest privileges and responsibilities of the ministry is to make choices. It is, of course, possible to make those choices simply on the basis of the calls made upon us by the voices that shout loudest. In the pressures of a pastoral ministry these easily consume all our energy and time. The minister can, however, operate on the basis of certain selected priorities. Surely the apostolic nature of his calling demands just that. In establishing these priorities he needs clear theological perspectives which derive first and foremost from the Bible but also from the tradition and doctrine of the church.

Forgive, please, a personal illustration as I approach once again a pastoral ministry in a parish of some 30,000 people. It is important for me to try to identify some clear aims for the work which lies ahead. The ministry cannot simply respond to the calls which are made upon it, nor operate only with techniques which appear to be successful elsewhere, but must try to give direction to the church. Four aims emerged from a study of the nature and purpose of the church and the kingdom in the Bible:

- 1) The church exists to proclaim, by work and act, the kingdom of God and to extend its borders. In other words, the church cannot live for her own sake but engages in Christ's own mission to tell the good news beyond the boundaries of her own fellowship.
- 2) The life of the church is that which communicates most p. 308 effectively the challenge of the gospel. A style of life is the most powerful agent of change which the church possesses.
- 3) Every member of the church has a ministry to be recognized, trained and used. This understanding of ministry will take the typical parish into structural and procedural change.
- 4) There is a world-dimension to the Christian mission. In recent years the church in the western world, fascinated by herself, has lived in isolation from what God is doing in the rest of the world. We must correct the imbalance.

A theological reflection on ministry today has helped me to identify these four aims. They will provide a useful standard by which to evaluate what is happening now and to approach changes in the future. Reflection upon practice will hopefully stand alongside reflection upon theology, and the objective is that they will complement each other. If the pastoral educator helps the student throughout his ministry to do both, he will provide an *approach* to his work which will prove a valuable tool to last a lifetime.

Ian D. Bunting is Rector of Chester-le-Street, Co. Durham, England. He was previously Director of Pastoral Studies at St John's College (Anglican), Durham. [p. 309](#)

Book Reviews

FAITH AND CHURCH

Reviewed by David Allen Hubbard:

Joyce C. Baldwin, [*Daniel: An Introduction and Commentary*](#)

Reviewed by J. W. Rogerson:

John Goldingay, [*Songs from a Strange Land*](#)

Reviewed by Ronald Nash:

Carl F. H. Henry, [*God, Revelation and Authority*](#)

Reviewed by John Goldingay:

James Houston, [*I Believe in the Creator*](#)

Reviewed by George Mallone:

David Watson, [*I Believe in the Church*](#)

THEOLOGY AND CULTURE

Reviewed by Andrew Kirk:

Allan Boesak, [*Black Theology, Black Power*](#)

Reviewed by Tony Gough:

Patrick Sookhdeo (ed.), [*Jesus Christ the Only Way*](#)

Reviewed by J. V. Ferreira:

Moti Lal Pandit, [*The Fundamentals of Buddhism*](#)

MISSION AND EVANGELISM

Reviewed by Ron White:

Margaret Ford, [*Janani: The Making of a Martyr*](#)

Reviewed by Gerald Anderson:

Johannes Verkuyl, [*Contemporary Missiology: An Introduction*](#)

Reviewed by Martin Goldsmith:

Lesslie Newbigin, [*The Open Secret*](#)

Reviewed by William Parnell:

Alfred Krass, [*Five Letters at Sundown*](#)

ETHICS AND SOCIETY

Reviewed by E. David Clark:

Christopher J. H. Wright, [*What Does the Lord Require?*](#)

Reviewed by Frank Breisch:

Donald Kraybill, [*The Upside Down Kingdom*](#)

Reviewed by Irving Hexham:

Alan Storkey, [*A Christian Social Perspective*](#)
Reviewed by Kathleen Nicholls:
Robert M. Yule, [*Religion in Communist Countries*](#)

PASTORAL MINISTRY

Reviewed by Joseph Hall:
Robert E. Webber, [*Common Roots*](#)
Reviewed by Jay H. Grimslead:
Richard F. Lovelace, [*Homosexuality and the Church*](#)

THEOLOGICAL AND CHURCH EDUCATION

Reviewed by Stuart Gardner:
A. Elwood Sanner & A. F. Harper (eds.), [*Exploring Christian Education*](#)
Reviewed by Carl F. H. Henry:
James F. Engelt, [*Contemporary Christian Communications*](#) p. 310

Book Reviews

FAITH AND CHURCH

Daniel: an Introduction and Commentary

by Joyce G. Baldwin

(Inter Varsity Press, pp.210, \$7.95)

Abstract of a review by David Allan Hubbard in *Eternity* magazine October 1979.

Outstanding, formidable ... If I could own only one book on Daniel it would be this. Those who have assumed that a Maccabean date (about 165 B.C.) had the lions share of the evidence on its side will need to reckon with Baldwin's presentation of evidence for the unity, historicity and prophetic character of the work. Her section on apocalyptic literature is a model of careful scholarship. So is the way she handles the arguments about which four empires Daniel foresaw and what the numbers mean. Date-setters or calendar calculators will gain little comfort here. But anyone who wants to understand the historical and cultural backgrounds of the neo-Babylonian and Persian Empires will find a mint of information.

Those who seek understanding of God's sovereignty in the midst of political repression and religious persecution will find that Baldwin's exposition opens up the vast treasures of Daniel's stories and visions.

Songs from a Strange Land

by John Goldingay

(Inter Varsity Press 1978, pp. 172, £2. 15)

Abstract of a review by J. W. Rogerson in *Churchman* Vol. 93 No. 2, 1979.

[Psalms 42-51](#) include some of the most important of the psalm types which have been identified by modern scholarship. There are individual and communal laments ([42-44](#)), royal and Zion psalms ([45-48](#)), a covenant psalm (50) and psalms which reflect upon death (49) and forgiveness (51). Mr. Goldingay has chosen psalms admirably suited to reflect something of the psalter as a whole. The expositions, while closely related to the text, are not a verse-by-verse commentary, and this enables the author to bring out the meaning of his chosen psalms clearly under striking headings which are also related to contemporary life. The book is based upon careful scholarship, provides background illumination from Palestinian topography and climate, and by many references to other biblical passages introduces its [p. 311](#) reader to a much wider understanding of its Bible than might be suggested by the title.

God, Revelation and Authority, Volume III

by Carl F. H. Henry

(Word, 1979, pp.536, \$24.95)

Abstract of a review by Ronald Nash in *Christianity Today* February 22, 1980.

Carl Henry continues to expound his fifteen theses about inspiration, revelation and biblical authority which will culminate in a fifth volume on the doctrine of God in 1983. In the third volume Henry's thesis is that God's special revelation culminates in Jesus Christ who is the incarnation of God. God made himself known in the person and work of Jesus of Nazareth. So Jesus' view that the Scriptures are inspired and authoritative is normative for the believer. Henry critiques the claim that God's revelation in Jesus eliminates or supersedes any need for a revealed Scripture. Jesus himself recognised that "genuine faith has an intellectual content not reducible to naked faith in a person."

Henry insists that cognitive knowledge of God is possible and does not miss one of the assaults that has come to this claim.

He lays a foundation for his position through an extended analysis of the Logos-concept in Christianity. The Logos presupposes an intelligible order or logos in things, an objective law which claims and binds man and makes possible human understanding and valid knowledge." As the Logos of God, Jesus guarantees human rationality and certifies the ability of man to understand the Word of God. The correspondence between the mind of God and the mind of man that is grounded in the Logos makes possible a human understanding of the divine communication of truth.

Henry denounces the prevalent neo-orthodox tendency to drive a wedge between the logic of God and a so-called human logic, a move that can only lead to total scepticism. If the divine and human reasoning processes differ in any significant way, all knowledge about God becomes impossible and all human reasoning, including that of neo-orthodox theologians is vitiated. If God speaks and knows the truth, and man speaks and knows something different, then, quite simply man cannot have either truth or knowledge. If man can know [p. 312](#) anything at all, then at that point at least, man's knowledge and God's knowledge must coincide.

Affirming that God's revelation is a rational communication of truth, Henry insists that God's revelation is not contradictory and that it is expressed in meaningful propositions that convey intelligible ideas. Human language is a more than adequate carrier for the truth God reveals, and human reason is capable of understanding God's revealed truth. "In the theistic view, language is possible because of man's God-given endowment of rationality, of *a priori* categories and of innate ideas, all of which precondition his ability to think and speak. Since every human mind is lighted by the Logos or reason of God,

thought stands behind language ... Human language is adequate for theological knowledge and communication because all men are divinely furnished with certain common ideas.”

I Believe in the Creator

by James Houston

(Hodder and Stoughton, 1979, pp. 288, £3.95)

Abstract of a review by John Goldingay in *Churchman* Vol 93. No. 4 1979.

After a chapter on ‘The World We Live In’, the book centres on the Creator himself—the nature of his creative work and of man in the context of creation as Genesis describes these, the nature of his ongoing relationship with his creation, and the relationship of creation to Christ and vice-versa. The second half covers life with the creator in its various aspects: culture and civilization, wisdom, joy and hope.

Dr. Houston sets Christian affirmations in the context of nonChristian questions, ideas and doubts. He encapsulates insight in a nice phrase. ‘Wisdom is the awareness of mystery in a structured world’ (p.181). Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes illustrate respectively ‘living in a structured world, living in a suffering world, and living without the immediate presence of the Creator’ (p.195).

I found myself often disagreeing with Dr. Houston over specific points, for instance with his comments of [Genesis 1–2](#). If as an Old Testament lecturer I have problems with his handling of the biblical material, what would an expert on Tao or English literature want to query? [p. 313](#)

I Believe in the Church

by David Watson

(Hodder and Stoughton, Eerdmans 1979, pp.378, \$4.95)

Abstract of a review by George Mallone in *Christianity Today* February 22, 1980.

David Watson begins by showing that the deteriorating condition of the local church is the greatest block to the acceptance of the gospel. Until that blockage is repaired, there will be only a marginal Christian impact on culture. “Unless renewal precedes evangelism, the credibility gap between what the church preaches and what the church is will be too wide to be bridged. It is only when the world sees the living body of Christ on earth that it will in any way be convinced of the reality and relevance of Christ himself.”

He recites the great biblical themes of ecclesiology but is not a man who traffics in un-lived truths. He and his family work out what it means to be a part of the people of God by living in a community that includes the sharing of a “common purse.”

Watson, a charismatic Anglican, is concerned that the Holy Spirit be allowed to be a dynamic person of the Godhead who brings the presence of Jesus to the church in life and vitality. He rejects the exegesis, theology and cultural motifs of classical Pentecostalism, but maintains the need for a Spirit-controlled, gift-oriented community.

The church is called to serve and to save: therefore any creative vehicle that can be used with integrity can be of service in the church’s mission—a craft shop, restaurant, open air drama or dance, city-wide rallies or small house fellowships.

Worship must be wedded to evangelism. “We preach and answer questions that have been raised by our praise.” Watson also concludes that the Scriptures demand the full equipment and emancipation of every believer-priest to the ministry for which God has gifted him. This demands a reassessment of the ministry of women and the sharing of the pastoral oversight with a plural eldership.

Watson writes as a fellow-pastor (St. Michael’s, York, England) who has done his homework, both in and out of the study.

THEOLOGY AND CULTURE

Black Theology, Black Power

by Allan Boesak p. 314

(Mowbrays 1978 pp. 185 £2.95)

Abstract of a review by Andrew Kirk in *Churchman* Vol 93, No. 1, 1979.

Boesak is a black South African minister of the Dutch Reformed Church. He seeks to show how and why black Christian thinkers in the South African situation have ended their innocent acceptance of white theological norms as either universally valid, objectively true or socially neutral.

The author discusses his understanding of theology in a black context in conjunction with the American black theology of James Cone and others. The differences are more striking than the similarities. In South Africa blacks are a majority and can hope sometime to exercise power: they have less of a threat to their self-identity; they speak more of black consciousness than black power, and at least in Boesak's case his Reformed background gives his study more biblical depth and theological consistency than say James Cone's.

The book is an excellent guide to the kind of question which theology in South Africa is bound to raise and is a fine example of the method to be adopted for any pertinent Christian thinking in a complex social context.

Jesus Christ the Only Way

edited by Patrick Sookhdeo

(Paternoster Press 1978 pp. 159, £2.40)

Abstract of reviews by Tony Gough in *Christian Graduate* September 1979 and Martin Goldsmith in *Churchman* Vol. 93 No. 3, 1979.

This book developed from a commission set up by the Evangelical Alliance to study both theologically and practically a Christian approach to those of other faiths in Britain's multi-racial society. A section on basic principles of relationship with adherents of other faiths is followed by specific discussion of a Christian approach to Islam, Jews, and Oriental faiths. In a third section representatives of the Buddhist, Hindu, Islamic, Jewish and Sikh religions share what they think most important to tell British Christians about the communities they represent. This section enhances the value of the book, whose chapters vary in quality, since almost everything evangelicals read about other faiths is written from the Christian standpoint. p. 315

The Fundamentals of Buddhism

by Motilal Pandit

(I.S.P.C.K. New Delhi 1979 pp.83. \$2.50)

Abstract of a review by J. V. Ferreira in the *The Examiner* April 1980. Bombay.

Mr. Pandit sets out the fundamentals of Buddhism. The Buddha's enlightenment was the discovery that the cause of human suffering was desire or attachment to life. To eliminate suffering one had to extinguish desire and snap the attachment to life, by noting the four noble truths that there is suffering, it has a cause, it has to be got rid of, and can be got rid of by the eightfold path or right understanding, thought, effort, mindfulness, speech, action, livelihood and concentration.

Western intellectuals are attracted by the rationalism of Buddhism, its moralism without God or soul, its middle way, its stress on individual endeavours, its interpretation of reality as flux, and its therapeutic value.

Pandit notes that the Buddha's concept of man is negative because it obliterates the important notion of man as a person. It is the personal 'I' which enables man to relate himself to God and share by analogy in his being. Again in the Buddha's scheme of things, man is not a fallen creature; he is simply a victim of the casual forces of the cosmos. Thirdly, Buddhist freedom and Christian freedom are not identical. The former lacks the responsibility and authenticity which flow from the latter as a result of the relation between a person and the Source of his being.

Mr. Pandit has succeeded admirably in communicating the fundamentals of Buddhism and in briefly evaluating them from the standpoint of a Christian.

MISSION AND EVANGELISM

Janani, the Making of a Martyr

by Margaret Ford

(Lakeland 1978 pp.93, 95p)

Abstract of a review by Ron White in *Christian Graduate* June 1979. p. 316

Margaret Ford was secretary to Archbishop Janani Luwum of Uganda when he died in February 1977. She sketches his life from childhood and combines details of his arrest, trial and death which had previously only been available in magazines and letters. The book parallels the first Easter and ends not in death but in resurrection.

Margaret covers many of the difficulties encountered by the Church in Africa: (a) Tribalism: Janani's tribe had well-grounded fears when Amin seized power. (b) Rivalry between the Catholic and Anglican churches: Janani had close links with Cardinal Nsubuga towards the end. (c) Difficulty in accepting the work of the Holy Spirit: Janani was changed during the East African Revival and was not afraid of the current renewal. (d) Keeping the gospel free of Western cultural connections and of apparent affiliation to any political party. (e) Tension between Church and State. When should the church speak out against a corrupt government? Janani made his decisions with the full co-operation of his bishops and paid for it with his life.

Contemporary Missiology: an Introduction

by Johannes Verkuyl

Translated by Dale Cooper

(Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1978 pp.xiv 414 \$14.95)

Abstract of a review by Gerald H. Anderson in *Occasional Bulletin of Missionary Research* April 1979 Vol. 3 No. 2.

Johannes Verkuyl's *Contemporary Missiology* is a monumental achievement, with its encyclopedic scope and coverage, rich bibliographies, ecumenical perspective, and evangelical commitment. His book traces the historical development of missiology as a theological discipline, then surveys the major figures, books, and centres for mission studies during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Chapters are devoted to the biblical foundation, the motives, goal, purpose, ways, and means for mission. His surveys of ecumenical organizations and theological developments in the Third World, and mission in six continents, are especially useful for orientation and reference.

Of particular importance is Verkuyl's treatment (44 pages) of "The Church and the Jewish People"—a topic usually avoided by missiologists today. He maintains that the phrase "mission to the Jews" is theologically incorrect, and that any relation between Christians and Jews "must take the form of a dialogue" (p. 134) He denies however, p. 317

that the goal or purpose of dialogue with Jews is different from that of mission to people of other faiths. This blurring of a distinction between dialogue and mission needs clarification, so as to avoid misunderstanding among Jews and other non-Christians who already suspect that dialogue is the new name for evangelism in Christian mission.

In chapter 13, on "Trends in the Theology of Religions", Verkuyl gives a summary and synthesis of the issues and directions in this area, with valuable discussion of German and Dutch literature that is not so well known and accessible to English readers. While calling for a "fresh theology of religions" he is very critical of the directions taken by Rahner, Schlette, Panikkar, Halbfas, Heislbetz, Camps, Bleeker, and W. C. Smith. He prefers Newbigin, Kitamori, W. Andersen, M. M. Thomas, and Vicedom, who begin with a trinitarian confession. Neither Roman Catholics nor conservative evangelicals will feel that Verkuyl has given adequate and balanced attention to their concerns and contributions in missiology. Nevertheless the book is a reference tool of abiding value.

The Open Secret. Sketches for a Missionary Theology

by Lesslie Newbigin

(Eerdmans U.S. A. 1978, S.P.C.K. pp.214 \$4.95, £3.95)

Abstract of reviews by Martin Goldsmith in *Churchman* vol. 93 No. 4 1979 (reprinted from *The Harvester*) and by James A. Scherer in *Occasional Bulletin for Missionary Research* Vol. 4, No. 2, April 1980.

The distinguished bishop of the Church of South India sees the Bible as normative for missiological reconstruction and tests all contemporary ecumenical themes by it. He grounds his approach in the theology of the Trinity and is clearly Christ-centred in his presentation of the kingdom-of-God. Mission is therefore 'the proclamation of the kingdom, the presence of the kingdom, and the prevenience of the kingdom through union with the crucified and risen life of Jesus, and we act out the hope of the Spirit "who is the living foretaste of the kingdom".'

He wrestles critically with the major modern missiological options: universality vs particularity; the central role of action for justice in mission; the proper understanding of church growth (where he critically compares some aspects of the church growth movement with the other classic approach of Roland Allen); contextualization of [p. 318](#) theology, and the presuppositions for interreligious dialogue (on which Goldsmith finds him fairly conservative but open to criticism for such statements as "there is no distinction between Christian and pagan because the same Lord is Lord of all and bestows his riches on all who call upon him")

The book breaks little new ground, mostly consolidating positions expressed by the author in earlier writings.

Five Lanterns at Sundown. Evangelism in a Chastened Mood

by Alfred C. Krass

(Eerdmans 1978 pp.225 \$5.95)

Abstract of a review by William E. Pannell in *Occasional Bulletin of Missionary Research* April 1980.

Krass understands evangelism as God's call to discipleship, set in the context of the eschaton. For some the "last days" are heavy with judgement, but Krass sees them as pregnant with possibilities. He takes his cue from French sociologist Emile Durkheim to formulate a historical/sociological rationale for hope. When Krass centres this rationale in Durkheim's views of the importance of individuals transcending themselves, it becomes eschatological. This willingness to take history and God's activity in history

seriously provides the necessary hermeneutic which leads him beyond the characteristic western view of evangelism.

This view was based on an inadequate reading of God's saving intention as expressed in Jesus and Paul, producing a highly individualistic salvation, and an antihistorical understanding of the divine in the historical realm. In calling for a more scriptural view of God's saving purpose, Krass reflects on the dynamic of Jesus' announcement that the "kingdom has arrived". This is consistent with his understanding of history and redemption. If the Good News is to be heard as Good News it must mean more than a personal way to be privately happy. It must be the call of God to follow Christ in a new social order, an order at once united to God in Christ and committed to the world to which Christ is committed. Evangelism is the announcement of a distinctively new social understanding of human existence in Christ. Hence evangelism has not only to do with proclamation, but also with the style with which that proclamation is fleshed out. [p. 319](#)

ETHICS AND SOCIETY

What does the Lord Require

by Christopher J. H. Wright
(Shaftesbury Project 1978, pp.24, 45p)

Abstract of a review by E. David Cook in *Churchman* Vol 93, No. 1.

ERT reprinted one of the three articles in *Third Way* on OT ethics by Christopher Wright in Vol 2 No. 1, 1978. These have been collected and published as one book in which Wright examines the authority and relevance of the ethical material of the OT. His plea is to use all the material of the OT and to give proper weight to the context of Israel's experience of redemption. He applies his hermeneutical method to the laws of the OT to understand and then to look for their significance today. Finally he applies his method to the institution of the Jubilee.

The Upside Down Kingdom

by Donald B. Kraybill
(Herald Press, 327 Pp, Pb \$5.95)

Abstract of a review by Frank Breisch in *Eternity* magazine October 1979.

The thesis of this study in the Synoptic Gospels by an Anabaptist sociologist is that "the kingdom of God is an inverted or upside-down way of life in contrast to the usual or prevailing order". This means that "The corporate life of the people of God will be visible, external and political. These are the people who discern the demonic tendencies of economic, political and religious institutions to perpetuate injustice ... conspicuously share instead of consuming ... practice Jubilee rather than accumulate wealth ... give without expecting a return ... forgive liberally as they were forgiven."

The sociological perspective from which Kraybill writes provides concepts which illuminate scripture. Note his description of the kingdom as a collectivity rather than an aggregate, his study of Jesus' temptation as centred round the three main social institutions—political, religious and economic.

When he deals with the words of Jesus which touch our economic [p. 320](#) and social life, he assumes that they must be taken literally. His reaction to the evangelical tendency to take those passages spiritually blinds him to the situational factors which he considered when interpreting those passages.

A Christian Social Perspective

by Alan Storkey
(I.V.P., Leicester, UK, 1979, pp.416, £6.50 Pb)

Abstract of a review by Irving Hexham in *Crux*, March 1980.

The first hundred pages of this book are a stimulating and very helpful survey of the development of the social sciences and their anti-Christian ethos. Here Storkey shows that faith commitments of the founders of sociology are still at the root of modern sociology.

Although Storkey makes many good points and provides the reader with a host of ideas his basic framework seems to be a simplified and somewhat Biblicist interpretation of the views of the Dutch Christian philosopher Herman Dooyeweerd. The question must be asked why so many Christian authors are good at analysing the failure of secular thought but unable to create a really consistent and dynamic Christian alternative.

In the section on *primary sociology* he deals with what he calls “free relationships” and then develops his views on “class”, “marriage”, “the family” and the “mass media”. The chapters on marriage and the family are provocative but somewhat confusing. Storkey’s ideal “Christian” family seems to confuse honesty and trust with privacy and transparency.

The book improves in the final section on *secondary sociology* where Storkey is more at home with political and economic issues. As a Christian commentary on British society, the book is excellent. It ought to challenge other scholars to produce similar works equally rooted in their own cultures. The weaknesses of the book are theological and theoretical. Its strength is its practical attempt to apply the Gospel in a specific situation. This is a book I would highly recommend for all those interested in developing a Christian social perspective. It is an ambitious, provocative work which pioneers Christian reflection in a vitally important area of academic debate. [p. 321](#)

Religion in Communist Countries

A Bibliography of Books in English

Compiled by Robert M. Yule

(New Zealand Society for Study of Religion and Communism, 1979, pp. 73, \$3.00)

Reviewed by Kathleen D. Nicholls

Although there is an abundance of books and bibliographies on Communism and Communist countries, Robert Yule’s comprehensive survey on the relationship of religion and communism in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, China and Asian communist countries fills a conspicuous gap. It lists not only books but individual contributions to collected works and symposia. Details of journals and bibliographies are listed but not articles contained in them. The survey includes some English language books reflecting the official communist party view point on religion. Few of the titles listed are more recent than 1976. With the constant flow of materials the survey is already in need of revision especially on the Asian section. A welcome addition would have been a listing of books on ChristianMarxist dialogue that have taken place in recent years. The author, a Presbyterian minister and co-founder of the New Zealand Society for the Study of Religion and Communism is to be commended for providing libraries, research workers and students of religion and politics with such a useful resource tool.

PASTORAL MINISTRY

Common Roots: A Call to Evangelical Maturity

by Robert E. Webber

(Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan, The Paternoster Press, Exeter, 1978, pp.256, \$8.95, £5.00).

Abstract of reviews by Joseph H. Hall in *Presbyterion* Vol. 5 No. 2 1979 and by Timothy Weber in *Themelios* April 1979.

Robert Webber (Associate Professor of Theology, Wheaton College, Ill., U.S.A.) has given us a book whose theme revolves around two poles—an emphasis on the early church during the first five centuries as a norm for evangelicals today (thus the title: *Common Roots*) p. 322 and an equally emphatic stress on the social responsibility of the church in the contemporary world. The emphasis on getting back to the pristine integrity of the church—particularly the second century church—would indeed be laudable were that church the acme of achievement. Lutherans and Reformed churches have taken the position that progress exists in the development of doctrine and that the acme of that development was reached in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Hall comments that we should avoid the pitfalls of absolutising any age in the matter of progress of doctrine and life.

For the most part, Webber's observations and suggestions are provocative and pertinent. He looks at the life of the early church in five areas—the church, worship, theology, mission and spirituality. He contrasts the man-centredness in much modern worship with the early stress on Word and sacrament. He calls evangelicals to recover the early church's balanced view of Christian mission and its corporate spirituality. More controversial is his appeal to the apostolic witness to Jesus Christ as the authoritative source of all Christian truth and not to the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture. *Common Roots* is a valuable contribution to the rising consciousness of American evangelicalism. This book deserves to be taken seriously.

Homosexuality and the Church

by Richard F. Lovelace

Fleming Revell (Old Tappan, N.J.: 1978, pp. 158. \$6.95)

Abstract of a review by Jay H. Grimstead in *Themelios* September, 1979.

A well researched and written book which may be heralded as a definitive work on the subject for the decade of the 1980's. The author maintains that the 'Bible's teaching on human sexuality is not occasional and fragmentary, but is a central ... body of doctrine running through the whole structure of biblical ethics' (p.103). Furthermore, 'it is no accident therefore that every form of sexual expression outside the marriage covenant which is the centre of the family is explicitly or implicitly condemned in the remainder of Scripture'. (p.104).

There are two weaknesses which may render the book a somewhat less helpful tool than it might otherwise have been, First, there seems to be present an unsubstantiated optimism that practicing homosexuals p. 323 in the mainline denominations will either accept the traditional viewpoint and repent, or that they will transfer to a homosexual denomination. Second, it appears inconsistent with the character of Christianity to engage in debate as to whether or not it is proper to ordain to the ministry of God those who are practicing homosexuals.

In spite of these two criticisms, the book will undoubtedly remain a classic in the field as long as there is serious discussion on homosexual ordination in the church.

THEOLOGICAL AND CHURCH EDUCATION

Exploring Christian Education

Edited by A. Elwood Sanner & A. F. Harper

(Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1978, pp.504, \$11.95)

Abstract of a review by Stuart Gardner in *Crux*, March 1980.

The authors of *Exploring Christian Education* work hard at identifying the important questions that I believe we all need to be asking about Christian Education in the 1980s. Throughout the book the 19 writers affirm that the goals and values of Christian education are to be derived from a Christian theology and not from secular methodology. Although a particular theological bias is not forced on the reader, the book is definitely written from the Wesleyan-Arminian viewpoint and most of the examples and illustrations stem from churches of that tradition.

Basically the book falls into three sections: foundations, curriculum, and structures. Thirty-two pages of appendices include a detailed consideration of “the nuts and bolts” of Sunday School teaching. It would have been helpful to know the specific location and background of each contributor. Unfortunately only 1/3 of the total references cited are post-1971. The delay between the writing of the different chapters and the subsequent publication was partly due to all of the contributors having to read and critique the entire manuscript at several stages of its development. This process adds solid unity and strength, but a significant amount of contemporaneousness and immediacy is sacrificed.

The fourth chapter, “The Theological and Philosophical Bases of Christian Education” is particularly helpful, examining as it does John [p. 324](#) Wesley’s beliefs and their implications for Christian education. The formulation of an evangelical philosophy of education is attempted. Chapter 6, “The Sociological Bases of Christian Education” is also a section you shouldn’t miss.

This book was “designed to meet the need for a comprehensive, college-level textbook on the subject of Christian education”, but it should win the allegiance of a much wider audience. It is a valuable map, not for the features it points out, but rather for the topography and bench-marks related to Christian education that it supplies, to both the novice and veteran explorer.

Contemporary Christian Communications: Its Theory and Practice

by James F. Engel.

(Thomas Nelson, pp.344, \$12.95)

Abstract of a review by Carl F. H. Henry in *Eternity Magazine*, November 1979.

Engel is an authority on marketing research and consumer behaviour who seeks to bring effective advertising and promotional strategy to Christian evangelism. In this, Engel’s sixteenth book, he aims to guide those engaged in Christian communication and to help the local church effectively to be a steward of its funds for outreach.

He discusses measurable and practical results of pulpit sermons, radio ministries, Christian magazine outreach and Bible distribution. He discusses the diverse media available for religious use, gives statistics and analyzes costs while also insisting that no mass medium can fully replace face-to-face witness. Engel proposes criteria for measuring the genuineness of new birth and sanctification and stresses the importance of intermediary goals—attitude changes for one.

Engel holds that a mix of promotional strategy and divine grace will guarantee maximal results, but he nowhere clearly works out the relationship between the two or clearly articulates the legitimate roles of media and Spirit. Thus the process of motivating conversion is discussed at times at a humanistic level that gets along rather well without

the Holy Spirit and at other times he insists that “the Holy Spirit alone can open the eyes of the blind”.

Those interested in communications will profit from the book, but one misses moral and spiritual judgements on the media as cultural phenomena. It is left to others to do a penetrating theological assessment and analysis of the communications crisis. [p. 325](#)

Journal Information

Publications Referred to in This Issue

Asian Perspective

Published by Asia Theological Association, 73–119 Shihlin, Taipei, Taiwan, ROC III. Rates \$1 (23 titles)

Bible Translator

Published by United Bible Societies, 56 Craighton Road, Aberdeen, AB1 7UW, UK. Rates \$6.00 or £3.00 (2 issues)

Christian Graduate

Published by the Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship, 38 De Montfort Street, Leicester, LE1 7GP, UK. Rates £1.40 p.a. (4 issues)

Christianity Today

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

Churchman

Published by the Church Society (Anglican), Wine Office Court, Fleet Street, London, EC4A 3DA, UK. Rates £4.50 p.a., £5.50 overseas (4 issues)

Crux

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

Eternity

1716 Spruce St., Philadelphia, Penn. 19103, USA. Rates \$9.00 p.a., \$10.00 overseas (published monthly)

Foundations

Published by British Evangelical Church, 58 Woodstock Road North, St. Albans, Herts., AL1 4QF, UK. Rates £3.50 (2 issues)

The Harvester

Published by The Paternoster Press, Paternoster House, 3 Mount Radford Crescent, Exeter, EX2 4JW, UK. Rates £4.20, \$12.60 overseas (published monthly)

Occasional Bulletin of Missionary Outreach

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 p.a. (4 issues) [p. 326](#)

The Other Side

Available from Box 12236, Philadelphia, P.A. 19144, USA. Rates \$11.50 (\$13.50 outside USA). (Monthly)

Presbyterion

Published by Covenant Theological Seminary, 12330 Conway Road, St. Louis, Missouri 43141, USA. Rates \$5.00 (2 issues)

Themelios

Published by the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students, 10 College Road, Harrow, HA1 1BE, Middlesex, UK. North American orders to TSF, 233 Langdon, Madison, Wisconsin 53702, USA. Rates £1.30 or \$3.00 p.a. (3 issues)

Theological Fraternity Bulletin

Published by Latin American Theological Fraternity, Casilla 4, 1602 Suc. Pte, Saavedra, Buenos Aires, Argentina. Rates \$6.00 p.a.

Theological Renewal

Published by Fountain Trust, 3a High Street, Esher, Surrey, KT10 9RP, UK. Rates £3.45 (3 issues)