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Editorial Beyond Contextualization

During the last ten years the major thrust in theological endeavour has been to make theology relevant to our different cultural contexts. In an era of escalating social change and with the rapid growth of the church in many regions, especially in the third world, this has been a necessary task. The crisis of our age is one of communication and it is right that theologians should devote themselves to understanding the Bible in its own context, the cultural thought patterns and behaviour of the recipients of the Gospel and the communicator's self-evaluation of his own horizons. The steady flow of theological consultations, research projects, journals and books published reflect this concern to translate biblical theologies into concepts that speak to local and regional cultures. However, in this process many theologians have gone beyond the task of communication to construct contextualized theologies that have given a radically different interpretation of the Gospel. They have worked within the framework of the world view and values of a given culture, usually non-Christian in origin, and have tended to use Scripture more as a proof text than as a final bedrock authority. Too often these cultural theologies have become syncretistic and ultimately reductionistic. The dangers of theological provincialism and obscurantism are becoming apparent.

Perhaps the time has now come to emphasize the need for reflection and evaluation of our theological scene from a fresh scripture perspective. This is essentially a hermeneutical task. It is a call to go beyond contextualization and to restate the universals of our faith which transcend culture and contemporary experience. Simon Chan's article in this issue is a call to do just this—to engage with new vigour in theoretical research in theology. The attempt to restate biblical theology systematically must be made not as a reaction to cultural theologies but in the light of them and the issues they raise. Theology is in danger of being too small wherever it is culturally conditioned as in the past systematic theologies of the west or in the cultural theologies of the third world. Our Christian theology begins with the assumption that biblical truth is divinely revealed truth. Our task is to lay bare this truth and then to communicate it faithfully and relevantly to our world. Good theology is both universal and contextualized. [p. 8](#)

Peace

A Bible Study on Ephesians 2:11–3:21

Cullen I. K. Story

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THE GOOD NEWS OF PEACE

In biblical history, the 'gospel of peace' appears as a most fitting rubric for God's good news. Witness, for instance, how—to an oppressed people—the great prophet of Israel's exile portrayed vividly a messenger moving across the mountains announcing the good

news of peace (*shalom*, cf. [Isa. 52:7](#) with [52:4–5](#)). Or again, consider that, in the face of the reign of a cruel Edomite king whose value for human life was sub-zero, the angelic evangel sang of peace on earth ([Luke 2:14](#)). Two powerful paradigms soliciting our reflection today. Not only do they cry out in opposition to a nuclear arms race threatening the world with a holocaust that defies description, but they also issue a clarion call for evangelical messengers who will proclaim pre-eminently Christ's peace.

Peace on earth was incarnation's first word for the world ([Luke 2:14](#)) and what a word it was! It encompassed the entire ministry of Jesus, for as he moved in and out among all levels of society, his word of peace implied wholeness for the one who was sick ([Mark 5:34](#)), forgiveness for the one who had sinned ([Luke 7:47, 50](#)), restoration for the one who had failed ([John 20:19, 21, 26](#)), and confidence in God's ultimate saving purpose for the one who faced death ([Luke 2:29–30](#)). The implication is clear. Twentieth-century Christians are to join hands with Christians of the first century in that invisible yet indissoluble bond of the gospel of peace ([Eph. 6:15](#); cf. [Isa. 52:7](#)).

In such confidence, we approach our Bible study in Ephesians with its theme of peace, a theme that permeates the pivotal section of the letter ([Eph. 2:11–3:21](#)). The passage is divided by a number of printed texts into two main divisions ([2:11–22](#) and [3:1–21](#)). I suggest that the movement of Paul's thought in the two divisions is comparable to the second and third parts of Handel's *Messiah*. Part two of the *Messiah* opens with what may be termed the 'golden passionate'¹ i.e., the chorus, 'Behold the Lamb of God.' It continues with a description of messengers on the mountain who bring with them the gospel of peace, and concludes with the 'Hallelujah Chorus'. Part three highlights the p. 9 triumph of Christ's resurrection and the resurrection of his people, concluding with the 'Amen' chorus. So, in Ephesians—similar to the chorus, 'Behold the Lamb of God'—we find a portrayal of Christ's passion ([2:13–15](#)), then a description of the messengers of Christ's peace ([3:1–12](#)), followed by a proclamation of Christ's victory ([3:13–17](#)). Then, commensurable to the 'Hallelujah Chorus', is Paul's praise offered for the incomprehensible dimensions of Christ's love—its length and breadth and its depth and height ([3:18–19](#)). Finally, similar to the concluding 'Amen' chorus of Handel, Paul also ends with his own 'Amen' following his ascription of praise to God ([3:20–21](#)).

The letter to the so-called 'Ephesian' church is quite evenly balanced between what 'amazing grace' has done *for* the people of God (chapters [1–3](#)) and what grace can do *through* them (chapters [4–6](#)). One feature that distinguishes the two parts is the extensive use of the indicative mood in chapters [1–3](#) over against the imperative mood in chapters [4–6](#). Chapters [4–6](#) are full of exhortations or demands laid upon the Christian body for a well-ordered life among its own members as well as in society. For example, the writer urges readers to 'put on the new nature' ([4:24](#)), 'speak the truth' ([4:25](#)), 'be imitators of God' ([5:1](#)), 'walk in love' ([5:2](#)), 'be strong in the Lord' ([6:10](#)), and 'put on the whole armour of God' ([6:11](#)). There are almost forty of these 'imperatives' in chapters [4–6](#), all indicating what the people of God are to do.

In contrast, chapters [1–3](#) are characterized by the 'indicative' mood, i.e., what God has done. There is one imperative only—in [2:11](#), 'remember'. It relates to the past: remember what you were and the change which God has wrought in you. But as the lone imperative in the first three chapters, it is one of the important keys for understanding the letter. It points us to the basic need of the church today and likewise directs us to the heart of our concern for 'peace' in this study. For, the apostle says, in remembering what you were—

¹ The term is used by F. Delitzsch of [Isa. 52:13–53:12](#).

strangers, alienated persons, without hope, and without God—while you remember all of these things, remember most of all, that

- a. Christ Jesus is our peace ([2:14](#)),
- b. He made peace through his cross ([2:15-16](#)), and
- c. He came preaching the good news of peace ([2:17](#))—peace to those who are far off and peace to those who are near.

Remember. The verb—ever so important in the Bible—is the word which Israel needed to hear. Remember that you were slaves and that the Lord brought you out of Egypt; remember the days of old; remember [p. 10](#) what wonders the Lord performed on your behalf. And how well Jesus knew that—like the butler who did not remember Joseph but forgot him ([Gen. 40:23](#))—His disciples and His church could and would forget, and so He instituted the holy supper, saying, ‘This do in remembrance of me’.

And now, two ‘pegs’ may help us to grasp the breadth of our passage:

Peace—the provision of Christ for the world—[Eph. 2:11-21](#).

Peace—the purpose of God in Christ for the world, to be channeled to the world through the church—[Eph. 3:1-21](#).

I

Peace—The Provision of Christ for the World

Christ breaks down the middle wall of separation between one people and another, between one culture and another, between one race and another ([2:14](#)). In a succinct way, Robert Frost’s poem ‘Mending Wall’ has captured the meaning of barriers between people. He describes a scene where he and his neighbour, at an appointed time each Spring, walk down on either side of the stone wall that marks the boundary between their respective properties. They cut and bruise their hands as they replace the stones that have fallen down through the winter months. When his neighbour blandly states, ‘Good fences make good neighbours,’ the poet rebels. He says to himself, ‘Why do we need fences? My neighbour has pine trees and I have apple trees. Surely my apples will not cross the wall and eat the pine cones under my neighbour’s trees’. Then come the famous lines:

Before I built a wall, I’d ask to know what I was walling in or walling out, and to whom I was like to give offence. Something there is that doesn’t love a wall, that wants it down.

Does Frost, unconsciously, capture something of [Ephesians 2](#)? Does Paul suggest that the ‘wall’ is that which divided the court of the Gentiles from the Temple proper? Possibly. Over a hundred years ago, the French archaeologist, Clermont-Ganneau, uncovered an inscription that had once been written on the temple wall, an inscription that in clear, crisp terms forbade any Gentile to enter the sanctuary under penalty of death. Yet, by the ‘wall’ of [Ephesians 2](#), Paul may provide us with a flashback to the curtain of the holy place in the temple—which curtain, at Jesus’ death, was torn in two from top to bottom ([Mark 15:38](#)). Whether either of these ideas be Paul’s specific reference, the [p. 11](#) text summons us to face the painful barriers of racial animosities that have plagued the church from its very inception. There was a sharp almost impenetrable wall that separated Jew from Gentile in the first century. We are aware of the prayer of the Pharisee in Paul’s day, ‘God, I thank thee that I am not a Gentile’—a prayer echoed pointedly, according to Jesus, by the Pharisee in the temple: ‘God, I thank thee that I am not like the rest ... or even like this tax-

collector' ([Luke 18:11](#)). Think what it took to get Peter to go to the home of the Gentile centurion ([Acts 10](#)). Or consider the anxiety and sleepless nights that Barnabas and Paul must have had prior to the Jerusalem council where they contended vigorously for the equal standing and status of Gentile and Jewish Christians in the church of Jesus Christ ([Acts 15](#)). Today, we remember that it was racial hatred that ignited the fearful holocaust of so many millions of Jews. We remember too the fearless stand of Martin Luther King, Jr., who aroused the conscience of church and society alike to a responsible commitment to human rights and human dignity for all races. The tragedy of racism drives us back relentlessly to [Ephesians 2](#), where there unfolds before our very eyes the sociological miracle of the first century with all of its tremendous implications for the twentieth century. Jew and Gentile are placed in one body in Christ. The passage reverberates with the numeral *one*.

He made us both *one* ... that He might create in himself one new person in place of two ... and might reconcile us both to God in *one* body ... for through Him we both have access in *one* Spirit to the Father ([2:14-18](#)).

The church is called, not to mount a peace 'bandwagon', but to something far more serious. The word 'remember' ([2:11](#)) summons the church away from a theological amnesia to a renewed awareness of a peace that is full and profound, rooted indelibly in Christ's cross. In essence, peace is the provision of Christ for the world, for He is the one who breaks down the wall of hostility, who creates one new person, thereby making peace.

CHRIST OUR PEACE

Today, peace and the broken wall, in the words of Markus Barth, mean 'the end of separation and segregation, the end of enmity and contempt, and the end of every sort of ghetto!' (*The Broken Wall*, p.43). But beyond what Barth has said, there is a frank confessional nature to our Scripture, 'For he himself is our peace ... so [he was] making peace' ([2:14-15](#)). It is confessional in the sense of [Mark 8:29](#), 'You are the Christ', or in the sense of [1 Cor. 12:3](#), 'Jesus is Lord'. **P. 12**

'Christ himself is our peace.' The confession is both clear and revealing.

First, it is comparable to the confessions in Second Isaiah and in the Fourth Gospel that express respectively the self-revelation and self-declaration of God and of the God-Man, Jesus:

I am he, I am he who blots out your transgressions ([Isa. 43:25](#)).

I am the bread of life ([John 6:35](#)).

I am the way, the truth, and the life ([John 14:6](#)).

And so if we should put the confession of [Eph. 2:14](#) on the lips of the risen Jesus, it would be, 'I myself am your peace' (cf. [John 20:19-23, 26](#))—implying that our own plans and programmes for peace must always be subject to our confession of Jesus as our peace.

John Bunyan has described the point so well in his other masterpiece, *The Holy War*. The Prince of Peace, Emmanuel, successfully conquers the town of ManSoul and establishes his rule of peace within. At first the inhabitants visit the prince regularly and take delight in his love feasts. But then, because of the craftiness of a Mr. Carnal Security, they begin to think of themselves—how impregnable is their town, how great are their heroic leaders—and they take to feasting and sporting and grow cold in their love for Emmanuel until He withdraws from their town and they do not even miss him. There is, however, one ray of hope, the continued presence in ManSoul of a Mr. Godly Fear who

probes and warns and preaches. Like a thorn in their side, he calls to remembrance who they are and who is the centre of their lives. 'I myself am your peace', says the risen Jesus. Armed with this assurance, as committed Christians we too are to probe and warn, to proclaim to our people and nation that Christ is our peace.

Second, there is a breadth to the confession for the first century church but no less for the church today. It is a confession of Christians, but of Jewish Christians, and of Gentile Christians alike. He himself is our peace who has made the two one. The terms Jew and Gentile in the first century embraced all people, for if you were not a Jew you were a Gentile and vice versa. For us today, the confession is ecumenical. I doubt seriously if we have begun to explore its potential power in the worldwide church—Malaysian Christians, Christians in Indonesia, China, and India, in East and West Germany, in Kenya, Lebanon and Brazil, in Argentina and Great Britain, in El Salvador and the United States. For Christians everywhere to recover or to discover for the first time the timely meaning of the confession—this may be our most important task for the day.

Third, the confession ends with a unique expression, 'making [p. 13](#) peace'. Ephesians finds its parallel so often in Colossians, where we read similar words, 'he made peace through the blood of his cross' ([Col. 1:20](#)). Apart from a brief reference in James ([3:18](#)), a comparable declaration is found only in the beatitudes of Jesus, from the sermon on the mount: 'Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God' ([Matt. 5:9](#)). As far as we know, there was no written Gospel of Matthew in circulation at the time Ephesians was written. But can it be that Paul was acquainted with the tradition of the beatitudes and can it be that he is consciously reflecting the seventh beatitude in [Ephesians 2](#)? You are to stretch your minds just a wee bit now as you see the two similar expressions in transliterated Greek and as you sense the similar 'ring' which they have.

poiōn eirēnēn

[Eph. 2:14](#), 'making peace'

eirēnopoioi

[Matt 5:9](#), 'peacemakers'

cf. *eirēnopoīēsas*

[Col. 1:20](#), 'having made peace'

A link between the texts would imply two things:

PEACE THROUGH THE CROSS

It would imply that the one who gave his special blessing to peacemakers demonstrated in himself that peacemaking involved great personal sacrifice, for the peace that he made came by way of the cross, as [Eph. 2:16](#) affirms (cf. [Col. 1:20](#)). That is to say, real honest-to-goodness peacemakers, who receive Jesus' blessing, according to [Matt. 5:9](#), are led in [Ephesians 2](#) not only to Jesus' sacrificial example of peacemaking but to the unique nature of his 'peacemaking' as well. His was indeed the solitary sacrifice, the sacrifice of the sinless one for us the sinners. He, the just one, suffered for us the unjust that he might bring us to God. He in his own person bore our sins in his own body on the tree. Our life in Christ is completely dependent on his life that was poured out for us. There is, in brief, a deep indelible substitutionary quality about the peace that Jesus made through the blood of his cross. I say 'made', and yet the verb tense used in Ephesians is not past but present, as though to describe what it is that Jesus continues to be about in the world. Unique it is, then, yet [Ephesians 2](#) suggests that Jesus' sacrifice is also exemplary. It means that Paul's word linked to Jesus' saying affirms that peacemakers who receive the blessing of Jesus must be ready for personal sacrifice—even to the extent of death. **P. 14**

GLOBAL CONSEQUENCES

A second implication emerges as we join [Eph. 2:15](#) to the beatitude in [Matthew 5](#). The peace that Jesus made through his cross is far more than a personal peace which you and I may claim to have with God. It is more than the peace that the church receives through the preaching of the word or the celebration of holy communion. The blessing of Jesus on peacemakers, in [Matthew 5](#), does not mean a blessing on those who merely claim to receive and celebrate the peace and wholeness that Jesus brings. No, it means a blessing on those who are reconcilers wherever there may be enmity, hostility, hatred, and warfare. What Jesus preached He practiced. He proclaimed, 'Blessed are the peacemakers', and 'He made peace through the blood of his cross'. Peace in [Eph. 2:14-16](#), therefore, has global consequences. Jesus bestowed his blessing on peacemakers. If he were here, he would bestow no blessing on our government which spends more than a million dollars an hour on military arms, a nation whose peacetime military budget has escalated to an all-time high. Whether it is known or not, Ground Zero Week and the clarion call that is being sounded in many sectors of our nation for a halt to nuclear arms production possess a biblical base in [Ephesians 2](#) that is lucid and compelling. The agonizing question presses in on us on every side, a question that refuses to go away and get lost: 'To a nation that we love, whose heritage we have appropriated and much of whose heritage we appreciate, how do we, as Christ's witnesses, bear effective and sacrificial witness to the Christ who made peace through his cross and hence calls on us to be peacemakers?' The question brings us appropriately to the second part of our study. Peace is not only the provision of Christ for the world, but—

II

Peace is the Purpose of God in Christ for the World, to be Channeled to the World through the Church.

The word 'peace' itself does not actually occur in chapter [3](#) but, given the way in which chapter [2](#) flows into chapter [3](#), we are to understand, I believe, that to preach the good news of peace ([2:17](#)) means to proclaim 'the mystery of Christ' ([3:4](#)), and the 'wisdom of God' ([3:10](#)) is nothing less than the peace which comes through Christ's cross ([2:15-16](#)) or the confession, 'Christ Jesus is our peace' ([2:14](#)). p. 15

The indication that [Eph. 3:1-12](#) constitutes one extended sentence² points to the difficulty we face in grasping adequately the thought of the apostle. Apparently, Paul's intent is both to unfold the special stewardship of God's grace with which he was entrusted ([3:1-9](#)) and to show no less the awesome responsibility that is laid upon the church to proclaim divine grace ([3:10-12](#)). Much like the pretentious wrapping around a gift that gives an aura of mystery to the quality of the gift within, so, when Paul mentions 'the mystery of Christ', we wait in expectancy for him to unfold the mysterious nature of the gracious gift. He does so by using three rare expressions that affirm the singular relationship of Gentile Christians with Jewish Christians: fellow-heirs, fellow-members, and fellow-sharers of the promise of Christ through the gospel ([3:6](#)). If peace means a broken barrier ([Eph. 2](#)), it also means a bridge built between hostile peoples ([Eph. 3](#)). Jew and Gentile come to realize that they have become siblings, heirs of all that their Father offers, that their life is organically and socially intricately intertwined much like the interrelatedness of members of the human body, and that they share in the promised

² Thus the Westcott-Hort Greek text.

Spirit and thus experience the power that is inherent in the good news of Christ (cf. [Acts 2:39](#)).

THE CHANNEL

But we dare not forget two other items of great importance. First, the very existence of this interracial body of Christians springs from God's purpose of peace through Christ. That is to say, Christ's body, his church, appears in the text nestled between 'the mystery of Christ' on the one hand ([3:4](#)) and 'the free gift of God's grace' on the other ([3:7](#)). And second, it is through this body as well as through Paul that God plans to carry the peace of Christ to the world.

Paul stands in awe and amazement before the gift of God's grace ('less than the least of all saints'), yet he moves irresistibly to proclaim and interpret that grace to all ([3:7-9](#)). Far more than his own individual task, however, he is concerned with the task of the church.³ It is through the church that God's ultimate purpose of peace may be realized in the world ([3:10-11](#)). I say 'in the world', though Paul speaks of the object of God's peace as 'the principalities and powers in the heavenly realm' ([3:10](#)). The terms 'principalities and powers' occur in three places in the letter. They are said to be, ultimately, under the control of the risen Christ ([1:21](#), cf. [1 Cor. 15:24](#)), to be the adversaries p. 16 of the Christian church ([6:12](#)) and at the same time to be the objects of her witness ([3:10](#)). It is extremely doubtful that, by these terms, Paul reflects a gnostic or mythical view, as some have imagined. After all, he uses one of these two terms (i.e., 'powers') to describe the very mundane Roman government of his own day ([Rom. 13:1-2](#)). Given his own commitment to evangelism of men and women in all walks of life (cf. [Acts 26:22](#)), it cannot be that he encouraged any less of a commitment for the church. Yet, it is indeed curious that the goal of his own mission is 'the nations' ([3:8](#)) while the mission of the church is to 'principalities and powers' ([3:10](#)). Is there indicated here part of the greatness of Paul in that he can sense that the corporate witness of the church exceeds by far his own individual witness? But the basic question is whether the church of Christ has caught the vision of God's goal that is indicated in [3:10](#). The phrase 'principalities and powers in the heavenly places' suggests both demonic persons behind these ruling forces (cf. [6:12-16](#)) as well as the pervasive nature of the power which they wield (cf. [1 Cor. 15:24](#), 'when he shall render ineffective every principality and every authority and power'). Markus Barth seems to be right on target when he explains:

Paul means by principalities and powers those institutions and structures by which earthly matters and invisible realms are administered, and without which no human life is possible. The superior power of nature epitomized by life and death; the ups and downs of historic processes; the nature and impact of favoured prototypes or the catastrophic burdens of the past; the hope or threat offered to the present by the future; the might of capitalists, rulers, judges; the benefit and onus of laws of tradition and custom; the distinction and similarity of political and religious practices; the weight of ideologies and prejudices; the conditions under which all authority, labour, parenthood, etc., thrive or are crushed—these structures and institutions are in Paul's mind (*Ephesians*, [1-3](#), p.174).

There will be times when we sense that these structures or powers are of God ([Romans 13](#)), but, on the other hand, we may often find them to be inspired by the evil one. [Ephesians 6](#) tells us of the real spiritual warfare which men and women of God are to wage against principalities and powers, against the world-rulers of this present darkness. And,

³ The *hina* clause in [3:10](#) ('in order that') makes this clear.

by the way, these Christian men and women not only are to wear the breastplate of righteousness but to have their feet shod with the equipment of the gospel of peace ([Eph. 6:15](#)). Appropriately now, as we come to the close of our study, we discover that the witness of the church to the world ([3:10-12](#)) is buttressed by Paul's prayer that the church be gripped and held ('rooted' and 'grounded') in Christ's measureless love ([3:13-19](#)). And, as a fitting conclusion to the passage, [p. 17](#) Paul ascribes all praise to God ([3:20-21](#)). And so, enmity between nations and the militarism of any one nation can be countered effectively only by a people who are rooted and grounded in the love of Christ ([3:17](#)) demonstrated in his cross. A friend of mine put it this way:

The cross is a declaration that there is no violence so horrid, no despair so comprehensive, no mindless brutality so thorough-going that it is beyond the pale of God's peace. The cross is 'the more excellent way'. The cross with all its horror becomes in fact our hope. God wills his peace and the world cannot contradict it. The cross—irony of ironies—is the consummation of the angelic song, 'peace on earth' (Dr. John McCoy).

CONCLUSION

Here then, my brothers and sisters, in [Eph. 2:11-3:21](#), is the message of peace which, I believe, God would give to the world through the church today. Ours is a world of which God has a purpose, a world of axioms, of religion, of politics, of history, and of culture. And what is that purpose? It is that the wisdom of God be made known to this very world through the church. God's wisdom is nothing other than the peace of Christ that comes through the cross, for [1 Cor. 1:23](#) tells us, 'We preach Christ crucified ... Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God'.

The Revised Standard Version affirms that the wisdom of God is 'manifold' ([3:10](#)). The word occurs only here in the whole New Testament. Does it mean many-faceted, variegated, many-sided? How would Paul intend for us to describe it in English? The picture which comes to my mind is the kaleidoscope with its small cardboard telescope. With each successive shake of the hand you peer through the telescope only to see ever-succeeding scenes of ornamental beauty and arrangement which point to some imaginative creator who put it all together. And so the kaleidoscopic wisdom of God, the manyfaceted peace of God, is to be channeled through the church to the principalities and powers of our own day whose growing stockpiles of weapons of destruction are designed to wipe out cities and people en masse. To confess that Christ Jesus is our peace in the face of the devious and demonic militarism of our day demands from us far greater wisdom than you and I possess. And yet to be called sons and daughters of God means that we are inevitably peacemakers who follow in the path of Him who made peace and makes peace through the blood of his cross for, through us, God deigns to make known his variegated wisdom which implies, pre-eminently, his global peace through Christ.

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The Ministry of Women in the Church

Margaret Malcolm

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When Paul says, 'I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man; she must be silent', is he expressing his personal view in a particular situation or is he declaring that which is universally normative for church worship? Again when he argues from the creation narrative in Genesis does he see headship as superior authority or as a reference to the source of woman?

Was the order of deacons sufficiently developed in the New Testament churches to allow Phoebe to be classed as a woman deacon or was the emphasis still on gifts and opportunities for service? Which leads us to the question: Does the Spirit give new gifts and ministries to women in the Church today? Some argue for the distinction between teaching with authority and under the authority of the elders. Is this valid in the local church, in para-church ministries, in cross-cultural missions? Thus the place and contribution of women in the church continues to exercise the minds and hearts of those who accept the Scriptures as final authority in all matters of faith and conduct. The current feminist movement both heightens and observes these issues. As an increasing number of Church bodies legislate in favour of women deacons and elders and ordain women to the ministry of Word and Sacrament the question of freedom of conscience in such matters becomes more acute. The article below is one woman's response within the framework of her own denomination. Readers are invited to respond with letters and articles.

(Editor)

I FEMINISM AND THE CHRISTIAN

As a Christian, I obviously cannot agree with all that the feminists stand for. Nevertheless, I firmly believe that suffragettes of the last century and feminists of this century have had just cause for complaint in some areas; and mainly through their efforts, tremendous advances in recognizing women as people have been made in recent times—and needed to be. For example, as late as the end of the last century women in our society were treated legally as second-class citizens, without the right to vote, without the right to hold property and dispose of it, without the right to education, without the right to go to **P. 19** court, without the right to exercise their abilities in careers they themselves chose. All these rights, many long held by men, have been won for women in our society only comparatively recently. Yet still, today, some of the old stereotypes and attitudes remain, and Christian women and girls, in particular, are often presented with these as being God-given patterns for their behaviour.

It cannot be denied that the belief in the inferiority of women and the consequent demand for their repression in varying ways stretches across all cultures and from the earliest centuries. The ancient Jew prayed to God, 'I thank Thee that I am not a woman'. Even at the height of their culture, a low view of women existed in the Greek and Roman worlds and it is only in Greek art and poetry that women are heroines. Aristotle is said to have taught that women were inferior in every way, only a rank above slaves. Xenophon, the historian, wrote that women are best confined to an 'inside world'.

The early Church Fathers followed in the same line. Tertullian spoke of women as ‘the mothers of all ills’, Chrysostom wrote of women as ‘a natural temptation, a desirable calamity, a deadly fascination’, almost, as Gladys Hunt suggests, as if women were designed by Satan instead of made in the image of God. Thomas Aquinas agreed with Aristotle that ‘woman is a misbegotten male’ and St. Augustine believed that women’s sole function is procreation. And what the early church fathers taught, the Christian church through the centuries, often believed was the pattern that God had ordained.

But was it? Or was it rather a cultural pattern, the outcome of sin, a pattern of the world to which the church too easily conformed? I believe it was the latter and, moreover, that this cultural pattern started right back at the Fall. Disobedience to God in the Garden of Eden disrupted not only the man to God relationship, not only the man to earth relationship, but also the man to woman relationship. The key verse in this argument is [Genesis 3:16](#), ‘Yet your desire shall be for you r husband and he shall rule over you’. Ross Palmer states:

‘The Fall and [Genesis 3](#) give no ground for saying that women are Divinely ordained to be dominated by men. Rather, domination is the result of sin and to be fought against with the aim to restore the original partnership God designed us for’.

So in that garden, at the very beginning of our history, the unity of the sexes, the enhancing, the complementing the one of the other, which was God’s original pattern was lost and instead domination and subjugation, superiority and inferiority became the characteristic attitudes. This was, indeed, not God’s original perfect pattern. It came p. 20 into the world as a result of sin and has remained in the world, as sin has remained.

ATTITUDE OF CHRIST

My recognition of the validity of the above view is supported when I look at the attitude Christ, the perfect man, untainted by sin, adopted towards women. It is very clear that Christ did not conform to all the rigid cultural patterns of His day as far as attitudes to members of the opposite sex were concerned. He moved about in the company of women with a freedom unknown to the teachers of His day. In an analysis of person-to-person healings or interviews in the gospels of Luke and John it is interesting to note that, apart from His time with His disciples, Jesus in Luke healed or talked with women on ten separate occasions and with men on eighteen occasions. In John, which is among other things the gospel of personal discourse or interview, there are four major sessions with individual men and four also with individual women. Even His disciples marvelled that He, a rabbi, should hold a conversation with a woman, the woman of Samaria, in public. But He did. And moreover to that very woman the Lord gave the first revelation that He was the Messiah. The cultural patterns of that day further decreed that women could not be taught the scriptures—but Jesus did to Mary and others; that women could not bear witness—but Jesus deliberately commissioned a woman, Mary Magdalene, to be the first witness of the resurrection and bear His message to the disciples. In the incident of the woman sick for twelve years with the flow of blood Jesus allowed her to touch Him, He spoke to her, and healed her. This was indeed a major break with the tradition of His day when women in such a physical condition were regarded as unclean and untouchable. Unquestionably on these and many other occasions Jesus sought to give women full dignity and freedom as persons. Their womanhood was no barrier.

Jesus was thus prepared to make a sharp break with contemporary culture in order to give women this dignity and freedom as persons. Because of Him Paul could write, ‘There

is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus’.

This ideal of personhood, each individual’s worth as a person, with different qualities, characteristics, abilities, responsibility, but nonetheless the equal worth of each person of whatever race (‘Jew or Greek’) of whatever position (‘slave or free’) of whatever sex (‘male or female’) is a basic Scriptural principle. [p. 21](#)

If this view of women and their personhood, as expressed above, is accepted as Biblical then there is a need for Christians to examine the attitudes towards women which are woven into our society and find their way into parts of our church life. It is because of this that I can find myself identifying with much of moderate feminism. We need to recall that some of the great liberalising social movements of the 19th century—abolition of slavery and child labour, for example, were begun and carried through by sincere, committed Christians. It is pertinent to note that they did this, sometimes, against the beliefs and wishes of fellow Christians some of whom considered they could justify the continuation of slavery, for example, from Scripture. But nevertheless, they did it, and I doubt whether any Christians today would argue for slavery as being a God-ordained condition. In a similar way, if we all as Christians, whether women or men, are prepared to seek the true Christ-like attitude to women and not rely on tradition and man-made cultural patterns of past and present then, in this matter also we would be seen as doing something of God’s work of freeing from the shackles of sin.

II THE PLACE AND CONTRIBUTION OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

One of the sad things about the history of the Christian church over the centuries is that there have been times when tradition and man-made cultural attitudes within it have distorted the originally given truth, whether principle or practice. This is certainly true when one considers some of the attitudes adopted by sections of the Church over the years towards the place and contribution of Christian women.

You can walk into Durham Cathedral today in England and see, etched there in the concrete floor a long way back from the high altar, a line marking the point beyond which no woman could go in mediaeval times during a Church service. The reason? Because she might be ‘unclean’ and therefore likely to contaminate the worship! Of course, such a barrier is no longer countenanced.

But there are nevertheless other taboos and restrictions placed upon Christian women today in different sections of the Christian church, restrictions particularly upon how they are permitted to contribute to the ongoing work of the church. The General Secretary of the Netherlands Bible Society in 1974 at the Lausanne Congress stated in one address:

The personal worth of women must be recognized and their talents must not be confined. Women in our churches are often second-class Christians whose role is only to make the tea and butter the scones! [p. 22](#)

How true this is even today in some of our churches. Let me hasten to add, however, that making tea and buttering scones is a very much appreciated and very necessary service, and all honour to the many Christian women who do this ‘as to the Lord’. But the point of the above statement is that a domestic role such as this is regarded sometimes as the *only* role women in the church can play. The contention of this article is that the contribution and place of women in the church can and must be much wider than this and that Scriptural truth unmarred by tradition and prejudice supports this. As an Australian clergyman Kevin Giles states:

If we are to be faithful to what Jesus inaugurated in His life and death we must understand that for Christians the disruptive forces of sin have been overcome and man-made discrimination on the basis of sex or race annulled. Jesus broke completely with the customary attitudes to women and bestowed on them the dignity, equality and responsibility Eve once knew in the Garden of Eden. If we do less to our sisters in Christ we are not obedient disciples of His, and we show that we have little grasp of the theological significance of His coming.

And the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Robert Runcie, in a recent statement said:

The church's ministry to women, at least in my own tradition, is often exercised badly and insensitively.

He further commented that on reading the extent of women's sufferings in a male dominated church:

I felt ... the incredible pain and agony of it all and with it the extraordinary love and patient endurance and perseverance which lies behind it.

In writing this article the thesis I wish to put forward is that sex is not of itself a determiner of place and contribution in the church, and that therefore some women can exercise forms of church leadership and church teaching in the same way as some men can. I believe in the inspiration of God's Word as originally given and I am aware that traditionally the church has not interpreted the Scripture as giving to women these opportunities. But I also believe that much of that traditional interpretation has been mistaken, just as was the traditional stand taken by many Christians last century in North America who opposed the emancipation of slaves on what they claimed to be the teaching of the Bible. To argue this case fully would be impossible within the limits of this article, but I have selected three key aspects to elucidate in a little detail.

As a preliminary statement it must be noted that all of the teaching [p.23](#) about women and their place and contribution in the church comes in the epistles of the New Testament and most of it in those written by Paul. On the surface there is given in these, clear directions about the subordination of women both in the home and in the church. However, it is generally recognized that two difficulties present in many parts of the epistles are:

- (1) determining what is actually said, and,
- (2) deciding whether the various comments are directed to special local circumstances or whether they have general eternal significance.

Another point that must also be looked at when considering Paul's teaching is that his teaching and his practice must be seen to mesh together—he cannot teach one thing and practice another. And, indeed, it is Paul's practice that underlines the case that he accepted women into leadership and teaching roles within the church. A careful reading of Acts and the epistles indicates that there are more women holding responsible positions than has often been recognized. Such a one is Phoebe.

Phoebe in the Cencreae Church

Phoebe is mentioned in [Romans 16](#) in a list of some 30 people of whom 10 are women, and seven of these are said to have engaged in some form of Christian ministry. Phoebe appears as a person of some importance, a deacon and leader of the church at Cencreae, the port city of Corinth, and in all probability she was the one who carried Paul's epistle to Rome. The two titles describing her position are *diakonos* and *prostatis*. The first is

correctly translated 'deacon' (the feminine form 'deaconess' does not appear in the New Testament) and it is interesting to note that reference to other uses of this word and its cognates in the epistles shows that Paul frequently used *diakonos* of 'those who were active in preaching and teaching' (E. E. Ellis). It would be fair to assume that when Paul applied this word to Phoebe it also carried just this meaning.

The second word used to describe Phoebe is *prostatis*. This noun in this verse is translated variously as 'succourer', 'helper', 'good friend'. It is the only time it is used in the Bible in its feminine form and practically the only time it is translated as above. At other times it is translated with the primary meaning of 'standing before' or 'leading', e.g. Thessalonians [5:12](#) and [1 Timothy 5:17](#). (In a derived sense it includes the idea of protection. The leader protects those whom he leads). It seems significant that the translators of the Bible have preferred the lesser meaning for the feminine form and retained the stronger meaning for the masculine form. But it was also done with the [p. 24](#) word *diakonos* which appears 22 times in the New Testament. In the authorized version it is rendered 'minister' 18 times, 'deacon' three times and 'servant' only in this passage concerning a woman!

Therefore I believe, in going back to the original, it can be fairly argued that Paul spoke of Phoebe as exercising leadership with the church at Cenchreae and as one 'active in preaching and teaching', and he most definitely commended her to the Roman church in this capacity.

Order in the Corinthian Church

Certainly in the past and sometimes even today, Christians are taught that the place of women in the church is to be silent. This teaching is found in [1 Corinthians 14:33-35](#), and the passage does need careful analysis, for if interpreted literally it prevents women not only from teaching or preaching but also from singing and making prayer responses. In addition it appears to make Paul contradict himself for in [1 Corinthians 11:5](#) Paul explicitly speaks about women praying and prophesying in the church.

It has been well suggested by many able scholars that Paul in this section of his epistle is responding to difficulties of practice in the church at Corinth which were referred to him for his help. One of the problems concerned those who spoke in tongues often without interpretation and apparently sometimes together. They were advised to speak with an interpreter and in turn. The problem with the women can only be guessed at by the context, but it would appear from the statement 'if they would learn anything let them ask their husbands at home' that they were calling out and asking questions to gain understanding. Women's lack of education generally in those days would mean that such interruptions and questions were at a much lower level of understanding than that of the majority of men. Consequently the general edification would be interrupted and the practice was causing disorder in the congregation. Paul's solution was that women should not ask questions in the church but should seek understanding or clarification at home as was most certainly the pattern in society around and in the synagogues.

This is quite obviously a situation and solution true for the culture of the time in which it is written. Many conservative scholars today recognize that some statements in the Scripture are, to use John Stott's term, 'culturally dated'. Examples of such teaching are Jesus' command that we 'wash one another's feet' and Paul's injunction that women must cover their heads when praying or prophesying, or that they should refrain from wearing 'gold or pearls or costly attire'. Few [p. 25](#) Christians seem to believe these instructions are applicable literally today and this, I contend, applies also to the question of women being silent in the church. Women in Paul's times, who were gifted to do so, prayed and preached (prophesied), they sang hymns and no doubt read the Scriptures. They were not

silent. And today, I believe, they need not be silent. Nevertheless it must be said that the change in the cultural situation whereby women in present-day society have equality of position with men, does not mean that women (or men for that matter) have the right to be disorderly or bring about confusion in a meeting of the congregation. Women and men both have the responsibility to respect and defer to those who at the time, under God, exercise leadership and give ministry. This I believe is the eternal principle underlying this teaching.

Instruction to Timothy

One of the strongest bans against women's participation in the church relates to the situation of women giving teaching. The instructions concerning this appear superficially very clear in [1 Timothy 2:12](#) 'I permit not a woman to teach nor to have authority over men', but when one delves beneath the surface and looks at the context and surrounding verses several problems arise. These have been expounded by abler pens than mine but it is worthwhile to note them.

(1) If the surface meaning is taken as applying to women in all places for all time, this passage becomes the only text in the whole Bible which would definitely appear to forbid women from teaching or leading in a congregation. As such it appears contrary to practice in the New Testament church and contrary to other parts of Paul's teaching. The eminent New Testament scholar, Oscar Cullman, reminds us: 'the fountain head of all false Biblical interpretation and all heresy is invariably the isolation and absolutising of one single passage'.

(2) The surrounding justification for the prohibition is drawn from the creation story and the statements concerning childbirth and salvation. The difficulties of seeing clearly what is meant here are well known and it is true that parts of the passage can be understood in more than one way. When difficulties such as this exist, Christians have a duty not to interpret the disputed passage so that it conflicts with Paul's numerous positive statements about women and their ministry.

(3) When one looks at the original statements, the first clause is interpreted by the second: 'A woman is not to teach: not to have authority over men'. That is, the teaching is a special kind of teaching in which the idea of authority is embedded. The actual word used for [p.26](#) 'authority' can be translated 'supreme control'. It does not appear anywhere else in the New Testament and is the strongest word that could be chosen. It literally means 'to play the tyrant or despot'. This word tells us the sort of teaching that Paul was prohibiting. It is not the regular teaching of received Scriptural doctrine but teaching which is given as if the teacher had 'supreme authority'. It is interesting to note an historical situation of the time which recent research has uncovered. There were in existence some women who claimed to receive direct revelations from God upon particular matters. They therefore taught not under the authority of the Scriptures, not under the authority of the apostles or recognized leaders, but set themselves above all these. Such a practice by such women was condemned. In similar fashion Paul, when writing to Titus, denounces 'insubordinate men' who were proclaiming false teaching and says 'they must be silenced ... they have no right to teach' ([Titus 1:10-11](#)).

Women, therefore, like men, are prohibited from teaching outside the recognized authority, but conversely, their right to teach under authority, if God gives them this gift, must be allowed. To do otherwise is to set Scripture in conflict with Scripture.

God's church today needs women—to make the tea and butter the scones, yes—but also to teach and lead and worship under the authority of Holy Scripture and as guided by the Holy Spirit. That women of the past have not been able always to exercise their God-given gifts in the service of His church is a sad commentary upon the way in which the

church has at times conformed, even perhaps unconsciously, to the culture surrounding it. If Christians, both women and men, are sincerely seeking God's mind on this question and not relying on tradition, then they would again be seen as doing God's work of bringing light and liberty and harmony, and freeing from the shackles of sin.

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I Will Build My Church Reflections on the Wheaton '83 Conference on the Nature and Mission of the Church

William Cook

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BACKGROUND

As is the case in many conferences, Wheaton '83 took its name from the Wheaton (Illinois) College campus and the adjoining Billy Graham Centre where it took place. Perhaps it marked a first among modern Evangelical conferences. Convened by the Theological Commission of the World Evangelical Fellowship, its purpose was to join for creative interaction and critical reflection on Evangelicalism's three contemporary missiological streams. Evangelicalism has been dominated largely by a Western—and U.S.—worldview. Still these streams had been more or less represented at three previous international conferences: Pattaya, 1980 ('How Shall They Hear?'); Edinburgh 1980 ('A Church for Every People by the Year 2000'); and Grand Rapids, 1982 (Consultation on the 'Relation between Evangelism and Social Responsibility' [CRESR]).

ORGANIZATION

Meeting from June 20 to July 7, Wheaton '83 was billed as three consultations rolled into one. Each had its own converters, staff, materials, methodology and goals united by an overall theme. The proximity of the three mini-conferences—or 'tracks'—and their frequent mixing in plenaries and Bible studies on Ephesians, made it more like one conference with three sub-themes. In this, Wheaton '83 superficially resembled the structure of the WCC's Vancouver meeting. Nonetheless, each mini-consultation formed its own identity, followed its own dynamics and concluded in different ways.

Wheaton '83 was intentionally a small affair, as world-wide Christian gatherings go these days. Operating with a limited budget and intent on giving maximum opportunity for dialogue, the staff of 30 resolutely permitted only 320 participants. In addition, 17 journalists covered the conference. Though few women and young people took part, no

one [p. 28](#) protested their notable absences. To judge from the number of journalists there, even the Evangelical press did not perceive Wheaton '83 as a major media event.

The conference planners are to be commended both for their low-key approach and for their commitment to open dialogue. For example, conference organizers permitted several informal documents on current social issues to be circulated and discussed. In the plenary sessions, some protested as irrelevant to mission, discussion of the role of Evangelicals under a Protestant military president (Guatemala), or the Christian attitude toward the nuclear arms race. Neither of these issues was mentioned in the final documents. Yet I was impressed with the absence of overt manipulation as sometimes has been the case in Evangelical (and ecumenical!) gatherings.

THE TRACKS MEET:

Although the overall conference co-ordination remained firmly in the hands of 'first worlders', able leaders from the so-called 'Two-thirds World' took charge of the individual tracks. Track I, under the leadership of Pablo Pérez of Mexico, focused on 'The Church in its Local Setting'. Ably chaired by Patrick Sookhdeo, Track II tried to tackle 'The Church in the New Frontiers in Mission'. Track III attracted the most participants. Spurred on by Vinay Samuel's holistic vision, they made considerable headway on the subject of 'The Church in Response to Human Needs'.

The quality of the pre-conference material was uneven. Conference Co-ordinator Bruce Nicholls and the organizers of Tracks I and II sent out too many advance position papers to be digested properly. Track III's advance materials came in a book prepared for a London preconsultation. These materials often reached the participants too late for serious study and reflection. That tardiness may have reduced the quality of the actual conference reflection. It was difficult—and often not worth the effort—to read the advance materials of even one track, much less all three, as some of us attempted to do. With notable exceptions, little in the plenary Bible studies, the papers and the advance documents of Tracks I and II stirred the mind to reflection or the body to renewed action. Despite such shortcomings, Peter Kusmic's paper in a plenary session stood out. The young Yugoslavian Pentecostal theologian called Wheaton '83 to genuine mission holism based on the Gospel of the Kingdom.

Track III's volume dealt seriously with mission's social dimension [p. 29](#) from sociological and theological dimensions. This was partly the case because this mini-consultation attracted social activists and development agency professionals in addition to a number of missiologists concerned with mission holism. The other tracks were heavy with the activists and consequently light in mission theologians.

Track III did have its failings, however. The participating social scientists could not quite make a clean break with the functionalist school. They recognized, moreover, the bankruptcy of the current developmentalist approaches and largely rejected them as models for Christian social action. As alternatives to both, they propose 'Christian transformation'. Depending on the sociological tool it is wedded to, this could herald either a breakthrough in Christian mission or perpetuate paternalistic developmentalism under a new name.

Each track used its reading materials differently. At the end of the first week, some Track I participants wondered aloud whether its leaders, short of quality position papers and unsure of their goals, were still groping for a methodology. By the second week, though, everyone was busily at work in small groups discussing issues they eventually condensed in their track's final document. This paper says nothing startlingly new or particularly challenging. Perhaps its value lies elsewhere. Conservative Evangelicals are

just beginning to rein in their unqualified enthusiasm for numerical growth, to question the freewheeling ways of para-church organizations, and to think of mission as the task of the 'one, holy, catholic and apostolic church' (cf. Wheaton '83's 'Letter to the Churches', Section I).

In contrast, Track III had a surfeit of position papers. These were summarized quickly in clusters of three or four. Squeezed into brief times among the summaries were small-group huddles in an overcrowded church basement. Despite these drawbacks, Track III was the most creative of the three mini-conferences. Its broad mix of participants, from 'radical Evangelicals' to a member of Guatemala's Church of the Word's social action arm, produced a stimulating document. Though it did not go beyond Grand Rapids' '82's CRESR, given the context Wheaton '83, the document represents overall progress.

I took part in Track II and was pleased with its organization. We had just about the right mix of study materials and time for discussion. Track plenaries summarized the study papers during the first week. In week two, small groups were formed around topics pinpointed by participants. There was a disappointing lack of interest in the theology and even strategy of cross-cultural mission. *That* is most surprising among Evangelical activists. The major concern seemed to be the emerging [p. 30](#) pattern of relationships between older, established missions and the new 'Two-thirds World' missions. In its own way, this differed little from the inter-church 'Christendom syndrome' into which the WCC has fallen since Uppsala.

As in the other tracks, Track II's highlights were its case studies. MARC/World Vision had prepared real—though slightly disguised—case studies. Lively sessions catalyzed by specialists took the studies apart and put them back together again with more success than the king's men had on Humpty Dumpty. In this track, at least, we enjoyed a rare opportunity to break new ground. We were taking the unevangelized 'three thousand million' seriously. We saw them not only as objects of missionary compassion, but as subjects of their own histories, as people with a capacity to challenge our own top-down understanding of mission.

But Track II failed to live up to its promise. Many of its participants ground the axes of their own narrow presuppositions. Unlike the parallel mini-consultations, Track II's participants did not seem to understand their role as part of this whole. At times they were threatened by the insights coming from the other tracks. They chose to focus on limited, at times theologically sterile and singularly uninnovative approaches to cross-cultural mission.

Three interpretations of mission 'frontiers' surfaced. Predominant was the Evangelical mainline 'frontiers as opportunities for mission beyond the barriers of geography and culture'. The more recent 'unreached peoples' category, doggedly pushed by Ralph Winter and his U.S. Centre for World Mission, was less prevailing. A few voices from Latin America pointed out that 'frontiers' (*fronteras* in Spanish) refers both to borders and to barriers. They are more than cultural and geographical; quite often they are also socio-economic, ideological and political. Despite the co-ordinator's firm and gentlemanly efforts to bring all of these issues into play, no consensus evolved. Track II ended in frustration, unable to produce its own final document.

THE TRACKS DIDN'T FULLY MEET:

Though the conference conveners had hoped to produce either an integrated or a three-part document, the most it could do was issue the Wheaton '83 'Letter to the Churches' (see Documents Section). Wheaton '83's lasting contribution to the life and mission of the Church was to bring into focus the equal importance and interrelatedness of the three

issues it highlighted. Though the conference failed to become the integrating ‘switchyard’ as it had billed itself, there is **P. 31** reason for hope. Evangelicals are beginning to move in the right direction. Despite frustrating reversals, the ‘tracks’ are converging—slowly. More encouraging still, they may even be drawing cautiously within hailing distance of the concerns aired at Pasadena and Vancouver. All the while, our ecumenical brethren are becoming increasingly appreciative of Evangelical contributions.

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Wheaton '83 Letter to the Churches

We, the participants in the Wheaton '83 Conference, greet you, our brothers and sisters all over the world, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. More than 300 of us from 60 countries gathered for this Conference about ‘the nature and mission of the church’, convened by the World Evangelical Fellowship, sponsored by many churches and agencies, and meeting in June 1983 in Wheaton, Illinois, U.S.A. For two weeks, under the general theme of our Lord’s Word, ‘I will build my church’, we have been working together in three simultaneous consultations dealing with:

- The Church in its Local Setting;
- The Church in New Frontiers for Missions;
- The Church in Response to Human Need.

We were very diverse in our background, coming from rich and poor nations, speaking different languages, having different cultures and histories and with great disparity in incomes and lifestyles. We came from churches representing a variety of forms, structures and practices. All were concerned about the urgent need for a biblical and incarnated theology of the church and to proclaim the Gospel to every people. We invite you to join us in our effort to study the nature and mission of the church which our Lord Jesus Christ Himself is building.

I THE CHURCH IN ITS LOCAL SETTING

The Church as the Kingdom Community

Some may wonder why it is necessary to have an international conference to discuss the nature and mission of the church. Are not the historic creeds and confessions enough?

Certainly the creeds and confessions affirm with great precision the unity, the holiness, the universality and the apostolic nature of the church. Yet it is also true that we live in two dimensions at the same time. We possess a joyous oneness in Christ which transcends all restrictions known to mankind but we also live in the painful reality of a visible church regrettably divided by both doctrine and practice.

And so, we have sought to discover afresh what it means in our time to affirm that the church is one, holy, catholic and apostolic. We have understood and now reaffirm that the church is the community of Christ’s saving rule, made up of those who bear and confess

the name of Christ. His Kingdom community manifests itself locally and visibly in a variety of assemblies, large and small, gathered by God's Word and marked by Christ's ordinances. These local assemblies minister to God [p. 33](#) in worship, to their members in nurture, and to the world in witness and service.

The Life and Work of Local Churches

We acknowledge that these local assemblies are shaped by Christ Himself receiving both life and form from His Spirit. And we know the Spirit provides everything needed for their life and work, and that the Spirit transforms their members into the likeness of Christ. We know that the Lord who so richly endowed the church charges us to holiness and godliness, as together we eagerly await the consummation of all things in and through our Lord Jesus Christ from whom and for whom all things exist ([2 Peter 3:11, 13](#); [Colossians 1:16, 17](#)).

We have also searched the Scriptures and shared our insights in order to clarify our claim to be apostolic. We praise God that Christ's church is built upon the teachings of the apostles and prophets who received the Word of God and ministered it to us ([Ephesians 2:20](#)). Moreover, our churches are apostolic not only because they rest on that foundation but also on account of their mission. We therefore unequivocally affirm that the command of Christ to His apostles in [Matthew 28:19, 20](#) is totally binding upon us all.

The Witness of Suffering and Free Churches

We recognize with sober concern that some churches are being called by Christ to fulfil their apostolic mission amidst forces fiercely hostile towards both them and their Lord. We all thank God for their faithful witness, and pledge ourselves to support them and pray for them.

Dear brothers and sisters, we have been humbled to reflect that if some of our number can accept suffering for Christ and His Kingdom those of us who enjoy the freedom to serve Christ openly should break out of our complacency and redeem the time. Ought we not to shun the temptation to compromise and to be conformed to this world? Ought we not to repent of our self-indulgence and indifference? We cannot afford to forget that we should be a prophetic voice in the world today, preparing the way for the Lord's return!

Leadership Training in the Churches

We have also considered leadership in the church. We praise the Lord Jesus that He still raises up those whom He endows and equips to build up His church ([Ephesians 4:11-16](#)). We must be alert to identify the gifts of the Spirit in men and women, and encourage them to carry the torch of testimony in the power of the Holy Spirit. We may be able in part to do this by formal training but we must recognize that informal [p. 34](#) learning through active service and discipling is always necessary for the formation of leaders.

Co-operation Between Churches and Agencies

We have given serious attention to the relationships between local churches and denominations on the one hand and para-church agencies on the other. We are grateful for what many of these agencies are doing in the areas of evangelistic outreach and specialized ministries. We view them as servant agencies supplementing the mission of the church to the world. Let us bear in mind that the para-church agencies have a responsibility to relate their ministries to the full fellowship of the church.

We are sad to learn, however, that there are sometimes serious tensions between churches and para-church agencies. We humbly appeal to everybody involved to be

responsible stewards of what God has entrusted to us. Let us therefore be mindful of each other and together listen to our Lord. Only in this way will our time, resources and personnel be used responsibly and will we strengthen each other in our common ministry. And only so can the friction caused by paternalism, insensitivity, and abuse of power be overcome.

We are very conscious of the fact that this entire matter still needs further reflection and we invite you to join us in this. Our overall purpose should be to fulfil our task of reaching the unreached, responding to human needs and building up the church to the glory of God.

II THE CHURCH IN NEW FRONTIERS FOR MISSIONS

A local church is the body of Jesus Christ in its historical and geographical setting, the gathering of men, women, and children, reconciled by Jesus Christ. To this church, in spite of its weaknesses, the Lord has given the task of continuing His own mission, of being the agent of mission in His world.

The Challenge of Unreached Communities

We are thankful for missionary outreach in past centuries which has planted the church in all the world. But we are deeply conscious of the lostness of more than three thousand million people who have not yet had the opportunity to respond to the gospel or have rejected it. In thousands of social and ethnic groups, there are still no churches. Accordingly in considering the mission of the church, we have been challenged to find ways to cross new frontiers to reach urban communities [p. 35](#) and those imprisoned by resistant religious and ideological systems. We are equally concerned for people whose life-styles and values are negatively affected by manipulative mass-media.

The Church as a Missionary Community

As local and national churches God is calling us today to respond to the challenge of these frontiers across the world. Every church is called to fulfil the mission in its own place and in all the world ([Acts 1:8](#)). Indeed the church in its local and regional expression is both a gathering and a sending community. We invite you to explore with us these two aspects of the church.

New Structures for Mission Agencies

We are thankful for the increasing interest in missionary outreach in our century. We recognize that a significant part of the mission work is done through new sending agencies. A century ago mission was still mostly a one-way operation. Today it is different. Churches in all parts of the world are crossing frontiers at home and abroad creating their own sending agencies. Others are taking an active part in existing international Christian organizations.

We have heard about new examples of training missionaries in different countries and we are glad to see that some new patterns are emerging. There is a growing recognition that to be adequate, orientation should be provided at the location of ministry.

Sharing Resources for Mission Worldwide

God is calling us to mission in every place. He provides the enabling resources to fulfil this calling. People called of God and filled with wisdom and the Holy Spirit are the churches' primary resources. Christ continues to call us to prayer that the Lord will send forth

committed and faithful workers into His harvest field. God's means also include material resources of finance and new and traditional forms of communication media. We ask both traditional and emerging missions to share these resources with each other so that the whole body of Christ may be built up in unity and in faith.

III THE CHURCH IN RESPONSE TO HUMAN NEED

Compassion for the Lost and Exploited

As we reflected on the nearly three thousand million people who still have to hear of Christ and His gospel, we were struck by the awesome awareness that most of them are poor and that many are getting even **p. 36** poorer. Millions of these people live in situations where they suffer exploitations and oppression and where their dignity as people created in God's image is being assaulted in many ways. We must be deeply moved by their plight. Our Lord Jesus Christ redeems us from eternal lostness and establishes his lordship over all of our lives. Let us not limit our gospel, then, to a message about life after death. Our mission is far more comprehensive. God calls us to proclaim Christ to the lost and to reach out to people in the name of Christ with compassion and concern for justice and equity ([Rom. 10:14, 15](#); [Ps. 82:2-4](#); [Mic. 6:8](#)).

The Transforming Presence of the Kingdom

We have reminded each other and we remind you that in the incarnation, death and resurrection of Christ, the Kingdom of God has come to us ([Lk. 11:20](#)). We confess that the Kingdom is still to come in its fulness at our Lord's return and we live in joyful expectation of that day. Yet we also affirm that He has already given us His Spirit as first-fruit of the glorious future and as guarantee of what is still to come ([Rom. 8:23](#), [Eph. 1:14](#)).

The reality of the presence of the Kingdom gives us the courage to begin here and now to erect signs of the coming Kingdom by working prayerfully and consistently for more justice and peace and towards the transformation of individuals and societies. Since one day God will wipe away all tears, it grieves us to see people suffer *now*; since one day there will be perfect peace, we are called to be peace makers *now*; since one day we will enjoy full salvation, we have to oppose deprivation and injustice *now*. We humbly yet urgently call upon you to stand with us in this ministry of practising love, seeking to restore the dignity of human beings created in the image of God.

A Two-Fold Accountability

We gratefully acknowledge the fact that many churches and Christian agencies are involved in the work of relief, of justice, and of transforming communities. We rejoice in what is being done through the far-flung and diverse activities of such Christian groups and individuals. Still, as children of the same Father, we recognize that we are to be accountable not only to those who support our ministries but also to those to whom we minister including the local churches. We are thus challenged to become more sensitive to each others' needs as we together seek to glorify God. We should recognize that we are never only givers; we are also receivers, and we rejoice in the many and varied gifts we have been privileged to receive from one another. **p. 37**

The Stewardship of God's Resources

We have come to the awareness that we may joyfully affirm our various cultures as God's gifts to us. It has, however, become clear to us that these very cultures are infected with

evil and may indeed lure us into conforming to the world. We have been challenged to let God's Spirit purify our cultures, so that they may be ennobled and transformed.

We have become deeply aware of the fact that we have nothing we can really call our own. Everything belongs to our Lord, and we are to be His faithful stewards. We are therefore challenged to care for His creation. This means, among other things, that many of us should live more simply in order that others, including unborn generations, may simply live. We humbly confess that we have often acted as though the earth's resources and what we call our possessions are for us to use and squander at will, not realizing our dependence upon and responsibility to others.

An Invitation to Partnership

Finally, brothers and sisters, we confess our utter dependence upon God. He sends *us* into the world, but the mission remains *His*. It is He who enlists us—the Kingdom community—in His agenda for the world. To this end, He has given us His Spirit, to enlighten us and be our Counsellor, to impart His many gifts to us, and to equip us for our ministry. We move forward—trembling yet confidently—and we invite you to move with us, as we prepare for that day when Christ will return and every knee will bow before Him and every tongue confess Him as Lord of all.

PRAISE HIS NAME! [p. 38](#)

Yoga as a Method of Liberation

Moti Lal Pandit

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The modern guru movements that have captivated thousands if not millions of Westerners have one thing in common—the practice of yoga. The increasing flood of propagandist literature on yoga generally misleads people about its ultimate purpose. Yoga is not simply meditation; its goal is to liberate man from his own humanity and from the created world. The ideology of yoga determines the meditational techniques used by the gurus.

The importance of this article is that it does not deal just with the praxis of yoga but gives a rigorous scientific analysis of its philosophic roots. It is the most penetrating analysis this editor has ever read. It is pure science and herein lies its importance for Christian apologetics. Too often Christian apologetics deal primarily with the phenomena and are weak on the theoretical base. This article is pre-theology; it has no reference to Christian doctrine at all. But reflection on it in the light of biblical dogmatics will be of immense value for those who are serious in seeking to understand the dynamics of Hindu spirituality and who want to expound a radical alternative that leads genuine seekers after inner peace to salvation in Jesus Christ—the only true liberator.

(Editor)

INTRODUCTION

There are four main interdependent concepts which comprise Hinduism, and one can approach Hinduism from any one of them. These four concepts are *karma*, *maya*, *mukti*, and *yoga*. These four interconnected ideas have been the source and strength of Hindu spirituality from the post-vedic times, that is, from the Upanishadic period (700 B.C.).

(i) KARMA is a universal law of causality, and this law binds man with the world of becoming, and thereby chains him to eternal process of becoming (transmigration).

(ii) MAYA is a mysterious and unfathomable creative power, a power which enables the cosmos to make its appearance, and thereby exist. It is because of this power that the eternal return of life is made possible. This creative power is considered to be real by the man who is enmeshed in the world of becoming, and thereby suffers from p.39 ontological ignorance about the nature of reality. In fact, this creative power is only an appearance, an illusion.

(iii) MUKTI signifies deliverance or liberation from the process of becoming. It is an unconditioned mode of existence. In and through *mukti* the Absolute is realized within, and is called *brahman-atman*.

(iv) YOGA is a methodology or technique of meditation the aim of which is to realize the state of liberation within, that is, to realize the original unity within the Absolute. Yoga, as a corpus of techniques, is employed in the service of liberation.

Having these four concepts in mind, we can understand the Hindu search for truth and meaning. When we speak of truth, it has not to be understood as something which has value in itself. Truth is meaningful in so far as it is existential, in that it is through truth that man realizes liberation from becoming. A Hindu is not so much concerned with the possession of truth as much as his attention is concentrated on liberation. It is liberation or deliverance which has meaning. To have freedom means to have another form of existence. Freedom means to appropriate another mode of existence which transcends the human condition. In other words, freedom is achieved through metaphysical knowledge or gnosis, a knowledge which allows man to die to his human condition, and thereby be reborn in an unconditioned mode of existence.

The Meaning and Significance of Yoga

In this scheme of things, let us now deal with the basic ideas of Yoga. Etymologically, the word yoga is derived from 'yuj', which means 'to bind together', 'to yoke'. However, as a general concept yoga signifies a methodology of meditation and an ascetic practice. Therefore, any form of ascetical practice or meditational technique is considered to be yoga. But the main themes of yoga are contained in the *Yogasutras* of Patanjali. Alongside the classic yoga, there are numerous other forms of yoga which are not as systematic as the yoga of Patanjali. They mainly depend, for the elaboration of their ideas, on the *Yogasutras*, and most of them dabble in magic, witchcraft, ritual, etc. The yoga of Patanjali is free from these contradictory and folkloric elements.

Although the term yoga means to bind, its fundamental aim is to break the bond which ties man to his condition. This conceptuality has to be understood from a metaphysical point of view. The world of becoming is misery, and therefore the aim of yoga is to disengage man from that which binds him. By delivering him from the net of bondage, yoga aims at *isolating* the spirit of man from all that which causes bondage. The state of isolation is at the same time a state of original p.40 unity, in that the spirit returns to its pristine state. The term has, therefore, to be understood from its double function: on the one hand, it disengages man from his environment by isolating him from his human condition, and on the other, it re-unites man to his original state of being, which is free from temporality.

From this it is clear that there is no possibility of liberation, of original unity, if one is not detached from the world. In not conquering oneself, one's environment, and thereby the world, there is no possibility of beginning the practice of yoga. Yoga, therefore, signifies, on the one hand, complete rupture from the human condition, and on the other, a reversion to the state of non-condition.

Yoga does not have only a practical side; it has an initiatory dimension also. Yoga cannot be learnt by oneself, or through books. It has to have a guru: a master who can teach the disciple the way of yoga. The initiatory character of yoga expresses itself as a detached mode of existence, that is, through the process of initiation a yogi cuts the threads of relationship. While giving up his ties with the world of becoming, a yogin is guided by a guru, and thereby he tries to go beyond the milieu of the human condition. By detaching himself from the world, a yogin thus engages in the process of dying to himself, to the world, and to everything that surrounds him. And through initiation a yogin actualizes the possibility of a new body, a new being, a body which is of mystical character. Having a mystical body, the yogin enters into a non-temporal, non-becoming mode of existence; it is a mode of existence which is beyond good and evil, which is not concerned with the miseries of man.

Yoga is not simply a method of meditation. It is also a philosophy, as set out in the *Yogasutras* of Patanjali. It is believed that Patanjali created the system of yoga philosophy. However, it is not true. Patanjali did not invent either the philosophy or the techniques of yoga. He himself admits the fact that he is only correcting and codifying the system (*Yogasutra*, i.1). Even before Patanjali, esoteric yogic techniques were known to the ascetics. It seems he retained only such practices as had been testified by experiences as authentic. As far as philosophy proper is concerned, Patanjali merely handles the Samkhya system. The philosophy of yoga and Samkhya are so closely allied to each other that the affirmations of the one are meaningful to the other. The main differences between the two are:

(1) Samkhya is atheistic and yoga is not;

(2) Samkhya believes that there is only one way to liberation, and that is, metaphysical knowledge. Yoga, on the other hand, gives much importance to the techniques of meditation. p. 41

Existence is Pain

The world, in the scheme of yoga philosophy, is real. Although the existence of the world is not unreal, it exists, or is there, because of metaphysical ignorance of the soul. The world exists to the extent that the soul is under the influence of ignorance. It is because of this metaphysical ignorance that the soul is enslaved to the process of becoming, of transmigration. The world will cease to exist, or rather will reverse to its unmanifest state, the moment the last soul is awakened from his slumber (ignorance) by metaphysical knowledge through the techniques of yoga.

It is in this belief—that man and the world exist because of ignorance—that in Indian spirituality constant indifference is shown towards the world, and towards the man of the world. This negative attitude, however, does not lead to nihilism because it is realized that there is something more real and authentic than this life of becoming, of temporality. In other words, Indian religiosity rejects the temporal aspect of life as well as of the world. This rejection is based on the idea that there is a mode of existence which is affected neither by history nor by time-space.

Since the world is becoming, is history, it is the centre of sorrow and pain. In the words of Patanjali: 'All is suffering for the seer' (*Yogasutra*, ii.15). Before Patanjali this doctrine was propounded by the Buddha in similar terms: 'All is sorrow, all is impermanent'. All

metaphysical thinking and techniques of yoga find their justification in the belief that everything is but the dark shadow of pain. As one of the commentators (Aniruddha) of the *Samkhya-sutras* writes: 'The body is pain, because it is the place of pain; the senses, objects, perceptions are suffering, because they lead to suffering; pleasure itself is suffering, because it is followed by suffering' (*Samkhya-sutra*, ii. 1). Although there is sadness in Indian philosophy, there is no nihilism in it. It is the knowledge of pain which creates the desire for emancipation, for liberation. Thus suffering plays a positive role in Indian spirituality. It reminds a Hindu that there is only one way to achieve liberation, and that is in withdrawing from the world, in going deep into oneself. Pain is not something which man alone is made to experience. It is an ontological necessity, in that every form of existence, whether it be that of an animal, or insect, is condemned to suffer. But man has the possibility of going beyond the condition of pain.

Since there is possibility for emancipation, knowledge has value in so far as it serves the purpose of liberating man from pain. Therefore, in this 'world, the audience listens only to the preacher, who sets forth facts whose knowledge is necessary and desired. To those who set p. 42 forth doctrines that no one desires, no one attends, as comes to pass with fools or with men of the herd, who are good in their practical affairs but ignorant of the sciences and arts' (*Tattva-kaumudi*, p.1). Vacaspatimisra, in his commentary on the *Vedanta-sutra-bhasya* of Sankara, repeats this very theme about the significance of knowledge: 'No lucid person desires to know what is devoid of all certainty or what is of no use ... or of no importance' (*Bhamati*, p. 1).

The Nature of the Self

The problem of yoga has been defined in clear terms: the source of suffering is the ignorance of the soul or self (*purusa*). To remove the sheaths of ignorance of the soul, and thereby seek liberation, yoga seeks the way of meditational techniques. The centre of this ignorance lies in the self. The self, in the philosophy of yoga, is conceived of as autonomous and independent; it is Buddhists and materialists alone who have denied the reality of the self (*purusa*). In the terminology of Patanjali's yoga the self or soul is spoken of as *purusa*. The self is said to be free from attributes as well as from relations. It is a passive entity. The only thing that can be said about the self is that it knows and is.

This self, being attributeless, is ineffable, unfathomable, beyond description, beyond thought: 'The self is that which sees (*saksin*), it is isolated (*kaivalyam*), indifferent, mere inactive spectator.' These are the words of Isvarkrsna, the author of the *Samkhya-karika* (*Samkhya-karika*, 19). Being passive and attributeless, the self is without intelligence (*ciddharma*) (cf. *Samkhya-sutras*, i. 146), and therefore without desires. As desires are ephemeral, they do not belong to the Self.

There are some difficulties with such an understanding of the self. If the self is pure, attributeless, relationless, without desires and intelligence, then how is it that the self leads an embodied existence, an existence which is seen as pain and sorrow? It is this problem, the link between *purusa* (self) and *prakrti* (matter), which forms the core of yoga thinking—and the techniques devised by yoga are meant to sunder this link.

Man always thinks that the self is bound by the psycho-mental life. We think the self to be bound because we view reality from a human, and therefore empirical, viewpoint. But the self, when seen from the transcendental perspective, is not bound; it is free and unchained. The self appears to be a doer, and therefore bound. In reality, the self is said to be only a spectator (*saksin*). The self is a spectator in the same way as liberation is nothing more nor less than becoming conscious of the eternal freedom and autonomy within.

The sense of pain and bondage exist because of the 'I', and for this p. 43 reason I say: I am bound, I am thin, I am fat. These qualities—bound, thin, and fat—are superimposed upon the eternal self due to ignorance, due to wrongly identifying 'ego' with 'self'. But the moment there is awakening, there is realization that the 'I' is nothing more than the product of matter (*prakṛti*). During this awakening, I realize that existence, in its temporal aspect, has been a constant chain of suffering and that the self has been impassively contemplating the drama of personality. It means that person, as a unique entity, simply does not exist. What we take to be the 'I', is simply a conglomeration of psycho-mental experiences. The personality ceases to be the moment the revelation of the self as autonomous and unconditioned being takes place.

Although the self in itself is free, it, however, allows itself, though in an illusory fashion, to be associated with matter. If existence is viewed in this fashion, then human life seems to be meaningless. In order to avoid this difficulty, Buddhism did away with the self. Vedanta (that is, the Upanishadic philosophy), on the other hand, does away with the reality of the world in order to avoid the difficulty of relationship between the self and the world. Yoga is not willing to destroy the ontological reality either of the world or of the self. It is for this reason that yoga philosophy has been attacked by Sankara, the father of Indian monism, and his followers.

The yoga philosophy believes in the plurality of selves. It believes that there are as many independent selves as there are human beings. A self is a monad, and lives in complete isolation from other selves. The world is inhabited by these monads, and each monad is free and eternal. Yoga philosophy postulates the plurality of selves precisely because, had there been one self, emancipation would have been an easy matter, in the sense that, once the self realized its true nature, all human beings would simultaneously realize liberation.

A person who has realized liberation does not, in so far as he lives his temporal existence, cease to act. After awakening, the liberated person's actions do not belong to him; they are mechanical and objective. He performs these actions without any motive for fruit. His actions are not characterized by the consciousness of 'I'; they are constituted by the consciousness of 'it'.

Means to Liberation

Yoga does not believe that gnosis in itself can lead to liberation (*mukti*): it can prepare the person for the acquisition of freedom. Emancipation, according to yoga, has to be a forced one; it has to be won or conquered. This freedom has to be appropriated through ascetic techniques p. 44 and meditation. The aim, therefore, is to do away with the normal mode of consciousness. The new form of consciousness has to be qualitatively different from the normal one. It is this form of consciousness which is able to comprehend the subtle truth of metaphysical knowledge. This transformation of normal consciousness is not achieved easily. This can be actualized only 'by suppressing the states of consciousness' (*Yogasutra*, i.2). It means that yoga techniques presuppose the knowledge of various kinds of normal modes of consciousness, which are secular, unilluminated, limited, and transient. These normal states of consciousness are said to be numerous, but they can be reduced to three main categories (see Vyasa's commentary on the *Yogasutras*):

- (i) A state of consciousness which is characterized by dreams, illusions and errors.
- (ii) A form of consciousness which is the sum total of all experiences.
- (iii) A consciousness in which experiences of occult nature are awakened by the yogic exercises.

According to Patanjali, each form of consciousness has its own science which explains the limits of experience, its nature and function. The theory of knowledge, for instance,

tells us how to avoid conceptual confusion. Since, according to yoga, every psychological experience is the product of ignorance about the nature of the self, it is but evident that they are false from a metaphysical viewpoint. They may be real when seen from a psychological point. Therefore, metaphysics recognizes that knowledge as real and valid which is of the third category.

The aim of yoga, therefore, is to abolish the first two forms of consciousness or experience, and thereby lead us to a form of consciousness which is non-rational, beyond sense perception, and of para-psychological nature. This form of knowledge, according to yoga, is gained in the state of *samadhi*—a state which is beyond becoming, and thereby the state of absolute freedom is affected.

Yoga is a method or technique which believes in the experimental form of knowledge. There is no possibility of any form of experimental knowledge without asceticism—and this is the leitmotif of yoga literature. Books 2 and 3 of the *Yogasutras* are devoted to this activity: purification, bodily attitudes, breathing techniques, etc. In order to reach the state of *samadhi*, yoga techniques are indispensable.

The Nature of the Mind

There are, according to Patanjali's yoga, five states which create the [p.45](#) normal psychomental activities of consciousness, and they are: ignorance (*avidya*), the sense of personality (*asmita*), passion (*raga*), disgust (*dvesa*), and the will to live (*abhinivesa*). All these states of consciousness are of a painful (*klesa*) nature. Taken together, human experience is nothing but pain and sorrow.

The yogin, one who follows the path of yoga, has to eradicate these states (*vruttis*) from the mind, since they constitute the normal psychomental stream of consciousness. These states form the subconscious, as it were, of the mind. The subconscious forces raise two kinds of obstacles on the way of liberation: on the one hand, subconscious sensations (*vasanas*) feed continuously the psycho-mental activity of the mind, and on the other, these subconscious sensations, by virtue of their function, constitute obstacles on the way of liberation, because their very nature is elusive and difficult to control.

The origin of these subconscious sensations according to Vyasa, the commentator on the *Yogasutras* (iv.9), is memory. Human life is seen as a continuous flux of subconscious sensations, and these sensations express themselves in the form of states of consciousness. In other words, it means that life is seen as the actualization of these subconscious forces of the mind through experience. Whatever kind of specificity an individual has, it is determined by the subconscious forces.

Since the psycho-mental activity of the mind is characterized by the subconscious forces, which are of a painful nature, it is difficult for the mind to experience such states of consciousness which are pure. Even if pure states of consciousness existed, it would be difficult for man to renounce his subconscious sensation. It is this pain of the subconscious which humanity in general shares. Pain, therefore, is a common datum of experience of humanity, and there are few who have the strength and courage to renounce this world of pain. In so far as the subconscious sensations are not eliminated, it is of no use to attempt to change the direction of the states of consciousness. The aim of yoga, therefore, is to enable man to destroy the *vasanas*, and thereby change the states of consciousness.

The Nature of Yogic Techniques

To overcome the subconscious sensations of the mind, methods and techniques have been devised. The basic method is that of concentration (*ekagrata*), and concentration has to be on a single point, whether it be on the space between the eyebrows, or on God. The concentration is realized by integrating the stream of consciousness (*sarvarthata*). The

function of concentration is to bring the mind under [p. 46](#) control, to keep it away from distractions. Concentration presupposes control over the senses (*indriyas*) and on the functions of the subconscious. Control means to intervene at will. In other words, it means to realize discontinuity of psycho-mental life at will.

To achieve *ekagrata* (concentration), certain bodily techniques have been devised. It is for this purpose that emphasis upon breathing, bodily postures, etc, is laid. The aim of the techniques is to suppress the normal states of consciousness through concentration. To facilitate the state of concentration, and thereby elimination of the states of consciousness (*citvritti*) the help of eight 'limbs' (*angas*) is sought. They are: restraint (*yama*), discipline (*niyama*), bodily postures (*asanas*), breathing exercises (*pranayama*), freedom from sense activity (*pratyahara*), concentration (*dharana*), yogic meditation (*dhyana*), and *samadhi* (an undifferentiated state of consciousness).

The yoga proper begins with the third limb, namely, with that of *asana* (bodily posture). The aim of the *asana* is to reduce the bodily activity to non-activity, and thereby create a condition of immobility. The same purpose is served by *pranayama*, in that conscious life is transformed into a kind of plant life. By achieving motionlessness, by having rhythmic breathing, and by deep concentration, a yogin, through the process of immobilization of both mind and body, transcends the normal modality of life. This immobility is said to be an autonomous form of existence in relation to the external world. In this new autonomy, a yogin is supposed to be insensible to heat and cold, to thirst and hunger, to light and darkness. It is a process of killing the life of sensations, and thereby creating an alternative form of inner sensations.

While a yogin progresses on this path, the sensations of his body become dead. All the states of his consciousness get narrowed down to one point: immobility of mind and body. According to Patanjali, through immobility there is concentration. Once concentration takes place, the withdrawal of senses from the external influences becomes evident.

This withdrawal of senses is spoken of as *pratyahara*. At this stage para-psychological phenomena take place, that is, as said above, consciousness is reduced to the inner world of sensation. At this stage all the activities of the conscious mind are suspended. In this state of non-consciousness, there is the experience of light in the heart, or, as the mystics say, it is light from the lotus of the heart. So we are introduced to an occult physiology.

From this account it should be clear by now that the yogic meditation is quite different from meditation as we normally understand it. By [p. 47](#) meditation, we understand reflection, reflection by the mind. In the yogic terminology, meditation signifies non-reflection, destruction of the psycho-mental activities of the mind. According to yoga, meditation is neither subjective nor objective, it is beyond both.

The Nature of Samadhi

The last three limbs, namely, *dhyana*, *dharana*, and *samadhi*, represent states of consciousness, and are spoken of as *samyama* (controlling together). The realization of *samyama* means the simultaneous experience of concentration (*dharana*), yogic meditation (*dhyana*), and *samadhi* (non-conditioned state of consciousness).

To go from the level of concentration to that of yogic meditation needs no new technique or method. In like manner, no new yogic exercise is needed by a yogin once he has achieved the plane of concentration and yogic meditation: *samadhi* is bound to take place. *Samadhi*, therefore, is the crown and apex of all yogic ascetic practices, that is, the realization of freedom as a mode of existence which is non-conditioned.

There are various difficulties in understanding the meaning of *samadhi*, even if we concentrate our attention on the explanation of Patanjali and his commentators alone. To

explain samadhi in precise terms is difficult on account of its being indescribable. Also the meaning is difficult to explain precisely because there are various modalities of it.

Let us describe the meaning briefly. Samadhi is a state of consciousness in which the form of an object is directly grasped, that is, consciousness does not make use of categories and of imagination (*kalpana*). It is a state in which the object reveals itself as it is (*svarupa*). It is a state in which a yogin is supposed to suspend the operation of all mental faculties, and thereby the distinction between the act and the object of meditation is obliterated. It is a state in which there is identity between knowledge and object. The object no longer presents itself to consciousness as that which delimits the horizon of consciousness, and thereby the phenomenon is defined. There is, therefore, no distinction between illusion and imagination, between fact and fiction, as they are done away with. In the words of one of the commentators on the *Yogasutras*, namely, Vijnanabhiksu: the state of samadhi is arrived at 'when dhyana is freed from the separate notions of meditation, object of meditation, and meditating subject, and maintains itself only in the form of the object meditated on.'

Samadhi is most probably different from hypnosis. Indian thinkers seem to have been clear on this point. Hypnosis, according to Indian [p. 48](#) thinking, is an automatic damming of consciousness, and is not to be considered as concentration. The process of hypnosis is spoken of in these terms: 'Uniting (*samyojya*) the rays of his own eyes with the rays of her eyes, he made his way into her body, as wind makes its way through the air.' (*Mahabharata*, xiii. 40, 56–57).

However, when we say that samadhi leads to liberation, to a non-conditioned mode of existence, it does not mean that every kind of *samadhi* possesses this power. Broadly speaking, samadhi has been classified into two categories: samadhi with aid, and samadhi without aid. When the state of samadhi is realized with the help of an object or idea, it is called *samprajnata*, that is, a differentiated state of consciousness. If samadhi is reached without the help of an object, it is called *asamprajnata*, that is, undifferentiated state of consciousness. The former may be said to be a means to liberation in so far as it makes possible the comprehension of truth. As far as the latter is concerned, it completely destroys the psycho-mental states of consciousness, and thereby the 'impression' carried by the subconscious. This state of consciousness arrests all mobility within man, and thereby complete immobility of thought and body is achieved. In the state of *samprajnata* samadhi, the immobility of all mental faculties is realized except that of the object on which one meditates.

There are several levels which comprise the differentiated samadhi. The states are the following: argumentative (*savitarka*), non-argumentative (*nirvitarka*), reflective (*savicara*), and super-reflective (*nirvicara*). Patanjali, while describing these levels, also uses a different set of terms, namely, *vitarka*, *vicara*, *ananda*, and *asmita*. However, these terms have a technical function, in that they are applied to different levels of consciousness. These levels present the ascent, as it were, of consciousness from the temporal horizon to non-temporal.

However, if one desires to achieve liberation, one has to go beyond these levels of consciousness of differentiated samadhi. Since one has to make use of support during these levels in order to ascend higher and higher, the states are spoken of as *bija* (seed) or *salambana* (dependent) samadhi. These levels are so referred to because they produce the future tendencies for consciousness, whereas undifferentiated samadhi is seedless (*nirbija*). Once all the four levels of differentiated samadhi have been realized, one reaches the level whereby one is able to have the faculty of absolute knowledge (*ritambharaprajna*) opened. It is an opening towards the seedless samadhi, as the ontological unity, in the form of undifferentiated consciousness, is realized, and thereby the distinction between being

and becoming, knowledge and the object of knowledge, ceases to exist. Being in this p. 49 kind of samadhi, consciousness has the revelation of the self (*purusa*), and thereby the mode of matter (*prakriti*) is transcended. In the transcendence of matter lies liberation—and to realize this transcendence in one's lifetime is the aim of yoga.

By now we have covered a tortuous road. The aim of yoga should be clear by now: it is to realize liberation from the human condition. To achieve this liberation, various methods have been devised: psychological, physical, mental, mystical, etc. All these methods are antisocial, and sometimes even anti-human, in that yoga prescribes a way of life which says: this life of ours is not worth living. Yoga refuses to live a natural life, and thereby aspires for a kind of life which is non-natural. In other words, yoga conceives the natural form of life as unfreedom precisely because it is characterized by a continuous flux of subconscious forces. On the other hand, a life which is beyond nature is free from the influences of the subconscious, and therefore is spoken of as freedom. This freedom is liberation, and in it lies the culmination of yogic techniques, ideology and methodology.

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Second Thoughts on Contextualization

Simon Chan

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This article explains why the author does not share his Third World colleagues' enthusiasm about contextualization. As a catalyst, he seeks to stimulate discussion on the issue which points to new areas of study and reflection that are important for pursuing our theological task.

(Editor)

It has become quite popular nowadays, particularly in the Third World, to begin the discussion on contextualization by accentuating the differences between East and West. Recent articles in the *Evangelical Review* bear ample testimony to this. The differences usually centre on two issues: the epistemological (the 'Hebrew' versus the 'Greek' way of thinking) and the cultural. The Western way of thinking, we are told, is abstract and rationalistic; it relies heavily on Aristotelian logic (the law of the excluded middle: the 'either-or'), and consequently, it is reductionistic. The Eastern way, on the other hand, is concrete and holistic; it employs the category of the 'both-and' and allows for paradoxes and mysteries.¹ A major task of contextualization is to extricate the biblical message from its 'Greek' trappings. After all, we are further told, the Hebrew mind-set has closer affinities with the Eastern way of thinking.

¹ J. Y. Lee, 'The Yin-Yang Way of Thinking', *What Asian Christians Are Thinking* (Quezon City, Phil., 1976).

There is no doubt that the goal of contextualization is entirely worthy, if not noble. It seeks for no less than the recovery and effective communication of the biblical message within a specific cultural context: in short, a coherent hermeneutics. The programme, if successful, would certainly enrich the Church in whichever part of the world it is intended to be for. Yet, it seems to me that the programme as a whole may be quite mistaken in some of its fundamental assumptions and tendencies. As a result it may actually be endangering its avowed aims. In this short essay, I would like very briefly to highlight a few points of observation. My own limitations would necessarily confine these observations to the context in which 'we live and move and have our being', namely, the Asian context. p. 51

SOCIOLOGICAL OR BIOLOGICAL

First, much of the attempt at contextualization which presupposes the problems attendant on cultural and epistemological incompatibilities may be questioned from its uncriticized reliance on the sociological paradigm for understanding the human phenomenon.² This has resulted in a view where cultural peculiarities and barriers (some even speak of 'cultural totalities')³ become greatly exaggerated. Yet there is reason to believe that the sociological model may not be the only model for understanding human nature, nor is it even the most determinative. For from the monumental vision of Teilhard de Chardin⁴ to the structuralism of Levy-Strauss⁵ and the linguistic theories of Noam Chomsky⁶ we are singularly impressed with the more basic fact of mankind's unity. And surely such a fact (which could no longer be considered to be merely a construct of theological anthropology) must have more than a perfunctory influence on our hermeneutical task? Teilhard, for instance, schematizes his concepts around his theory of 'convergence', the significance of which may be noted in his own words:

Anthropologically, ethically, socially, morally, we understand nothing about man and can make no valid forecasts of his future, so long as we fail to see that, in his case, 'ramification' (in so far as it still persists) works only with the aim—and under higher forms—of agglomeration and convergence.⁷

Convergence, then, for Teilhard, is even more basic than 'ramification' or diversification—shall we say cultural diversification?

The contextualization programme, therefore, must take more serious cognizance of the *total* human phenomenon and not just focus on aspects of it. It needs to supplement its sociological paradigm with—for want of a better term—the biological paradigm. The latter may in fact be more relevant to the issue on hand since it is also concerned with the psycho-spiritual aspects of man. But contextual p. 52 theology, in over-emphasizing the

² Although Peter Chang seeks to locate the different ways of thinking in the fundamental operations of the brain, the preponderance is still on cultural diversity: 'Linear thinking' is identified with 'Western thinking'. See 'Steak, Potatoes and Chopsuey: Linear and Non-Linear Thinking in Theological Education', *Evangelical Review of Theology* (Oct, 1981), pp. 279–286.

³ E.g., Denis Nineham, *The Use and Abuse of the Bible* (London, 1976).

⁴ Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man* (New York, 1959).

⁵ Claude Levy-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology* (New York, 1963).

⁶ Noam Chomsky, *Language and Mind* (New York, 1972); *Reflection on Language* (Glasgow, 1976).

⁷ *The Phenomenon of Man*, p.243.

sociological paradigm which is more concerned with man's social environment and external relations, may have failed to appreciate the deeper levels of religious consciousness with which Christianity is ultimately concerned.

CULTURAL OR UNIVERSAL

A second point of observation has to do with the sharp distinction between the Eastern and Western ways of thinking. That there are different ways of conceptualizing is patent; what is questionable is whether these differences can be demarcated along cultural lines. A closer examination of the spiritual traditions of the East and West will reveal that the so-called Eastern thought-category is not exclusively nor even predominantly eastern, but is a universal category that belongs to the larger *human* tradition.⁸ This is what phenomenologists of religion have taught us since Rudolf Otto; and there is no lack of examples of this method of conceptualizing in all the major spiritual traditions of the West: the medieval mystics from St. Bernard and the Victorines to St. John of the Cross;⁹ the thoroughly protestant English Puritans;¹⁰ the apophatic theology of Greek orthodoxy.¹¹ (It may be observed in this connection that contextual theologians are often highly selective in their use of examples to illustrate the differences between Eastern and Western Thought.) To speak of Eastern and Western ways of thinking, therefore, is quite misleading. It would be more appropriate to distinguish between two levels of conceptualization, a relatively superficial level which employs rational categories and a deeper level which touches primarily on man's religious consciousness and which finds verbal expression in what Otto calls 'ideograms'. **P. 53**

SYNCHRONIC OR DIACHRONIC

Thirdly, contextualisation as it is currently undertaken has the tendency to accentuate the synchronic difficulty in the hermeneutical task—one often hears of the alleged irrelevance of rationalistic western theology for the East—without an equal appreciation of the diachronic difficulty—one also often hears it confidently asserted that Asians have a spontaneous appreciation of biblical thought-patterns. That may be true (perhaps in some pickwickian sense?), but the fact of the matter is that the biblical culture is still a culture separated from our own by several millennia. Here we may refer again to Dennis Nineham's controversial book *The Use and Abuse of the Bible*: If Nineham has exaggerated the diachronic problem, he has at least shown that this is a problem which cannot be so easily bypassed.

RELEVANT OR THEORETICAL

⁸ This human tradition has been schematized into three universal spiritual models in Robert Neville's *Soldier, Sage, Saint* (New York, 1978).

⁹ Bernard of Clairvaux, *On the Love of God* (London, 1937); St. John of the Cross, 'The Ascent on Mt. Carmel' and 'The Dark Night', in *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross* (1964). St. John and his counterpart St. Teresa represent perhaps the best of the Catholic mystical tradition.

¹⁰ Studies in puritanism are massive. But William Haller, *The Rise of Puritanism* (New York, 1938) and Perry Miller, *The New England Mind* (New York, 1939) may be cited as examples of studies which highlight its spiritual dimension.

¹¹ According to Vladimir Lossky, apophatism and, hence, mystery are basic to Eastern Orthodoxy. See *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (London, 1957), pp.25–43.

Fourthly, contextual theologians have often manifested an almost neurotic concern for cultural relevance in theological endeavours. To cite a case in point, it has become commonplace for theological students in Asian seminaries to be told, almost invariably, to adopt topics of research 'relevant to our context'. But this attitude may actually have serious drawbacks. It has resulted to use another analogy from science, in a tendency to concentrate on 'applied' research and to disparage 'pure' or theoretical research in theology. One engages in theological reflection for what immediate 'cash value' it has for a particular context. To be sure, such concerns must not be neglected; yet it is in the realm of 'pure' research that new and creative possibilities are discovered. This is true of science as well as of philosophy and theology. Perhaps Whitehead's philosophy may be cited as a case in point. It is a complex system and probably the most ambitious attempt in the 20th Century at a comprehensive cosmology. But who would have imagined that a philosophy couched in highly technical terms (rationalistic?) could have useful implications for liberation theology in Latin America? Thus, the pragmatic approach to theology is bound to have severe limitations in the long run. It can only lead to theological provincialism and obscurantism!

CONCLUSIONS

The question may then be asked: of what should the theological task in the Third World consist? Basically, two things. First, our hermeneutics [P. 54](#) must be informed by a wider circle of ideas. It must embrace both levels of conceptualization as indicated above. Here it may be of interest to note that much of the theology done in the Third World has been in reaction to Western academic theology, but little, so far, has been done vis à vis the 'mystical theology' of the Eastern Church. A theology that is more comprehensive in scope would then mean that what we call an 'Asian theology' (or any other 'theologies' for that matter) must be a theology not only for Asia but also *from* Asia. It must be addressed to the Church Universal. And this brings us to the second and more practical task. Third World theologians must not shun theoretical research, however abstract and removed from their present contexts it may seem to be. Theoretical thought cannot be considered a luxury even if there are issues of more immediate concern confronting us. An openness to truth should characterize our theological attitude—even when the truth should lead us beyond the confines of our particular cultural context.

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Contextualization and Theological Education

O. Imasogie

INTRODUCTION

The question of contextualization must crop up whenever a religion is introduced to a people whose culture differs from that of the one who brings the religion. It is surprising that until recently no major Christian denomination in Africa made any serious effort to address itself to the problem.

There is no intention here to present an exhaustive treatment of the subject. I only want to describe the problem and the need for theological educators to come to grips with it in their curriculum revision. I will then suggest some guidelines that may be considered in the process of contextualization.

I CONTEXTUALIZATION: WHAT IT IS

As I was preparing this paper I asked my faculty, especially the new missionary teachers, to let me have the benefit of their efforts at contextualization in the teaching process. I got some interesting responses. One of them in a two-page monograph defined his understanding of contextualization as a process 'whereby concepts are translated from one cultural setting to another without loss of essential meanings and also whereby the application of these concepts can be demonstrated in a new setting.' He went on to add: 'A distinction needs to be made between bridging cultural gaps on the one hand and what we call simple accommodation to another culture. Decisions need to be made between essential, unchangeable elements in concepts and what is less essential and therefore can be changed. An example of the latter in religious context would be that the church formats can change. The former would require that the Christian God cannot simply be identified with Zeus without regard to His essential nature and attributes. One has to decide what can and what cannot be changed, what can be identified with another culture and what must be filled with an entirely new meaning.' (Charles Egedy).

I must confess that I find it impossible to improve on that definition. For the purpose of our discussion here let us look at contextualization as a process of systematic presentation of the Christian faith that is [p. 56](#) informed by a serious and critical consideration of the culture of a people and the world view that fashions that culture.

This is presupposed on the assumption that man's apprehension of Christ is greatly influenced by his total experience and needs as perceived through the spectacles provided by his culture. The importance of this view is underscored by the fact that no religion can be considered valid if it does not meet the total needs of a person as perceived by that person. In other words, if Christ is to be the Lord of a particular people, the Word must become flesh anew in the culture and the concomitant thought-pattern of the particular people; otherwise Christianity remains a foreign religion transplanted on a foreign soil. In that case, Santayana's maxim that 'any attempt to speak without speaking any particular language is no more hopeless than the attempt to have a religion that shall be no religion in particular' becomes true.

On the surface it would appear that one is belabouring the obvious but that is far from the truth. The truth is that many Christian theologians or educators are not usually aware of the subtle influences that determine their theological formulations and theological educational programmes. No one theologizes in a vacuum. Whether the theologian is aware or not there are certain *givens* which condition his theological activities and thought. Among these are; (1) His existential experience of Christ; (2) his church tradition;

(3) his own imaginative insights; (4) his intuitive reactions to the ideas of others; (5) his self-understanding within his world view and (6) his cultural background which provides the thought-pattern, the perspective from which he experiences reality and the language in which he expresses himself. Unfortunately, most theologians have not been acutely conscious of these hidden factors in their theologizing. The result is that there has been a confusion or an equation of Christian faith with the cultural hue or form in which it is presented. This can only lead to superficial commitment on the part of the average people the missionaries try to evangelize. Such a veneer of Christianity invariably peels off under stress and the faith based on it crumbles because it has not taken root in the total life of the convert involved.

One may wonder why this is the case. The reason is that by ignoring his world-view and self-understanding, the African Christian convert is not given the opportunity to confront his self-understanding with the claims of Christ. Consequently, the average African Christian is a man of two faiths. When faced with existential crises a conflict invariably develops as to the relevance of his Christian faith to what he perceives as a metaphysical problem. [p. 57](#)

He usually resolves the conflict in favour of his traditional religious practices for coping with such life problems. His unconscious rationale for opting for an unchristian solution is that the 'Christian God' must not be familiar with this type of problem, otherwise his pastor or missionary would have taught him something about this.

It is sad to note that the mainstream Christian denominations in Africa have not made any tangibly serious attempt to come to grips with this problem of contextualization. The so-called Independent Churches that have sprung up from the mainstream Christian groups have done so in protest and, in most cases, by people of questionable character and limited Christian theological understanding. The result is syncretism because they are unable to carry out a proper contextualization that does not violate the core of Christian faith.

This is where we must come in as theological educators to take the lead in contextualizing Christianity in Africa. If it is to be done right it must be done by people with an acceptable measure of theological understanding that grows out of existential experience with the living Lord. It may be in order to remind ourselves that what we are called upon to do is not new in Christian history; what is strange is that we did not start earlier than this. Much of the history of Christian doctrine is a commentary on the struggle between Jewish thought-patterns and the Greek world view, vis-à-vis the existential apprehension of Christ within the two thought-patterns. As John Cobb puts it:

In the long run it was Greek and not Jewish Christianity that triumphed; hence it was the problems of relating Greek thought to Christian faith that determined much of the intellectual history of Christianity.

Of course, by 'triumph' here, Cobb means the basic formulation of the Christian faith. This must be because in terms of detail the Eastern Orthodox Christianity is different from the Western version of Christianity. Within the Western sector, the Roman Catholic expression of it differs from the Protestant's. In the same way, within each of these groups the theology of one specific confession, say in Germany, is different from the same confession on the other side of the Atlantic ocean. In other words, the Word must always become flesh in a particular culture before His glory can be recognized existentially as the glory 'as befits the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth' ([John 1:14](#) NEB).

II GUIDELINES FOR CONTEXTUALIZING THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

I confess that I have neither the intention nor the expertise to tell you **p. 58** how to contextualize your theological educational curriculum. All I can do, having described my understanding of it, is to urge you to make a serious attempt to do it. To this end, I would like to suggest some guidelines which, I believe, are essential points for consideration in any meaningful effort at contextualization that is both Christian and Biblical. These are:

1. An existential conviction that the Gospel of the Incarnate Son of God has eternal saving efficacy for man everywhere and in all generations who, in repentant faith, is committed to Him.
2. A conviction that man's spiritual needs which are essentially universal are perceived through the spectacles of cultural colouring.
3. A recognition of the fact that every man's apprehension of Christ as God's answer to human needs is crucially influenced by his culture. This creates the need to overhaul the current theological curriculum which was devised in a different culture to meet specific needs as perceived there. This is necessary if theological education is to equip the minister for meeting the total needs of his people in their cultural setting. Overhauling does not necessarily mean that the existing curriculum will be discarded. Some elements are basic and must be retained, but this will be done because they are found to be universally relevant following an objective evaluation.
4. A realization that a theological curriculum that is relevant must include an in-depth study of the African world view, his self-understanding and the resultant traditional religions. Such an exercise will afford the minister an opportunity to sit where his people sit in order to see life through their eyes and thus be able to identify their deep spiritual needs which only Christ can satisfy.

With the foregoing, the Christian theologian is ready to begin a meaningful contextualization of the theological curriculum that will become relevant because it has grown out of the world view, culture and thought-pattern of the African as viewed from the perspective of Biblical Christianity. The theological educator must never lose sight of the fact that his main function is to 'equip the saints for the work of the ministry'. This the saints do by mediating the saving knowledge of Christ to men in their particular total environment. Unless the Gospel is so contextualized the people may not give an existential response to the Christ who came that men may have life and to have it more abundantly.

If this is our task, then we must resist the temptation to defend the status quo. We must be open and re-examine our present curriculum, **p. 59** delete, add and modify as needed in the light of the result of the findings from our objective studies.

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The Conception and Unborn Life of Christ as a theme for Christian Worship

Murray Darroch

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This edited version of a paper on the conception and unborn life of Christ seeks to explore the place of unborn children in society and in Scripture. The author suggests why this theme is generally ignored by Christians and why it is relevant for Christian worship.

(Editor)

Our own society sees life very much in terms of a process that starts with birth and ends with death. Anyone who has been closely involved in the experience of pregnancy will know that, in our day a person is seen as being a parent only when a birth occurs. Prior to the birth a woman is merely a person who 'is going to be a mother' and is 'going to have a baby', rather than being a woman who is 'with child'.

Similarly the human life of Christ tends very much to be seen as beginning at Bethlehem—hence the Incarnation of Christ is seen as being an appropriate theme for Christmas. Thus we have a pattern of thought which in effect says 'the birth of Christ = Bethlehem = Christmas = Incarnation of Christ'. It is almost as if Christ came straight to Bethlehem from heaven, without being incarnated as an unborn child and living for nine months in the womb of a human woman, and some of our statements almost go as far as saying exactly that.

The thought pattern 'the birth of Christ = Bethlehem = Christmas = Incarnation of Christ' is strongly reinforced by a number of our hymns and sermons. Such hymns and sermons, whether they are of a general nature or prepared specifically for Christmas, frequently make one of two assumptions. Either they speak of the Incarnation of Christ and the birth of Christ in the same breath, or they list our Saviour's birth as the first of the salvation events in his life here on earth. Hymns and sermons which fall into this latter category always start with the birth of Christ and use this as a sort of 'jumping off place' for all subsequent events in Christ's earthly life such as his childhood, his three years of public ministry, his death, his resurrection and his ascension. This same thought pattern is also clearly evident in the multitude of magazine articles and church sermons on the Incarnation during the month of December. [p. 61](#)

In practical terms birth is seen as the beginning of life because it is a process that can be pinned down to a place and a time. All of us know the date on which we were born, and most would know the time of day and the day of the week when our mothers' contractions pushed us out of their bodies into the world. Conception, on the other hand, is much less identifiable in terms of date or time. Except for those who were knowingly conceived through natural family planning, few of us could readily identify our respective conception dates, and none of us could identify a specific time at which we were conceived. Job in the Old Testament is aware that God knows when he (Job) was conceived (see [Job 3:3](#) and [6-7](#)) although such knowledge is of course hidden from Job.

A second reason why birth is commonly seen as being the beginning of life relates to the question of identity and the process of being named. When we were in the womb of our mothers, our sexual identities were unknown. And because they were unknown, we were unnamed. And because we were unnamed it was possible for us to be thought of as being other than real people. In her book *Male and Female* Margaret Mead refers to the commonplace relationship between the sexual identity of a child, and the naming of the child when she states:—

'The sex of the child, marked by a name, is the way in which the fact of birth is fixed in the minds of friends and relatives who have not seen the child. Before birth, hopeful mothers

may use the planned name for the baby, but only after birth does the child move, and at once, from it to a named, fully sexed individual.¹

There are perhaps other reasons why we have tended to emphasize birth as the beginning of life. The experience of this author is that amongst older people, there is a reticence to use such terms as ‘unborn children’, ‘conception’ and ‘conceived’ and ‘the womb’. Such reticence would appear to be related to a particular view of human pregnancy and human sexuality that sees these issues as being unmentionable in public conversation. Such reticence is commonly associated with the moral viewpoints of the 19th century. Certainly the citizens of the Duchy of Hanover had no inhibitions in 1660 about making plans to celebrate the stirrings of the unborn child, later to be named George Louis (later still to be George I of England) when he was in the womb of his mother the Electress Sophie of Hanover. This was possibly an unusual occasion in that the unborn child concerned was p. 62 known to be the prospective heir to the duchy.² The replacement of the term ‘with child’ (which was current in literature and everyday conversation up until the 19th century) with terminology such as ‘being pregnant’, has, in its own way, helped to reinforce the concept of life beginning at birth.

Perception of whether what is in the womb is a person or a thing is of course cultural. I am told that in traditional Chinese society, a child was regarded as being one year old when born. I have heard, too, that in Northern Nigeria there were difficulties in the past in gathering comparable population census data since rural dwellers count their own unborn children in the census count. Margaret Mead refers to Manus Islanders ‘handling miscarriages and abortions, all of which are named, and treated as if they had been full individuals years afterwards’. Mead says, ‘a (Manus Islander) mother will not distinguish in retrospect between a miscarriage at three months, a stillborn infant and a child who died after birth’.³

THE UNBORN CHILD IN BIBLICAL HISTORY

For its part the Old Testament shows a perspective about the beginnings of human life that does not fit easily with current western thinking. As already mentioned, Job, in his sufferings, looked back to both his conception and his birth as his beginning—

‘Let the day perish wherein I was born,
and the night which said “A man-child is conceived”.’

The above passage links conception and birth together in the poetic device of parallelism commonly used in Old Testament poetry. This device is also used by the prophet Isaiah in telling forth to the people that the fact that God will save and uphold them from the beginning to the end of their lives p. 63

Hearken to me, O house of Jacob,
all the remnant of the house of Israel,
who have been borne by me from your birth
carried from the womb;
even to your old age I am He,

¹ *Male and Female* by Margaret Mead, Victor Gollancz Ltd., London, 1950, p.267.

² *Sophie Electress of Hanover*, Maris Kroll, chapter 3. First published in Great Britain by Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1973 (First Nel Mento Edition, p.99).

³ *Male and Female* by Margaret Mead, Victor Gollancz Ltd., London, 1950, p.155.

and to your grey hairs I will carry you
I have made, and I will bear;
I will carry and will save

[Isaiah 46:3-4](#)

Because of this idea of the dual importance of birth and conception, those in the womb were seen by the Jewish people in the Old Testament as being very much part of the community. On three occasions in the Psalms ([22:31](#); [78:6](#) and [102:18](#)) the Psalmist refers to the coming generation who are 'a people yet unborn'. We are accustomed to think of such phrases as referring to people who are yet to be conceived. However, in view of Jewish thinking about life in the womb, what is being referred to are unborn children, and that those who are unborn children at this moment in time are the coming generation who are to yet receive God's testimony and to know for themselves the Lord and experience his deliverance from sin.

Further evidence of unborn children being regarded as the coming generation is found in the rather gruesome military strategies of the nations who surrounded Israel. In [2 Kings 8:12](#), [Amos 1:13](#), and [Hosea 13:16](#) we find reference to the ripping open of women who are with child. Conventional military strategies of the time dictated that if you were able to invade enemy territory but not able to occupy it permanently, you would kill all who were able to use weapons i.e. all men, and all who one day would be capable of using weapons i.e. all male children. If, as an invader, you wanted to be particularly thorough, your soldiers would also kill all unborn children by ripping open all women with child.

In discussing such passages it is important to see that the Old Testament not only reflects the views of the Jewish people concerning their unborn children. The Scriptures also reflect God's own perception of the place of unborn children. In [Romans 9:10](#) we read '... but also when Rebecca had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad, in order that God's purposes of election might continue, not because of his works but because of his call, she was told "The elder will serve the younger". As it is written "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated".' God's purposes for Jacob and Esau were determined and foretold while they were in the womb. p. 64

Then there is Samson. Samson was a Nazarite from conception—see [Judges 16:17](#). The angel of the Lord told Manoah's wife that the child she was to conceive and give birth to would be a Nazarite from birth. The dietary instructions she was given for the nine months of the pregnancy clearly bear out Samson's own assessment that he had been a Nazarite from his mother's womb.

Other examples of people whom God chose or consecrated while in the womb are Jeremiah, Paul and John the Baptist. In [Jeremiah 1:6](#) we have those well known words—

Before I formed you in the womb knew you
and before you were born I consecrated you;
I appointed you a prophet to the nations.

The Apostle Paul, for his part, looks back beyond the Damascus road experience to the time when God has 'set me (Paul) apart before I (Paul) was born'—[Galatians 1:15](#). There is no indication that Jeremiah's parents or Paul's parents had any prior knowledge of the respective tasks God had entrusted to their sons, nor indeed would they have known the sexual identity while they were in their mothers' wombs. Yet, in hindsight, both Jeremiah and Paul knew that God had chosen them while they were in the womb.

John the Baptist represents a particular case of God's involvement with an unborn child. In John the Baptist's case, not only was the circumstance of his conception very

special, but John the Baptist was ‘filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother’s womb’—[Luke 1:15](#). This is evidenced by the fact that as a six month old unborn child, he responded with joy to the presence of Christ (who was at that time newly conceived in the virgin womb of Mary)—[Luke 1:41–44](#). The prospect of an unborn child filled with the Holy Spirit responding to the presence of Christ is not something within our normal framework of thinking. Yet, as Alfred Edersheim points out, the response of John the Baptist as an unborn child was not at variance with Jewish expectations. Edersheim says in a footnote ‘According to Jewish tradition, the yet unborn infants in their mothers’ wombs responded by an Amen to the hymn of praise at the Red Sea. This is supposed to be indicated by the words (Psalm LXVIII. [27](#), see also the Targum on that verse).⁴ p. 65

The most important unborn child mentioned in the Scriptures is of course Christ himself. As the Apostles Creed states, Christ was ‘conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary’. Luke’s and Matthew’s Gospels both give prominence to the virginal conception of Christ and to those nine months Christ spent in the womb. The importance of God the Son taking on human form and of the nine months he spent as an unborn child is also dealt with in [Isaiah 44:2](#) where it says

Thus says the LORD who made you
who formed you from the womb and will help you
Fear not, O Jacob my servant,
Jeshu’run whom I have chosen

and in [Isaiah 49:1–3](#) where it says

The LORD called me from the womb
from the body of my mother he named my name
He made my mouth like a sharp sword
in the shadow of his hand he hid me
He made me a polished arrow
in his quiver he hid me away
And he said to me ‘You are my servant
Israel, in whom I will be glorified’

The fact that Christ was once an unborn child is more than just a piece of academic information. To realize that God became a human being in the form of an unborn child conceived in the womb of a virgin is ultimately to realize more of God’s salvation. To see him as a scarcely visible embryo is to see the exact nature of his emptying of himself to take on the form of a servant—[Phil. 2:6–7](#). By visualizing God as the unborn child we can gaze on afresh in wonder at the love and the obedience of God the Son—love which drove him to the cross. The writer to the Hebrews again makes this clear when he quotes our Lord in obedience to his Father saying ‘Sacrifices and offerings thou has not desired, but a body hast thou prepared for me. Then I said “Lo, I have come to do thy will, O God”.’ [Hebrews 10:5](#) and [7](#).

To know Christ the unborn child as the one who was to become our Saviour is to be able to glorify God in the same way as did Elizabeth, her unborn child John the Baptist and her husband Zechariah, all of whom did so under the power and the authority of the Holy Spirit. Zechariah was enabled to see God’s salvation in the form of a three month unborn child carried by his wife’s cousin. For him the unborn Christ child was indeed ‘a horn of

⁴ *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* by Alfred Edersheim, Longmans, Green and Co., London, first published in 1883, Vol. 1 (12th Impression 1907, pp.152f.).

salvation for us in the house of her servant David, as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old’—[Luke 1:69–70](#). p. 66

In looking at the conception of Christ, we are looking at the wonder of the Incarnation of God the Son. In the nine months that followed, his presence made itself known in the lives of Mary, Elizabeth, John the Baptist, Zechariah, and Joseph—all of whom are representative of the faithful remnant of Israel who were waiting for the Messiah. Later at his birth, he was openly manifested to the Jewish people, represented by the shepherds. Then he was manifested to Simeon and Anna at the temple, who, like Mary and Elizabeth and their immediate families, also represent the faithful remnant. Then Christ was manifested to the Gentiles represented by the coming of the wise men. All these events are noteworthy, but should not be allowed to overshadow the importance of the Incarnation.

If we can appreciate fully the significance of the conception of Christ, we are then able to look at the birth of Christ in its proper context. (The importance of Christ’s birth is that he was born where the prophets foretold he would be born, that through his birth he was clearly shown to be of the house of David and of the Jewish race, and that he was born as Messiah and king—see [Micah 5:2](#), [Isaiah 9:6](#), [Matthew 2](#), [Luke 2](#) and [John 18:37](#).)

Similarly, if we appreciate fully the significance of the conception of Christ we are then able to look at Christmas in its proper context. Christmas as it is meant to be is no more than the Feast of the Nativity of

<i>Event</i>	<i>Theological Significance</i>	<i>Name of Appointed Feast which is meant to celebrate the Event</i>	<i>Date</i>
The Annunciation (or the Announcing of the Coming of Christ) followed by Christ’s conception	Incarnation of Christ	Feast of the Annunciation of our Lord formerly known as the Feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary or ‘Lady Day’	the 25 March
Birth of Christ	Manifestation of Christ to Jewish People	Feast of the Nativity of our Lord or ‘Christmas’	25 Dec.
Coming of the Wise Men	Manifestation of Christ to the Gentile People	Feast of Epiphany	6 Jan.

p. 67

our Lord. At present Christmas as it is currently celebrated in Protestant churches is a conflation of three separate events and their themes—the Incarnation of Christ, the Birth of Christ, and the coming of the Wise Men. In the table set out below, this conflation of merging together of the three things can be seen more clearly.

Some Protestant denominations take the view that Christians ought not to have special feast days. Most would, however, see some merit in celebrating the occasional feast day, but only where it can be seen as having importance in relation to the life and work of Christ. Protestant denominations celebrate Christmas, as ‘Feast of the

Incarnation' rather than as a feast which concentrates on the *birth* of Christ. The reasons why we have been celebrating Christmas in this way, are as follows:

Firstly, our society has a preoccupation with birth, to the exclusion of conception.

Secondly, Matthew's and Luke's Gospels record the place of Christ's birth (Bethlehem). While still there he was visited by the wise men. The Gospels do not however, record the time or the place where Christ was conceived.⁵

Thirdly, Protestant Churches are culturally and theologically heirs of the Western Catholic tradition. We have accepted some parts of the tradition without question, and discarded other parts perhaps without sufficient good reason. The observance of Christmas has been accepted with question, and the other feasts (the Feast of the Annunciation of 25 March, and the Feast of the Epiphany) have been discarded, the result being that their themes have been conflated into Christmas.

Christmas in medieval Christendom had a dual significance—as the Feast of the Birth of Christ, and as the Feast celebrating the passing of mid winter. During the Middle Ages the Feast of the Annunciation on 25 March marked the beginning of the civic and religious new year. It also had a very strong Marian emphasis which is indicated by the feast's older title, the Feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Feast of the Annunciation specifically recalls to mind the incident of the Angel Gabriel's visit to the Virgin Mary, and the Annunciation or Announcing of the Lord, as recorded in [Luke 1:26–38](#).

What Protestant Churches have done has been to retain Christmas with its traditional Christological emphasis, and to discard the Feast of the Annunciation because of this traditional Marian emphasis. All this [p. 68](#) presents a particular handicap to the Christian individual or Christian congregation that may wish to emphasize the Conception and the Unborn Life of Christ, as a theme for Christian worship. As individuals and as congregations when we worship the Lord, we do so as members of the wider Christian Church. Individual saints, mystics, theologians and prophets may have particular insights regarding Christian worship, but it is only as these insights are fleshed out in hymns, choruses and carols, that the Christian Church is able to take up any insight it sees as being relevant. In this regard the Christian Church appears to be singularly lacking in hymns, choruses and carols which deal explicitly with the conception of Christ. Because the Feast of the Annunciation of our Lord (on 25 March) has been overshadowed by Christmas, the conception of Christ has been overshadowed by the birth of Christ as a prime subject for hymns, choruses and carols. This means that when a congregation attempts to focus attention on the Incarnation of Christ, it is inevitably drawn in worship to the theme of the birth of Christ rather than the conception of Christ.

A further complication for any congregation or any individual in attempting to focus attention on the Incarnation of Christ is the overwhelming lack of emphasis in other written material within the wider Christian Church specifically dealing with the Incarnation of Christ in the context of his conception as a theme for worship. There are many scholarly works on belief in the doctrine of the virginal conception of our Lord (the doctrine commonly referred to by Protestants as 'the Virgin Birth'). But this is not the same as looking at the virginal conception of Christ in terms of worship.

The significance of the virginal conception of Christ as a theme of Christian worship is not only that the conception represents the means by which Christ became Incarnate. It also points to the cross and beyond that to the Resurrection. Jesus Christ was conceived that he might die. By taking on human form as an unborn child, Christ was preparing

⁵ The recently built Church of the Annunciation at Nazareth assumes Nazareth was the place that Christ was conceived.

himself for the garden of Gethsemane where his willingness to be obedient to death was to be tested. In his sonnet 'Annunciation', the 17th century Anglican poet John Donne emphasizes the reality of this in the context of [Philippians 2:8](#). The path from the womb of the Virgin Mary is one that leads to the cross, and, as John Donne shows, it is a path taken by 'one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist'—[1 Corinthians 8:6](#). John Donne writes:

Salvation to all that will is nigh
That All, which always is All everywhere
Which cannot sin, and yet all sins must bear,
Which cannot die, yet cannot choose but die p. 69
Lo, faithful Virgin, yields himself to lie
In prison, in thy womb; and though he there
Can take no sin, nor thou give, yet he will wear
Taken from thence, flesh, which death's force may try.
Ere by the spheres times was created, thou
Was in his mind, who is thy Son and Brother;
Whom thou conceivest, conceived; yea thou are now
Thy Maker's maker, and thy Father's mother
Thou hast light in dark; and shutst in little room
Immensity cloistered in thy dear womb.

Recently after reading this poem Peter Dennison and I were moved to write a hymn that could be used in the weekly celebration of the Lord's Supper in our Christian Brethren Assemblies. Further we would like to encourage Protestants to recover the celebration of the Feast of the Annunciation in its true Christological meaning.

Lord of Glory

You are the Lord of glory,
Conceived in Mary's womb.
Eternal Word Incarnate,
You share our toil and gloom.
You are the One anointed,
The Saviour undefiled.
You entered your creation,
A helpless unborn child.

For us you came to suffer
In love upon the cross
A sacrifice for sinners
To bear our utter loss.
O Lord accept our worship,
We give ourselves to you.
Come Jesus our Redeemer,
Be formed in us anew.

(Sung to the tune of 'Passion Chorale'. It may be used without permission provided authorship is acknowledged and it is used without alteration).

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From Ecstasy to Enthusiasm Some Trends in the Scientific Attitude to the Pentecostal Movement

Carl-Erik Sahlberg

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This article is an abbreviation of part of the author's dissertation at the University of Uppsala, Sweden.

(Editor)

When the Pentecostal movement reached Sweden in 1907, it was treated with much arrogance and condescension in the secular press. That could, of course, be expected but more astonishing was the fact that early Swedish scholarly research uncritically took over this negative picture. Prof. Emanuel Linderholm,¹ church historian and Dr. Efraim Briem, religious psychologist, described from a mostly religious historical and religious psychological perspective the Pentecostals as ecstatic persons, who out of conscience performed their religion, and parallels to this behaviour were sought in Old Testamental primitive prophecy and in non-biblical cultures. An early American example of this scholarly attitude of annoyance and amusement was Alexander Mackie's *The Gift of Tongues: A study in Pathological Aspects of Christianity* (New York 1921), where the glossolalia was identified with 'pagan ideas and pagan practices'.² Very illustrative for the scholarly attitude was that Pentecostalism was a matter predominantly for religious psychological research.

This very negative picture of Pentecostals generally endured for about 50 years. The monumental work of the Norwegian systematist Einar Molland *Christendom* (London 1959) described the glossolalia as 'meaningless words uttered by ecstasies'.³ A Swedish Church history survey, also used in theological education as late as 1974 talked about 'the ecstatic phenomena' within Pentecostalism.⁴ Scholarly research really had given its important contribution to present Pentecostalism as 'ecstatic' and out of conscience, a strange bird in the religious world, made up into packets with mormons, theosophists and Jehovah's Witnesses.

The book *par excellence* which opened for a more positive scientific attitude was Prof. Walter Hollenweger's *Enthusiastisches Christentum* (Zurich 1969), translated into English *The Pentecostals* (London 1972). Some headings immediately reveal a different attitude from Linderholm, Briem and Mackie: 'Charismatic revival within the established churches: a new chance?' 'Religion of the proud poor' and 'Islands of humanity'. Hollenweger denoted—and that was a new way of approaching Pentecostals—that the movement should not only be understood as a compensation or an opiate for people with

¹ Linderholm, Emanuel, *Pingstroerlsen i Sverige. Extas, under, apokalyptic i nutida svensk religiositet*, Stockholm 1925 och Briem, Efraim, *Den moderna pingstroerlsen*, Stockholm, 1924.

² Mackie 1921, p.25.

³ Molland 1959, p.302.

⁴ Tergel 1974, p.293.

low social strata. Pentecostalism has, according to Hollenweger, a lot to give even to the highly educated who are 'disappointed with a kind of worship which adds the problems of the theologian to their own professional problems'. Even these educated people long for 'direct prayer and a simplification of religious faith in the form of spontaneous and personal relationships' and these people find 'in pentecostal worship exactly what they need. For it does not teach people to think, but to believe'. Hollenweger describes this 'island of humanity' as a spiritual milieu, which gives the poor 'a home, a relative economic security, care when they are sick and basic educational opportunities' and a spiritual milieu for managers of large factories, engineers, diplomats, artists and university professors where they get help 'to discover the other side of their personality, the original spontaneous and individual human element and to experience it in the framework of a liturgy, which controls it, but which is spontaneous in form'.⁵ Hollenweger therefore represents an attitude to the Pentecostal movement diametrically opposite to that of the scholars of the 1920s. Where Pentecostalism for them had a detrimental effect on its members, it is for Hollenweger very beneficial. Where Linderholm and Briem had psychiatrists to evaluate and condemn the new movement, Hollenweger instead recommends a collaboration between Pentecostal faith and psychiatry. Hollenweger states, 'perhaps a Pentecostal pastor who because of his understanding of the Bible is more open to this situation of psychosis may be able to give more help than a psychiatrist!'⁶ Talk about a scientific revolution! Where the Swedish scholars—and they were some of the first scholars in the world to evaluate the Pentecostal movement—considered Pentecostalism to be spiritually a wild movement, consisting of p. 72 uneducated people, Hollenweger instead regards this evaluation of the uneducated 'proud poor' within Pentecostalism as its most prominent contribution. Yes, so prominent, that this contribution is more valuable than the pneumatology. Hollenweger with his mighty work really promoted that Pentecostalism became 'house-trained' in the scientific world.

This new *modus vivendi* for the Pentecostal movement was also illustrated in another book from the same year 1969 by the Swiss sociologist Christian Lalive d'Epinay in his study of the Pentecostal expansion in Chile, *Haven of Masses* (London 1969). In this book, written on behalf of the World Council of Churches, d'Epinay in conformity with Hollenweger regards the high evaluation of the poor people as an important reason for the explosive growth in the South American context. Pentecostalism to this people gives a 'certain type of human dignity'⁷ and 'in rescuing the individual, Pentecostalism brings to him a human dignity refused him by society'.⁸ d'Epinay in his analysis makes use of the anomie-conception of the French sociologist Emile Durkheim to be able to explain how the Pentecostals succeeded in filling the socio-religious needs in the Chilean society of the 1930s. Without any personal connection to Pentecostalism the author evaluates the Pentecostal movement in explaining its explosive growth due to its spontaneity, its belief in man's possibilities and ability to reach the lower social classes. Why do so many Hindus in Durban associate with Pentecostals? Why don't they in the same way associate with the other churches? These are the two main questions in *Pentecostal Penetration into the Indian Community in South Africa* (Durban 1975) written by Prof. G. C. Oosthuizen. In this

⁵ Hollenweger 1972, p.472f.

⁶ Hollenweger 1972, p.382.

⁷ d'Epinay 1969, p.35.

⁸ d'Epinay 1969, p.44.

local study Oosthuizen draws the same conclusion as both Hollenweger and d'Epinaÿ have drawn before him. The natural integration of the laity into the life of the congregation is a very important factor behind the Pentecostal growth. Furthermore—the Pentecostal fellowship creates a home for people being evaluated: 'human dignity is what he seeks and this is found in the knowledge that ... he is supported, he is being encouraged. Their Saviour and Lord has no marginal figures.' To be a member of a Hindu ethnic group in a Western-oriented society can provide a feeling of alienation, a feeling, which is removed in the Pentecostal fellowship. Oosthuizen furthermore stresses as other attractive factors the spontaneity and the evangelistic activity and—perhaps astonishingly—the healing services within Pentecostalism. The Hindus who [p. 73](#) associate with Pentecostals witness that they are disappointed with the answer of Hinduism or lack of answer to the question of man's suffering. And in this situation Pentecostalism is said to provide an answer and a realism, where Hinduism for them represents only unreal mythology.⁹ Pentecostalism, according to Oosthuizen—and here he is also talking the same language as Hollenweger and d'Epinaÿ—is the movement of 'the proud poor', who feel participation,¹⁰ a sub-culture, which gives security, a fellowship without social barriers. The Pentecostals feel that they are doing something positive, their worship is therapeutic and healthy—there are some other positive judgements from Oosthuizen. He summarizes his interesting local study by saying, that 'the established churches have however to take note of the methods used by the Pentecostal churches' and simultaneously he doubts whether the established churches might be able to reach such success among the Hindus in Durban as the Pentecostals have reached.¹¹

Before we continue, we must honestly make clear that these three mentioned books are not a devout admiration of the Pentecostal movement. Hollenweger for example is very critical of an exclusive attitude shown by many Pentecostal congregations and d'Epinaÿ is especially critical of the non-political standpoint taken by many Pentecostals in Chile.

Anyway, these three chosen books are illustrative examples of reevaluation to Pentecostalism within the scientific world. Where we in the 1920s met expressions like ecstasy, out of conscience and fanatic, we in the 1970s read words as healthy, therapeutic, dignity, security and spontaneity. These three quoted books could without difficulty be supplemented by many other researches. Vinson Synan's serious approach in *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement in the United States* (Grand Rapids 1971) is another example from the church historical field and even the religious psychological research has got another theme. William J. Samarin's linguistic studies in e.g. *Tongues of Men and Angels* (New York 1972) regards Pentecostalism as a functioning feature of a complex behavioral movement and plays down the psychological interpretations. According to Samarin 'glossolalia represented extraordinary practice, but its practitioners were not necessarily abnormal people!' [p. 74](#)

The new attitude to Pentecostalism from the scientific world could consequently be summarized in the following four theses:

1. Theological investigation deals with Pentecostalism more than ever.
2. Pentecostalism is not dealt with from only a religious psychological viewpoint but even from a religious sociological as well as a church historical point of view.

⁹ Oosthuizen 1975, p.310.

¹⁰ Oosthuizen 1975, p.324.

¹¹ Oosthuizen 1975, p.346.

3. The main impression of the investigation is more positive and open compared to earlier investigations about the Pentecostal movement.
4. This trend can be observed internationally from c.1970.

When this trend clearly can be noticed, the reasons behind it must be searched and I want to contribute to this discussion by suggesting four plausible factors.

1. THE EXPANSION OF PENTECOSTALISM

The books of d'Epinay and Oosthuizen dealt exactly with that question: 'Why are the Pentecostals growing, while other churches are stagnating?' This question is raised also in other books, especially from the Church Growth field such as Peter Wagner, *What are we missing?* (Carol Stream 1973), Justo L. Gonzales *The Development of Christianity in the Latin Caribbean* (Grand Rapids 1969): Winston Elliot, *Sociocultural change in a Pentecostal Group* (Knoxville 1971), Arno W. Enns, *Man, Milieu and Mission in Argentina* (Grand Rapids 1971) and William R. Read, *New Patterns of Church Growth in Brazil* (Grand Rapids 1965). A growing movement evokes interest. In many so-called mission countries today Pentecostalism de facto is the spiritual movement, which grows most rapidly. Church historians and religious sociologists after Henry P. Van Dusen talk about Pentecostalism as 'the third force' alongside Catholicism and Protestantism. The Mission outreach evokes interest, respect and admiration also from the theological investigators.

2. PENTECOSTALISM IS NO LONGER AN EXCLUSIVE SECT

The sociological character of Pentecostalism has changed during its almost 80 years of existence. Many Pentecostals admit that the movement in fields of theology and praxis has become more established and institutionalized. The movement of the 1980s is not the same as the more radical movement of the 1920s. This process of institutionalization is due to the growth of the movement. A spiritual power, which today has c.5–6 million adherents in Brazil and p. 75 c. 100,000 in Sweden and all the time is growing is a rather large part of the population and has because of its high percentage many contacts with society. A study about Pentecostalism today must deal with both the spiritual movement itself and the development of that society where it is found. In my own thesis about the Pentecostal movement in Sweden, *The Pentecostal Movement and the Newspaper DAGEN 1907–1963—from sect to Christian society 1907–1963* (Sveg 1977) I could point out that Pentecostalism in the encounter with society and especially the secularization in that society, was changed and abandoned some of the principles which they had defended with great emphasis in the 1910s.

PENTECOSTALISM HAS BECOME AWARE OF ITS OWN HISTORY

3. If we use a religious sociological terminology, Pentecostalism today is in its third generation. This terminology can surely be discussed, while it must be difficult to talk about borders between generations in a movement which is growing all the time.

From c.1970 we can, however, notice an increasing interest in the history of Pentecostalism. Congregations reaching the times for jubilees very often publish small histories and at the universities Pentecostals are studying church history with special reference to the history of their own movement. At least this is a very typical development in Sweden these days. Another example is that before 1975 no dissertation on Pentecostalism was presented in Sweden, but after that year about 10 have been edited.

In Sweden also very recently, to the memory of the 100th birthday of its doyen Lewi Pethrus, an Information Centre has been opened, where documents about Pentecostalism, magazines, minutes and other information will be available for researchers. We have also been informed that the branches of American Pentecostalism have made up advanced plans for founding a Pentecostal Resource Centre with the corresponding aim as the Swedish Information Centre.

4. THE CHARISMATIC RENEWAL

The co-pentecostalism has surely contributed in creating an increasing interest in investigations about the Pentecostal movement. A study about the charismatic renewal always has to visit the old Methodist Church at Asuza Street 312 in Los Angeles. The book of Hollenweger is one illustrating example of the fact that the charismatic renewal has inspired a study about Pentecostalism. He starts in a special way by describing the charismatic renewal and after that description he goes over to a theological and sociological analysis of Pentecostalism. P. 76 Perhaps the charismatic renewal—born in university milieu—more than any other factor has inspired an increasing interest and a more open attitude toward Pentecostalism.

To summarize an interesting development—from first hand three books about Pentecostalism I have shown and tried to explain the revaluation which Pentecostalism has received from the scientific world during the last decade. Where the Swedish scholars Linderholm and Briem in the 1920s with the terminology 'ecstasy' expressed their negative attitude to this new movement, the scholars of the 1970s discover positive elements in that same movement—an ability to reach the lower social strata in the society, the evaluation of the laity, a therapeutic and healthy milieu, a spontaneity and a freedom of the Spirit, a spiritual power, which established churches can be lacking and an enthusiasm, which is very attractive—in Santiago and Durban.

Many reasons lie behind the development 'from ecstasy to enthusiasm'—the expansion of Pentecostalism—in some areas of an explosive kind—the changed sociological character of Pentecostalism, the increasing interest in history from Pentecostals themselves and the importance of the charismatic renewal to promote the pneumatology and soteriology of Pentecostalism. The first scholar to make a path for a scientific revaluation after half a century of negative judgements was Walter Hollenweger with his mighty work *Enthusiastisches Christentum in 1969*. He was, however, followed by many other scholars and today Pentecostalism as 'a church of disinherited'—to quote Reinhold Neibuhr—is met by an increasing interest and evaluation from church historical, religious sociological and religious psychological research. Theological research, at its best, is open to new informations and revaluations. The attitude to Pentecostalism has proved this good will to revaluation from the theological field. This revaluation may surely give the Church and Theology something healthy and therapeutic.

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Book Review Articles

EVANGELICAL THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION TODAY VOL I AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE AND EVANGELICAL THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION TODAY

Paul Bowers (Ed.)

Vol II Agenda for Renewal

Paul Bowers (Ed.)

(Evangel Publishing, Nairobi, Kenya, and The Paternoster Press, 61pp and 62pp, limp, stitched, \$0.00)

Reviewed by Chester E. Wood, Bethel College, St. Pauls, Minnesota, Deerfield, U.S.A, in *Trinity Journal* Vol. 4, N.S. No. 1 (Spring 1983)

Is there hope for theological education in the twenty-first century? From what quarter will come fresh insight in the renewal of pastoral training? Western evangelical theologians serving as missionaries in theological education in the so-called third world expect that these churches will provide new life to the body of Christ. Therefore, these two slim volumes of papers describe a new day in theological education. Among the recurring themes are character formation (spiritually), renewal, excellence, measured outcomes, accreditations, social concerns, contextualization and hermeneutics.

An International Perspective (Vol. I) is a collection of five papers read at the Theological Commission of the World Evangelical Fellowship, March, 1980, in England. The editor, Paul Bowers, explains that 'the consultation was designed to generate a comprehensive, critical review of the present state and future prospects of evangelical theological education, looked at globally' (p.2). The eighteen participants represent evangelical theological or accreditation associations from Africa, Asia, Europe, Central America, Latin America, North America and the South Pacific. The consultation led to the formation of

the International Council of Accrediting Agencies (ICAA) whose *structure* is to link the regional accrediting associations but whose *function* is much broader.

Bruce Nicholls, executive secretary of the WEF Theological Commission and a long time missionary in India involved in seminary teaching, delivered the opening address entitled 'Evangelical Theological Education in the Changing World of the 1980's'. Nicholls clusters his insights concerning goals for theological education in the 80's around three foci: the gospel, the church and mission. The givenness of the gospel and not praxis is the basis for 'doing theology'. The focal points of the gospel are the Lordship of Christ and the authority of the Scriptures: it is person-centred and truth-centred. The enemies of the p. 79 gospel are the relativistic spirit of our age, Marxism and especially Islam which will be the enemy of the gospel in the twenty-first century. Institutionalized churches patterned on western models will continue to depend upon traditional forms of theological education, but the rapidly multiplying house churches will require localized theological education programmes. Many of these churches will be characterized by an escalation of oppression and persecution. Therefore, the Theological Commission has called for a consultation on 'Preparing Churches for Effective Witness in Oppressive Situations'. The dynamic theological centres of Christianity will shift from the Western world to Asia, Africa and Latin America. Mission will witness a serious effort to work out a comprehensive understanding which integrates evangelism and social justice. Theological students must become involved with the poor and the oppressed.

In response to these goals there must be a restructuring of patterns in theological education. Schools will need to redefine educational objectives, diversify educational programmes, reinforce education by extension (the western world has much to learn from the third world in this area) and expand educational methodologies (fewer lectures and examinations and more tutorials in the Oxford-Cambridge tradition plus seminars and case studies). Accreditation will help to facilitate these goals and patterns.

Bong Ro, executive secretary of the Asia Theological Association, contributed a paper entitled 'Opportunities for International Cooperation in Evangelical Theological Education' which is characterized by the editor as the pragmatic centrepiece of the consultation. In light of the fragmentation among evangelicals and the pattern of training top ecclesiastical and theological leadership in the West, Ro proposes a global alliance among the various evangelical accrediting bodies, namely the International Council of Accrediting Agencies (ICAA). He recommends that the ICAA: (1) strengthen regional accrediting agencies, (2) develop commonly agreed academic standards for the accredited degrees of member agencies, (3) publish a quarterly bulletin on accreditation, (4) sponsor international consultations to deal with issues in evangelical theological education, (5) assist regional bodies with finances, (6) facilitate contacts between educators in the West and those in the Third World, (7) encourage mission societies to relate more effectively to the needs of theological education in the third world, (8) establish an extension education task force that would promote co-operation among TEE (Theological Education by Extension) programmes worldwide and (9) seek assistance from major evangelical publishers to develop theological libraries. p. 80

Lois McKinney, formerly executive director of the Committee to Assist Ministries Education Overseas and now a faculty member of Wheaton Graduate School, addressed herself to the matter of 'Serving the Church in Cultural Context: The Role of Academic Accreditation'. Her basic assumptions are that (1) theological education will maintain a servant posture as it relates to the church and (2) the quest for academic excellence will be pursued within the context of the church and culture. Given these assumptions she argues that accreditation can serve the church in its cultural context by encouraging (1) holistic leadership planning, (2) excellence in ministry and (3) a cultural response to

biblical imperatives. McKinney points out the advantages both to the seminaries and the churches of holistic planning, but she does not explain in what way the church leaders will give direction to the accreditation association. In the formation of the ICAA the delegates were invited because of their positions in regional accrediting associations, not because of their role in church structures. Concerning the measurement of excellence in ministry, McKinney notes that the 'traditional process variables' such as the size of the library, the training of the faculty and faculty/student ratios should not serve as the sole measurement because their importance is not always supported by empirical data. She believes that the most valid process variables are those which focus upon the *student's experiences* in the education programme, e.g. books actually read, professors with whom they have had a meaningful relationship, nature of peer interaction, quality of classroom and field experiences.

Wilson W. Chow, general co-ordinator of the Asian Theological Association and dean of the China Graduate School of Theology (Hong Kong), urged the delegates toward 'An Integrated Approach to Theological Education' in order to achieve excellence. With typical Asian insight, Chow explains that integration is based on the biblical doctrine of the whole man. 'Integration is not an attempt to maintain a balance between the academic, the spiritual and the practical, as though things were done one at a time. Integration means bringing these aspects together into a whole, and doing them at the same time. In integration no one aspect negates the other. It should be mutually permeating' (p.51). 'We affirm that theological education is academic, is spiritual and is practical. Each aspect necessarily presupposes, implies or contains the others' (p.51). In integration, character formation should be the focus. Sensing that character formation is not central to current patterns of theological education, Chow reviews the suggestion of John Frame that we 'dump the academic model once and for all—degrees, accreditation, tenure, the works, and replace all p. 81 this with a Christian community.' It is strange that Chow does not discuss in this context Discipleship Training Centre (Singapore) which was initiated by David Adeney and is carried forward by Howard Peskett. DTC is a community of twenty graduate students and four teachers who eat, play, worship, study and witness together. It has resisted accreditation and the granting of degrees, yet its students have successfully gone on for higher degrees (ThMs, PhDs) and occupy many key positions throughout Asia. Although calling for a new and radical approach to integration in theological education, Chow does not think that a particular model holds the key. Integration may be implemented with *any* model. Chow's integrated model of a residential theological school includes a Dean of Academic Affairs and a Dean of Students on equal footing, opportunities for student development within communal living, an advisory system, chapel, academics that emphasize content, research, communication skills, and supervised field work. This model resembles a typical Western Bible College or Seminary.

Volume two contains five papers presented at Malawi in September, 1981, on the theme, 'The Renewal of Evangelical Theological Education'. Tokunboh Adeyemo, general secretary of the Association of Evangelicals of Africa and Madagascar and chairperson of the World Evangelical Fellowship, gave the keynote address. His thesis is that renewal comes from 'fellowship of the Holy Spirit', a dimension largely lost after the first century. The implications for theological education are that study and training consequent upon the gift of the Holy Spirit are important, but the primary matter is gift and calling. Referring to Christ as a model, Adeyemo draws three implications for modern theological institutions. (1) Seminaries should shift from a formal to an informal academic structure because N.T. discipleship implies the existence of a personal attachment which shapes the *whole* life, (2) they must move from 'communication *to*' (one way communication) to

'communication *with*' (interaction) and (3) they must provide opportunities for training *in* the ministry instead of training *for* the ministry (p.8).

In 'The Role of Spiritual Development in Theological Education' Bruce Nicholls posits that the goal of education is the *kind of person* the student is expected to become. Spiritual development is based on three theological perspectives. (1) Mankind is created in the image of God; therefore, spirituality extends to the circumference of man created in God's image. (2) The image of God is marred; therefore, spirituality requires a response to this fallen world. (3) Men/women experience redemption; therefore, spirituality is harmony with God. p.82 This spirituality is developed in theological education in the context of (1) the curriculum (biblical knowledge, applied theology, church ministries), (2) the residential community (focal point of worship), (3) the local church (practical ministry under the guidance of the local pastor and elders) (4) society (e.g. students in India may be assigned to live in the slums). Nicholls rounds off this section by referring to the 'on-the-job training in spirituality' practiced by Jesus. The implications of Jesus' model are that the teacher-student ratio should be kept as low as possible and that a continuity of personal relationship between the teacher and the student should be encouraged. This spirituality must be evaluated. Self-evaluation and reports from counselling are possible tools of measurement.

Paul Bowers, editor of these volumes and chairperson of the Accrediting Council for Theological Education in Africa and general secretary of ICAA, addresses himself to the controversial topic of 'the relationship between the renewalist cause and the newly emerging international accrediting movement in evangelical theological education' (p.3). Bower's thesis is that renewal is properly integral to the accreditation mandate and that accreditation can serve as a vehicle for the practical implementation of renewal concerns at the grass roots level. He admits that his thesis is not the prevailing view. Rather the 'traditionalists' (apparently those who are entrenched in the western patterns of residential seminary education) view renewal as alien to the concerns of accreditation. On the other hand, the 'radicalists' (apparently those who have pioneered the theological education by extension methods) look upon accreditation as the latest enemy of renewal. Bowers delineated accreditation in terms of the 'essential internal ingredients' which are *quality, credibility, and collaboration*. Accreditation is 'a collaborative effort among programmes of theological education to achieve and demonstrate a quality that is credible' (p.30). A new day has arrived in which the 'open-minded traditionalist' has recognized the achievements of the renewal movement, i.e. their concerns for contextualization, outcomes measurement, ministerial styles, integrated programmes, field learning, spiritual formation and churchward-orientation. He urges the 'level-headed radicalists' to join hands with these 'openminded traditionalists' and seize 'accreditation as an exceptional instrument for effectively implementing the renewal agenda.' Bowers fears that the radicalists among the missiologists in the evangelical first world are blasting away at the accreditation movement without adequate first-hand information. This cogently written position paper demands a careful reading by all who are involved in theological p.83 education in the third world.

Tite Tiénou, executive secretary of the Theological Commission of the Association of Evangelicals of Africa and Madagascar, explores 'Contextualization of Theology for Theological Education'. Arguing that appropriate contextualization is basic to the renewal of theological education, Tiénou defines the goal of contextualization as a 'theology both meaningful to the receptors and faithful to God's message' (I, p.42). A fundamental principle of contextualization is that theologizing is communication, translation. In translation one distinguishes between 'sound' (mere linguistic form) and 'sense' (deep meanings). Such a distinguishing means that hermeneutics is at the heart of the

contextualization process. This raises a crucial question: 'How does one's interpretation preserve the normative character of Scripture in theology?' (II, p.45). Contextualization, therefore, involves both an investigation of the content of the Bible and its communication. Contextualization is not just a communication of a given universal biblical theology. It is a 'process toward an end'. The end is obedience to the Word of God. In Tiénou's incarnational model of contextualization, the truth of God's good news is 'born in people's hearts so that, without abandoning their cultural selfhood, they become authentic followers of Christ'. (p.50). The question of the normativeness of Scripture in contextualization is raised but not addressed (pp.51–52).

In his essay, 'Toward a Theology of Theological Education', James E. Plueddemann, formerly a missionary in Nigeria and now dean of Wheaton Graduate School, demonstrates from Scripture that the task of theological education is to facilitate the maturation process in students so that they can in turn facilitate that process in others. He refers to this as the 'hidden task' because it is so often overlooked. Theological education, therefore, is more than writing papers, passing exams and the gaining of skills and competencies. Plueddemann believes that growth toward maturation is facilitated in theological education by the removal of impediments to growth, i.e. false teaching and false practice. Having in mind this ultimate goal of theological education will enable educators to make better decisions concerning institutional purpose, curriculum balance, limitations of formal schooling and teaching methodologies.

In reading these volumes and writing this review, I have had a growing uneasiness with the underlying premises of the whole project. Let me confess that as a theological educator and administrator at Asian Theological Seminary in Manila I promoted with vigour the same project. But Wilson Chow's insightful comment that theological p. 84 education is academic, spiritual and practical all at the *same* time disturbs me. Oblique comments from other contributors have also shaken my confidence in the typical western model of residential seminary training found in the third world. Although this model may be modified by renewal concerns and administered by nationals, Chow comments that 'one of the problems that the seminary faces is being out of touch with the churches' (I. p.60). Adeyemo, on the basis of Jesus' model, wants to shift from formal to informal training, communication *with* (not *to*) and training *in* (not *for*) ministry (II, p.9). McKinney argues that theological education will maintain a servant (one who takes orders) posture as it relates to the 'Church' (I. p.35), but the half dozen seminaries in Southeast Asia with which I am familiar are not good at taking orders from *churches*. She notes that 'there is often a discrepancy between the scholar/theological role modelled by the seminary professor and the minister/pastor role ...' (I, p.40). Didn't we all find this to be a tension in our own training unless we were seeking to become professors? Nicholls further agitates my uneasiness: 'We all know from our own student days that the quality of life of the teacher is remembered when the content of what he taught is long forgotten' (II, p.14). Plueddemann, who argues effectively for maturation as *the* goal of theological education, recognizes the 'limitations of formal schooling' (II, p.60) and yet contends that '*theologians* ... must also produce *pastors* and *teachers* ... who apply Scripture' (II, p.50 italics mine). Can a person in *one kind* of role model produce someone suited for a *different kind* of role? How many theologians have had significant experience as pastors? And even if theologians have been pastors, what are they modelling now? On the basis of Jesus' model, Nicholls pleads for a low teacher-student ratio and *continuity* of personal relationships (II, p.23). I am pushed a step further in my uneasiness when Nicholls observes that, 'Because theological education is Gospel-centred it must be church-centred' (I, p.9), and 'The local church is the *baseline* for theological training' (II, p.20). Furthermore, he argues that in relation to the large multi-ministry local churches

seminaries must assist these churches by localized training programmes. 'If they don't, such churches will develop their own autonomous Bible schools for their church ...' (I, p.13). He could have added Bible Schools located *in* their church and *controlled* by their church. Indeed, he allows that TEE 'enables a local church to become a bible school' (II, p.22).

Does the reader perceive to what unorthodox conclusion I am unwillingly being driven? Can the new wine of renewal concerns (spiritual formation, integrated learning, continuity of personal p. 85 relationships, low teacher-student relationships, field learning, contextualization, churchward-orientation, training *in* ministry) be poured into the old wineskins of the professor-dominated residential seminary? I am beginning to have some doubts.

What are the alternatives? McKinney reports that, 'Any discussion of alternate structures for theological education sooner or later raises questions about educational standards', and that 'The assumption seems to be that academic quality can be maintained only through residence programs' (I, p.45). Would it be possible for accreditation associations to accredit a theological education programme conducted *in* (location), *by* (control) and *for a church*? By combining apprenticeship training (senior pastor—intern pastor, not professor-student) with theological education by extension to supplement the curriculum could a quality programme be developed that could achieve recognition through accreditation? Bowers 'crassly' (it is his word) remarks that 'accreditation peddles recognition in exchange for the achievement of quality' (II, p.34). Perhaps our Christian brothers and sisters in the so-called third world churches will lead the way in the renewal not only of theology but also of the structures, locations and controls of theological education. Can there be a meaningful renewal of theology apart from a renewal of its structures, locations *and* controls?

THE THEOLOGICAL TASK OF THE CHURCH IN AFRICA

by Tite Tiénou

(Africa Christian Press, Achimota, Ghana, 1982, 54pp, paperback)

Reviewed by D. A. Carson in *Trinity Journal*, Deerfield, U.S.A. Vol. 4 NS No. 1 (Spring 1983).

This little book bears an importance out of proportion to its size. Originally prepared as the Byang H. Kato Memorial Lectures, and delivered at ECWA Theological Seminary in Igbaja, Nigeria, on April 17–20, 1978, these pages analyze evangelicalism in Africa and offer balanced critique and a call to pursue some specific objectives.

The book is important for three reasons. The first lies in who wrote it. Born in Mali, Tite Tiénou was reared and educated in Upper Volta, then studied at Nyack College and at the Faculté Libre at Vaux-sur-Seine, France. He has served as executive secretary of AEAM (Association of Evangelicals of Africa and Madagascar) since 1977 and on the p. 86 WEF (World Evangelical Fellowship) Theological Commission since 1976, while serving as a pastor in Upper Volta. He is currently pursuing doctoral studies at Fuller Theological Seminary. These lectures are therefore not only the work of someone with wide experience, broad training, rich linguistic competence and mature theological reflection; they are something more: they are the heart-beat of an evangelical African leader and scholar as he addresses the church in Africa. That combination is still all too rare; but those of us who lack his breadth of experience will profit by listening in.

That raises the second reason why this booklet is valuable. Tiénou is addressing African evangelicalism. Although he offers both plaudits and criticisms of western missions and western theology, he is not simply firing off to the west another salvo of shallow praise or cheap shots; his concern is *African* Christianity. Similarly, although he

interacts a little with liberal forms of Christianity in Africa, his tangential remarks in this regard are not simply negative sideswipes, since his desire is to lead African evangelicals on, not simply tell them what to reject. In all this, there is a refreshing poise, a commendable maturity that succumbs neither to formulas learned in the west nor to African pressures toward syncretism. He does not forget his aim; and his aim is good.

The third reason why this booklet is valuable stems from this same point. Tiénoú reflects a healthy catholicity: he draws from western and African writers, conservatives and otherwise, without in the slightest veering from his biblical moorings. His little book is divided into four chapters. In the first, he defines terms and sketches the history of evangelical theological strategy in Africa, finding 1973 to be a turning point, as it witnessed the founding of the Theological Commission of AEAM and the appointment of Byang Kato as its Executive Secretary. The Theological Commission strove to develop graduate theological education (and, partly as a result, in 1977 the French-speaking Bangui Evangelical School of Theology opened its doors) and to raise theological standards by establishing ACTEA (Accrediting Council for Theological Education in Africa) and by founding ETSA (Evangelical Theology Society of Africa) to work on an assortment of theological questions. In the second chapter, Tiénoú targets two or three issues in the theological task in Africa today (while frankly acknowledging there are not a few others): the relationships between biblical Christianity and African culture, and between biblical Christianity and African religion; and the nature of and need for proper contextualization of theology in Africa today. In the third chapter, titled 'Threats and Dangers for Evangelicals', instead of listing 'outside' dangers (he p. 87 mentions syncreticism, secularism, ecumenism, universalism and pluralism), he focuses attention on dangers *within* the evangelical camp. He raises four: a mistrust of theology; the persistent tendency of African evangelicalism to follow its leaders blindly without thinking biblically and theologically and thereby calling in question or contributing to the leaders (this error Tiénoú calls 'acerdotalism'); the danger of 'an a-historical faith'—in which Tiénoú treats in part the grounding of the biblical revelation in history, and more particularly insists on the need for some awareness of two thousand years of Christian tradition and reflection; and finally denominational individualism.

But it is the last chapter which finally issues the call 'Towards an Evangelical Theological Strategy'. The first and central challenge is the need to develop a 'positive theology'. By this Tiénoú means that African believers must not merely criticize other developments, or merely follow leaders African or western but think through 'God's definitive revelation' *for themselves*, in the context of Africa, without sacrificing the authority of Scripture or the counsel of tradition, but equally without adopting, undigested, theological formulations that bear no consciousness of Africa and her needs, cultures and categories. Citing Barth, Tiénoú next insists that this theological reflection takes place in the context of prayer. Thirdly, African evangelicals, Tiénoú urges, must aim for balance 'between theological unity and denominational and personal identity and freedom'. Tiénoú briefly encourages African evangelicals to advance their own numbers in the developing departments of religion in the new universities, instead of withdrawing; to establish two or three more graduate schools of theology; to proceed cautiously with TEE programmes; to befriend wherever possible the leaders of the many independent churches in Africa, in the hope of influencing their direction, to strengthen ACTEA and ETSA; and more.

One could quibble here and there about small points, but this little booklet deserves thoughtful reading both in Africa and elsewhere. I met Tite Tiénoú recently at a study unit sponsored by WEF. In his presentation, designed to assess hermeneutically some of the theological reflection of the African theologian Harry Sawyerr, he simultaneously drew

out what was insightful and helpful in Sawyerr's work (things that western eyes might well have missed!) and delineated the shortcomings of Sawyerr's proposals, as assessed from a biblical perspective. Such measured response is in short supply everywhere, but especially in many third world countries where most learning is by rote, offering little incentive to develop critical faculties. Tiéno's call is therefore not only further evidence that many p. 88 'younger' churches have come of age, but that farsighted Christian leadership is springing up all around the world. p. 89

Book Reviews

SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL

Survey Review

Pentecostal/Charismatic Literature: A Survey of the Last Ten Years A Reading Guide by Zadok Centre. No. R22, 9pp. £0.00

Zadok Centre (P.O. Box 434, Dickson, ACT, 2606, Australia) is a study and research facility devoted to discussion of contemporary social, cultural and political issues within the context of the Christian faith. This reading survey is an important reference work on books which have been published in the last ten years addressing issues related to the history, theology and practices of charismatic renewal. While by no means intending to provide a list of all such publications, this survey is a short bibliographical essay outlining some of the most important books on these issues. They include studies undertaken by authors who represent a variety of theological positions. Some studies are clearly directed toward the subject of charismatic renewal, while others are more obliquely related. The survey covers the origins of Pentecostalism, histories of Pentecostal groups, sociological studies, theologies of the Holy Spirit, spiritual gifts, healing and prophecy, other gifts, charismatic renewal, ecumenical perspectives and periodicals. This reading guide is a revised edition of an article titled 'The Decade 1973-1982 in Pentecostal Charismatic Literature: A Bibliographic Essay' which first appeared in *Theology, News and Notes* (March 1983) a publication for the Fuller Theological Seminary alumni.

Periodicals mentioned include *Puema: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies*. *Puema* may be ordered from Russell P. Spittler, Executive Secretary of the Society for Pentecostal Studies, 135 No. Oakland Avenue, Pasadena CA 91101-1790, U.S.A.

Paraclete, a quarterly publication dedicated to exploring the person and work of the Holy Spirit may be ordered from Hardy W. Steinberg, Editor, 1445 Boonville, Springfield, MO 65803-1894, U.S.A.

Pastoral Renewal emphasizing pastoral issues (P.O. Box 8617, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48107-8617 U.S.A.).

EPTA Bulletin of the European Pentecostal Theological Association. It may be ordered from Don Smeeton, Assistant Editor, EPTA Bulletin, International Correspondence Institute, 45 Chausse de Waterloo, 1640 Rhode-St, Genese, Belgium. p. 90

MISSION AND EVANGELISM

Korean Church Growth Explosion
Edited by Bong Rin Ro & Marlin L. Nelson
Seoul: Word of Life Press, 1983)
Pp.374 including index

Reviewed by Theodore Hard.

Appropriately looking forward to the centennial in 1984 of the Protestant church in Korea this attractive and cleanly printed paperback is something of a bench mark for anyone who looks for tide markings in the development of God's Kingdom in different areas of the world.

Twenty-one pastors, para-church leaders and theologians, all authorities in their chosen topics, and long-time observers of the Korean church scene, write in lively, straightforward prose with abundant data in digestible form. Twenty-three topics are marshalled under five sections.

Part One, with 8 of the 23 articles, deals with EVANGELISM AND FOREIGN MISSIONS—the Korean Church's international reach. Though this aspect of the Korean church has in no way occupied a similar proportion of the effort and concern of the church, it is encouraging to see how the church in weakness, persecution and growth pains nevertheless has looked beyond itself for the Gospel.

Part Two: HISTORICAL, CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS ASPECTS has but three articles, but their topics—'Non-Spiritual Factors in Church Growth' by editor Ro and 'Social, Political and Psychological Aspects of Church Growth' by Methodist Harold S. Hong show an attempt to take account of the non-spiritual environment within which church growth took place. But to call these factors in church growth is to point up a weakness in the book—a definition of the church and of growth in terms of 'factors' that are admittedly non-spiritual and worldly!

Part Three: RENEWAL OF THE LOCAL CHURCH is of uneven value as two huge Seoul churches are analyzed as to church growth history, but no average sized ones, nor any rural groups. An important article in this section, is 'Keeping the Faith Pure' by Oh Byeng-Seh. It chronicles the struggles against the Shinto shrine worship and the influences of liberalism and humanism as over against evangelical movements and groupings, particularly in the once monolithic Presbyterian Church and its later splits. The World Council of Churches, p.91 castigated here, does not figure strongly elsewhere in the book, and does not get an entry in the index. This tells much of the aim and editorial stance, though some of the writers are in WCC circles.

Part Four: LEADERSHIP TRAINING has three articles—on the dignity of pastors, on Christian education, and Bible studies and lay witness.

Part Five: DANGERS AND OPPORTUNITIES, could well have followed part two. The first article is a strongly critical assessment of Korean church growth by Son Bong-Ho, for several years known for his frank and keen dissatisfaction with trends in the Korean church. This scholarly layman particularly assails the lack of self-criticism by church leaders, their naïveté as well. He feels the success-consciousness, love of numbers, influences from Shamanism, neglect of social responsibility and capitalistic competition for increased membership, including sheep-stealing and the decline in church discipline, are insidious and grievous evils everywhere. The reviewer, with his thirty years in Korea, finds himself in much agreement with Dr. Son. The final article, 'The Present and Future of the Korean Church' by the widely respected Han Kyung-Chik of the famous Young Nak Church in Seoul mentions similar problems with a blushing face (see pp.385ff.).

Like a Festschrift, this honours something—but it ought far more to praise the Lord who is author of all true growth of His own body. The ballad of Korean church growth

often becomes a medley of voices, perhaps with some forced harmony. It does, however, seem to avoid mere triumphalism, allows for critics, as we have seen, and arrays facts and data we have not seen available elsewhere, certainly not in one book. Certainly it would be difficult to do a better job with so wide a range of contributors and themes, and is a thankworthy offering, indeed. Recommended for usefulness to experts and neophytes, general libraries and church studies, study texts and living room tea tables. p. 92

PASTORAL MINISTRY

'Pilgrim & Dreamer' John Bunyan: His Life & Work

by E. W. Bacon

(Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1983)

Pp. 186, £4.50

Reviewed by Francis Foulkes.

This is a readable and matter-of-fact biography of the tinker of Bedford who has become known to millions as the writer of *Pilgrim's Progress*. The writer tells us a good deal of Bunyan's other works, poetry as well as prose. Most helpfully he shows us the setting of the times in which Bunyan lived, 17th century England. He gives a judicious account of Puritan piety and the nature and the cost of dissent from the established church in those times. Bunyan was a Puritan and a dissenter. Nevertheless he was 'against the extreme narrowness of some of his fellow Puritans' (p.183); and while he stood for religious liberty and struggled against the obligation to use set forms of worship, his greatest concern was for the gospel. Bacon brings out the way that to preach Christ and to die for Christ were Bunyan's greatest desires and he recognized a deep spiritual unity with all who loved the same Master as he did.

There are parts of Bunyan's life which are not well documented, but this biography draws on what is known to give a picture of his humble background—his home situation, his imprisonment and the closing years of his life—years of fruitful ministry. In a final chapter, Bacon assesses the greatness of the man: 'first and foremost ... a deep personal love for his Saviour', his 'spiritual mind' developed through 'the Bible, prayer, worship, Christian fellowship, Puritan writings', his 'deep-rooted tenacity of purpose', his enjoyment of 'the simple things of family life', his 'magination ... of the highest order' and, not least, his 'concern about the social problems of his day'. p. 93

THEOLOGICAL AND CHURCH EDUCATION

A Reader in Theological Education

Edited by Robert L. Youngblood

(WEF Theological Commission, 1983)

Pp. 126, £2.95

Reviewed by Ian S. Kemp

This is a book of selected articles and teaching hints, all published during the last twenty years in *Theological Education Today*. Gathered now in this more accessible format, they form a helpful compendium for anyone wrestling with the challenges of training people for evangelical and relevant ministries today. They are particularly directed at ministry training in the Third World, but theological educators in the West also would do well to heed the help offered here.

Part One deals with the lecture as the traditional mode of theological instruction. Three common patterns for organizing lectures are outlined, followed by two articles from Patricia Harrison who discusses the levels at which the lecture is effective or ineffective for transmitting information, promoting thought and changing attitudes. She offers alternative ways by which these goals may be better achieved by students in non western situations, then lists 29 ways in which lectures may be improved as means of communication. There is much here to stimulate and excite. Short articles follow on how to teach students of comparative religion, sects and history by exposing them to adherents of religions and sects or to architecture or art forms.

Part Two is devoted to the teaching of Church History and offers practical ways of making this come alive. Case studies, charts, tapes, flannelgraphs, drama, mime, photocopied source materials, models, visits to places of historic significance, and mutual support games are only some of the methods commended for transforming what is often dull and irrelevant into something interesting and most meaningful.

Part Three is a miscellany of articles. One by Jim Pluedemann of Nigeria diagnoses the 'diploma disease' endemic in most Third World theological education, and then offers the kind of 'medicine' which makes training far more ministry-oriented. Another by Bill Stedman of Brazil gives 13 practical steps in the planning of a course in the curriculum—good helpful stuff. J. Andrew Kirk describes the Kairos Community for Biblical and Theological Training in Argentina, and John Hitchen of New Guinea points to ways by which Christian concepts [p. 94](#) can be effectively communicated in a different culture so that indigenous leadership can be better motivated and the Church roused from its usual passivity. William Smallman has an article on the perils for the church in Thirdworldia when students seek training in the West rather than at home, and suggests how training at home can be improved to stop this wasteful westward drift. The methods of TEE are highly commended.

Part Four deals with the steps to be taken in self evaluation when any Third World seminary seeks accreditation. The methodology outlined enforces the rationale of all the articles in the book that something drastic needs to be done to improve the all-round standard of evangelical theological education if it is to be effective in today's world.

Theological educators the world over should be grateful to Robert Youngblood for bringing together such varied and practical help. If only a few of the many suggestions offered were taken seriously and followed through, theological education would become more creative, more exciting and more life giving. [p. 95](#)

Journal Information

Publications Referred to in This Issue

East Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology

General Editor Isaac Simbiri, Box 49, Machalos, Kenya. Subscriptions U.S. \$6.00 (2 issues).

Trinity Journal

Published by Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2065 Half Day Road, Deerfield, IL 60016, U.S.A.

The Princeton Seminary Bulletin

Published three times a year by the Theological Seminary of the United Presbyterian Church at Princeton, New Jersey 08540, U.S.A.

Journal

Published by Christian Brethren Research Fellowship (P.O. Box 3057, Wellington, New Zealand). Np. Occasional.

Occasional Essays

Published by the Latin American Evangelical Center for Pastoral Studies (CELEP), Apartado 1307, San Jose, Costa Rica. Subscription Rates: Latin America/Caribbean \$4, elsewhere \$6. Two issues a year.