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**Evangelical
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Editorial

Living in Context

A harmless looking short story, written by a non-Muslim in a local Sunday newspaper last December, proved catastrophic. Not only were the characters in the story rather unpleasant, but what is more important, the names given to these characters were unfortunately the names held sacred by the Muslim community, including the name of Mohammed the prophet. Such a derogatory use of the names naturally disturbed the Muslim community, and by the end of the day communal violence broke out; armed police had to step in. Newspapers reported that 17 deaths and a greater number of seriously injured were the result. Tension spread also to the neighbouring regions. The publishers had to pay huge compensations, in addition to their godowns being gutted.

As we, the staff of WEF Theological Commission in Bangalore, continuously remembered the riotous situation around us in our prayer sessions, one question haunted us—How would the Christians respond if the name of Jesus was so degraded? It must at once be added that the message of the cross, which gives us the 'Blunt the blade by the blood' lifestyle, would forbid any kind of violent reaction. All the same, what would be the Indian Christians' response?

If our theology is to be relevant, it must be useful *now*. Our theology must speak to the issues at hand, and speak now. When the *Kairos* is gone, the best of theology becomes useless. Parkinson's Law, that delay is the deadliest form of denial, would be well applied in theologisation!

We continue in this issue the concern of the last. In the last issue we attempted to analyse why theology has fallen into disrepute, as well as justify it. In this issue we come to the *How* of the doing of theology. What a normal Christian thinker needs is not so much the *why* and the *what*, but the *how* of theology. All the articles (most of them original) are examples as to how theology is done in a particular context. As you read the four articles by Emilio Núñez, Herman Moldez, Tite Tiéno and David Parker describing how evangelical theology is done in the four continents of Latin America, Asia, Africa and Australia, I trust you will find the diverse problems encountered and the diverse solutions suggested most fascinating. Of the rest, 'Doing Theology in Context' by Bruce J. Nicholls, the former Executive Secretary of WEFTC, concentrates on the principle of contextualization; 'Creativity—Human and Divine' by Harold M. Best is a novel way of doing theology with a novel topic; the last one, 'Evangelicals, Evangelism and Theology' by Peter Beyerhaus, is an assessment of a contemporary evangelical movement in the area of mission. In whatever way one does theology it should be, as these articles show, faithful to the text [p. 100](#) and relevant to the context. The context—the world, my life—is given, and how can I be relevant to any context if I am not living in that context? Jesus was crucified because He lived in His context (and of course He was resurrected since He lived above the context). Let us so live in our context that we may become useful *now* and so fulfil our life-missions.

Editor [p. 101](#)

Doing Theology in Context

Bruce J. Nicholls

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(The following article by the former Executive Secretary of WEF Theological Commission is part of a book to be published by IVP. With his vast experience of contextual theologians in all parts of the globe, Bruce Nicholls is eminently qualified to do the following analysis. Also his monograph on Contextualization entitled 'Gospel and Culture' (a paper presented at the Gospel and Culture consultation in Bermuda, 1978) has become a bestseller. Concentrating primarily on the hermeneutical side, Nicholls clearly brings out the dynamics of the text, the context and the church in the process of contextualization.)

Ed.

Contextualization is a dynamic process of the Church's reflection on the interaction of the Text as Word of God and the context as a specific human situation in obedience to Christ and His mission in the world. It is essentially a missiological concept. The interpreter or one engaged in this process may be part of the context or as a cross cultural communicator represent a second context in a three way process.

Contextualization is not a passing fad or a debatable option. It is essential to our understanding of God's self revelation. The incarnation is the ultimate paradigm of the translation of the Text into context. Jesus Christ the Word of God incarnate as a Jew identified with a particular culture at a limited moment in history though transcending it. In his life and teaching he is the supreme model of contextualization. His every command was *de facto* a command to contextualize whether to love one's neighbour or to disciple the nations. The implication of this process is seen in the apostolic witness and the life of the New Testament Church. The difference in theological emphasis and preaching methodology of Paul between his address to the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch ([Acts 13:16-41](#)) and his address to the Areopagus in Athens ([Acts 17:22-31](#)) is but one notable example of the sociological and theological inevitability of contextualization. In the history of dogma the affirmations of the truths of God's revelation in Scripture have always involved a selection of themes and contextualised language in response to the particular theological and ethical issues confronting the Church in that moment of history. The creeds, confessions and statements of Faith reflect this process.

With the rapid expansion of the western missionary movement in the 19th century missionary strategists Henry Venn, Rufus Anderson and others, developed the concept of indigenization, whereby the unchanging Gospel was transplanted into the static and generally p. 102 'primitive' cultures of non-Christian peoples. This movement was primarily concerned with indigenising the forms of worship, social customs, church architecture and methods of evangelism. This emphasis is still valid as the current interest in cultural anthropology and the church growth movement indicates. The failure to indigenize has resulted in the perpetuation of colonialism and the growth of a ghetto mentality among Christian communities. However in recent years the adequacy of the indigenization principle has been seriously questioned. Since World War II the rise of nationalism, the overthrow of western colonialism, the spread of political revolution leading to military dictatorship or socialistic and marxist governments have engulfed an increasing number of nations. The explosion of human knowledge, science and technology, the spirit of materialism and secular humanism which has permeated all

modern societies, has resulted in a crisis of faith and a search beyond indigenity for truth and relevance.

The need to move from indigenization to contextualization has also been accelerated by issues raised by modern theologians and the global ministry on Conciliar ecumenical movements. These issues include: the situational hermeneutics of R. Bultmann; the call to the church in the midst of rapid social change to be action orientated as for example at the World Conference on Church and Society at Geneva (1966); the questioning of the distinction between salvation history and world history at WCC Assembly Uppsala (1968); the acceptance of the principle of humanization and universalism in salvation at CWME Bangkok (1972); and the search for the unity of mankind (WCC Assembly Nairobi 1975). The focusing on these issues of social reconciliation, humanization and liberation has led to a shift of priority from interpreting the text to reflection on suffering and oppression in particular contexts. Contextualization has become a way of doing politicised theology.

The origin of the term *contextualization* is credited to Shoki Coe and Aharoan Sapaezian, directors of the Theological Education Fund of the WCC in their 1972 report, *Ministry and Context*. They suggested that the term contextualization implies all that is involved in the term indigenization but goes beyond it to take account of 'the process of secularity, technology and the struggle for human justice which characterised the historical moment of nations in the third world.'

RADICAL INTERPRETATIONS OF CONTEXTUALIZATION

Modern scholars and liberation theologians in particular, have made extensive use of the concept of contextualization as part of a wider **P. 103** theological debate. They begin by rejecting the traditional view of divine revelation as inscriptuated in the Bible, since the Word of God cannot be equated with any particular form, whether Scripture or theological systems. They deny that the Bible contains propositional truths and argue that since all Scripture is culturally and historically conditioned, its message is relative and situational. Further, they hold that there is no truth outside of the action of concrete historical events of human struggle. There can be no epistemological split between thought and action, truth and practice. Thus all authentic theology must be participatory theology. Theological knowledge only comes from participation in action and reflection on praxis. As a result, these radical theologians held that the hermeneutical process does not begin with the exegesis of Scripture but with a prophetic 'reading of the times', discerning God's set of humanization and liberation in the general historical process and in particular situations. Gustavo Gutierrez argues that theology is reflection on praxis in the light of faith. It is a dialectical movement between action and reflection. The hermeneutics of Scripture give place to the hermeneutics of history. Evangelical Latin American theologians René Padilla, Emilio Antonio Núñez and others, while recognising the validity of the deep concerns raised by liberation theologians, argue that this way of doing theology leads to a truncated gospel, a secularised political theology and ultimately to the demise of the institutionalised Church and the centrality of evangelism.

CONSERVATIVE INTERPRETATIONS OF CONTEXTUALIZATION

Evangelical scholars, missionaries, church and lay leaders have taken seriously the validity of the shift from indigenization to the enlarged agenda of contextualization. A beginning was made at the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization (1974) and followed up at the Gospel and Culture consultation at Bermuda (1978). However for many

evangelicals the task of contextualization is restricted to the faithful and relevant communication of the unchanging message into the cultural thought forms and language of those to whom it is communicated. This concern takes seriously the issues of the cultural conditioning of the biblical message, the communicator's self-understanding and the receiving community p. response to the message. In this way contextualization p. understood in terms of 'dynamic equivalence', whereby the biblical message p. seen to bring forth in the receiver an equivalent response to that which the biblical text produced in those to whom it was addressed. **P. 104**

However the task of contextualization calls for a more profound understanding of translating the Gospel in its relationship to the contemporary historical situation. The time honoured grammatico-historical method of biblical exegesis continues to be accepted as fundamental to authentic contextualization, giving clarity and understanding as to what the biblical writers said and meant in their own context. However, contextualization takes place only when the faithful exegesis of the text enters into a dialogical encounter with the issues of the human situation. This encounter will be both theological and ethical in which belief and actions are interdependent. It takes place in dependence on the Holy Spirit who is the hermeneutic key to relating text and context.

The interpreter's critical reflection on his own cultural pre-understanding as an essential part of this three way process. While drawing on the insight of Bultmann's hermeneutical circle scholars such as Orlando Costas find an alternate symbol in a dialogical spiral that points to an eschatological goal. This dynamic process of critical reflection and interpretation takes place as the interpreter identifies by faith with the text of the Scripture and at the same distances himself from it in study and reflection. At the same time the interpreter identifies with and distances himself from the context. Authentic contextualization takes place when these horizons meet. In the dialogue between text and context the questions raised by the context are brought to the text for answers while the text in turn raises new questions that confront the context. For example, the context may focus on specific issues of violence while the text raises issues concerning sin and demonic power. Since the text is given and authoritative and the context relative and changing the dialogical movement will always be from text to context. In this way the process of reflection differs sharply from that of the more radical views. However, while recognising that there can be no absolute and final system of theology the interpreter works in the confidence that the Spirit of God gives increasing clarity and assurance on the nature of the Gospel and its relevance to every human situation.

Evangelicals recognize that valid contextualization only takes place where there is unreserved commitment to the path of discipleship. First and foremost this calls for loyalty and commitment to Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord of all of life, personal and social, and to His Gospel Evangelicals share with liberation theologians their commitment to the historic Jesus in his humility and suffering and his prophetic rebuke of hypocrisy and injustice. But they are equally committed to the Christ of faith—incarnate men of God, crucified, risen from the dead and **p. 105** coming again at the End time to consummate his kingdom. This commitment to Jesus Christ is within the trinitarian framework of God the Father, and God the Holy Spirit.

Further, true contextualization demands commitment to the church as the people of God. The church with its openness to God in worship and fellowship is also called to obedience in humble service, especially to the poor and to proclamation to all people that salvation is only in Jesus Christ. Contextualization takes place primarily within the sphere of the church and only secondly within the world. Reflection and interpretation is the work of the Church. The priesthood of all believers and the work of the Holy Spirit in illuminating Scripture emphasize that the Church is the sphere in which contextualization

takes place. It is not the prerogative of a professional theological elite alone but is open to all God's people. The church as the body of Christ with the Spirit given diversity of gifts of ministry ensures that this dynamic process of contextualising theology and practice takes place. Its goal is conformity to the image of Christ in character and conduct. The historic dimensions of the church universal mean that God's dealings with the church fathers, the reformers and revivalists, the prophets and social workers of other ages are also relevant to the contextualizing process today. A purely existential view of contextualization is a truncated view of God's mission in the world. Historical and dogmatic theology when tested against the givenness of Scripture are foundational to a more contemporary contextualizing of theology.

Commitment to Christ, to the Bible as the Word of God and to the church inevitably means commitment to the *missio Dei* in the world. The Church as the Kingdom community is called to be a model of the coming redeemed society where truth and grace reign and where justification and justice belong to each other. The Church is both a signpost and an agent of this coming Kingdom. It gives hope, courage and endurance in the midst of suffering and oppression. The Church is also like salt and light permeating every part of society restraining evil by prophetic rebuke and non-violent conscientization and preserving all that is good in society. Commitment to God's mission is a commitment to Christian transformation of the world; commitment to conversion to Christ, to peace and goodwill among men, to justice and harmony in and between the nations. Such commitment also calls for the faithful stewardship of the resources of creation for the good of all mankind.

True contextualization warns against the dangers of syncretism in theological beliefs, religious practices and ethical lifestyles, but it is not driven to inertia or to maintenance of the status quo by fear of this p.106 danger. A willingness to take risks and commitment to clear missiological goals enables the communicator to overcome this fear. The Holy Spirit as the divine communicator is the pioneer and enabler, in the fulfilment of this task.

In this dialogical relationship between the biblical text and the human context all forms of idolatrous beliefs and practices, whether religious or secular, are judged and stand condemned. The church is committed to their destruction. Though all of culture is tainted with sin it still reflects the truths and beauty of God's general revelation. Therefore that which is compatible with the law of God must be purified, transformed and put under the Lordship of Christ. Finally, contextualization culminates in the Good News showing its relevance in every situation, with the newness of redemption from sin, guilt and demonic power and eventual liberation from human despair and social injustice and the actualization of faith, hope and love. Thus contextualization is a central task of the Church in its mission in the world.

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Evangelical Theology and Praxis for Latin America

Emilio A. Núñez

Reprinted with permission from his book Liberation Theology (Moody Press, 1985)

(This article is the concluding chapter in Núñez's latest book, Liberation Theology. Called by many 'the wise man of Latin American Evangelicals' Núñez gives here an evangelical alternative to Liberation Theology, preserving both the best of both the Liberations Theologies as well as the traditional Theologies, and yet holding on unquestionably to an evangelical stance. He sketches what the Latin American Evangelical response to Liberation Theology would be in the coming years. In the process there clearly emerges not only Núñez's understanding of what theology is all about, but also how to do it. The text is slightly edited for stylistic purposes.)

Ed.

Liberation theology is essentially political and clearly reflects a Marxist influence. It is a new way of doing theology. Its point of departure and hermeneutical norm is not the written revelation of God, but the social context of Latin America and the revolutionary praxis striving to create there a 'new man' and a 'new society' within a socialist system as a supposed manifestation of the kingdom of God.

Naturally this theology comes into conflict with capitalism and neocolonialism; but it also differs sharply with conservative evangelical thought in the matter of biblical interpretation of the Christian faith. We have seen that liberation theologians do not have a high view of the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures. They accept modern exegesis uncritically and subject the biblical text to an ideology; as a result of that hermeneutical conditioning they give to fundamental doctrines such as Christology and ecclesiology an interpretation that is far from satisfactory for those of us who feel seriously committed to the gospel.

It is worth noting that the Vatican continues to react against liberation theology without opposing its aspirations for social justice. A recent document prepared under the direction of John Paul II and published five days before the interrogation of Leonardo Boff states:

The 'error of liberation theologians' consists in the identification of 'scientific analysis' with 'Marxist analysis' without critical examination. They do not take into account the fact that this analysis depends on ideological premises which are incompatible with the Christian faith and which carry a logic that leads to the 'perversion of Christianity.'¹ p. 108

Jospeh Ratzinger, principal author of the document, has stated that it was not particularly directed at Boff and the 'conversation' he was about to hold in Rome 'to verify the ecclesiastical meaning of his writings.'

On our part, although we reject the non-biblical foundations of liberation theology, we need to recognize that this theological system gives us conservative evangelicals a warning with regard to our social responsibility and a challenge to study the Scriptures to see what they have to say to us about Latin American social problems. Even if liberation theology goes out of style as a system or is condemned by the Vatican, its impact on the theological consciousness of Latin American Christianity may be lasting.

We conservative evangelicals can no longer afford the luxury of doing theology in social isolation. We must not answer the challenge of liberation theology by simply

¹ *Prensa Libre* (Guatemala), 4 September 1984.

repeating the political arguments of its enemies in other latitudes. The hour in which we live is crucial for our society and for the church which the Lord redeemed with His blood. We need the wise counsel of our brethren in the world-wide evangelical community. But more than anything we need to lay hold of the written word of God, depend as never before on the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit, and truly live the gospel.

The evangelical response to liberation theology has to be both theological and 'praxiological'. It is not enough for us to become entrenched in a conservatism that closes its eyes to social reality and limits itself to repeating dogmatic formulas without explaining them or applying them to the new situation that confronts us in Latin America. We need to proclaim faithfully the gospel in terms that are relevant to that situation and live it to its final consequences. If we fulfill those conditions, we will be responding positively—much more than to liberation theology—to the teachings and exhortations of the written word of God and to the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our new life. After all, that is what is most important.

THE THEOLOGICAL RESPONSE

For the evangelical Christian there is on the one hand a theology that does not admit change because it is the word of the Lord which 'abides forever' ([1 Pet. 1:25](#)). On the other hand, we are engaged in a theological task the product of which can be modified with the passage of time. It is imperative to maintain the difference between the merely human word and that which the Holy Spirit inspired, availing Himself of godly men who lived, thought, felt, and acted in close **P. 109** relationship with their cultural and social environment ([2 Pet. 1:21](#); [2 Tim. 3:14-17](#)).

Whoever studies carefully the history of theological thought knows that theology as human reflection is to a great extent the result, directly or indirectly, of the cultural and social circumstances of the different periods in which particular theologians have lived and laboured. Evangelical theology is not exempt, as human reflection, from the influence of its social context. It is very difficult, therefore, to predict what Latin American theology will be like in ten or twenty years. Latin America is torn by transforming forces that could destabilize its countries and create a new social order before the end of this century. We don't exactly know where Latin America is headed if the Lord does not come soon. But we are sure that it is possible to deepen our theological roots now and suggest guidelines that should be followed in the ministry of communicating the word of God to the new Latin American society which is in gestation before our very eyes.

The evangelical theology of the future will definitely have to be *biblical* in its foundations, *ecclesiastical* in its close relationship to the community of faith, *pastoral* in its attempt to be an orientating voice for the people of God, *contextualized* with regard to that which is Social and cultural, and *missionary* in its purpose to reach with the gospel those who are not Christians.

A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

Authentically evangelical theology seeks to become grounded in the Written revelation of God. Therefore, the Bible must be the main source of knowledge for the evangelical theologian and his maximum authority as well. The basis for genuine evangelical thought is not what a particular theologian says, but what the Lord says in His written Word.

It is obvious that in order to formulate a biblical theology, an effort must be made to draw out the meaning of the Scriptures. Exegesis is necessary; but exegesis demands preparation, dedication, intense work, perseverance, and above all, submission to the

Holy Spirit in order to be illuminated by Him. It is very easy to impose upon the Scriptures a theological scheme, whichever it might be, instead of patiently and conscientiously studying the sacred text to discover in its words both what the sacred writers wanted to express under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and what the original readers were able to understand.

We Latin American evangelicals boast that we are people of one **p. 110** book: the Bible. But in reality we have not studied that book as we should in order to evaluate and improve our theological activity, in general, our theology has only been an echo of that which has been forged in other cultures. We have lacked the interest, preparation, time, and financial backing for the theological task. Besides, the conservative evangelical community has shown a preference for men of action and a certain disdain for men of reflection. There are even those in theological education who defend a functionalism that has little esteem for academic progress: 'it doesn't matter if the quality of theological training for leaders goes down as long as they are able to function.' As the Latin American evangelical theologian Samuel Escobar has well stated, in some evangelical sectors 'theological reflection as a form of obedience to the Word of God disappears, enslaved by an enthusiastic and effective but uncritical activism that has no time to think about the faith.'²

It is high time for us to sit down to study the Word of God exegetically, not only in order to prove or defend our theology, but especially to discover what the biblical text has to say to us about the critical situation in which we all live. We have to go beyond systematic theologies that simply quote biblical texts in support of a particular theological system to an exegetical theology that grows directly out of the Word of God.

On the other hand it is very easy to run from our social problems by taking refuge in a meticulous exegetical exercise that does not produce a theology for the here and now of our people. We can feel very comfortably wrapped up in the study of remote biblical cultures while we turn our backs to the crude reality surrounding us. We may also take refuge in the future and become eschatologists who say little or nothing about the present reality that troubles the Latin American people. By escaping to the past or to the future, we draw a theological arch over the distressing problems of Latin America. If there is a reference to those problems it is superficial, not deep.

We need, therefore, a greater number of *evangelical* Latin American theologians who are rigorously trained in the biblical and theological sciences and are able to interpret the signs of the times in the light of written revelation, to instruct adequately the future pastors and teachers of God's people, and to stimulate Latin American evangelical thought.

AN ECCLESIASTICAL THEOLOGY

What has just been said does not mean in any way that we should **P. 111** throw overboard everything that has been produced in the field of theology throughout almost twenty centuries of Christianity. It would be presumptuous to believe that the Holy Spirit has kept silence during all that time and that He will not begin to speak except through us—in other words, to think that no Christian before us has had the assistance of the Paraclete in the study and exposition of the Scriptures. There is a whole doctrinal heritage, a tradition—in the best sense of the term—that we should neither despise nor exalt above the written revelation of God. The evangelical theologian should not be a stranger to any of the centuries-long process of doctrinal reflection of the church. Exegetical theology should be accompanied by historical theology.

² Samuel Escobar, 'Identidad, misión y futuro del protestantismo Latinoamericano.'

It would be foolish to ignore the wealth of teaching in the early Church Fathers, to underestimate the great creeds of the universal church, or to take lightly the hard work of biblical exegetes of more recent times in order to gain the approval of iconoclasts who only destroy without building anything positive from a biblical point of view.

It is also necessary to be up to date with regard to what is happening in the theological world and to take advantage especially of the contributions that others make to the advance of evangelical theology in Latin America. We are indebted to the past and to the present for our theological task in Latin America.

By ecclesiastical theology we also understand a theology formed in close relationship with the community of faith. It is one thing to talk about *ecclesiological* theology, and something very different to refer to an *ecclesiastical* theology. Ecclesiological theology can remain on a purely theoretical plane, analyzing the doctrine of the church in the Scriptures and in the reflective work of theologians. That theology can be produced in isolation, apart from the community of faith. In his ivory tower the theologian thinks about the church, and from there he sends his message without seriously committing himself to any ecclesiastical group. He speaks about the church and talks to the church from outside, as a stranger.

We need the communion and the advice of our brethren in the faith, especially the advice of our colleagues in the ministry of the gospel. Evangelical theology should arise from the warmth of that fellowship and under the light of that counsel. The academic theologian should also be an ecclesiastical theologian, fully identified with the people of God.

A PASTORAL THEOLOGY

If theology is produced within the community of faith it will **P. 112** necessarily be pastoral because it will emerge in answer to the questions and needs of the Christian people. It will be a theology carried out from the written word of God to the concrete situation of Latin American evangelicals. This theology will not be aloof to human existence, occupied only with technicalities that are interesting to academic theologians but not to the rest of the evangelical people. An esoteric theology produced for experts is useless from the point of view of the interests of the kingdom of God if it does not come down from its highly academic pedestal in order to spiritually edify the people who occupy the pews in the churches.

The subjects that pastoral theology should treat in the context of the Latin American evangelical church are many. Among them are those related to the nature and mission of the church itself and the duties of Christians in their daily relationships with the family, the church, and society.

All of the fundamental elements of the evangelical creed should be expounded biblically with special reference to the Latin American church. Even the theological basis of our evangelical liturgy will have to be evaluated by means of a careful and objective exegesis of the biblical text. We will need to ask, for example, whether in our public worship we ought simply to imitate the liturgy of other cultures or whether there is freedom in the gospel to worship the Lord in ways that will better respond to the feelings of our own people. One of the more important questions that pastoral theology has to answer on the basis of biblical exegesis is what it means to be the church of the Lord in countries troubled by the process of social change.

A CONTEXTUALIZED THEOLOGY

Contextualization may be understood as the effort we must make in order for theology to be relevant to our own culture. This relevance cannot be achieved apart from dialogue between theology and our social and cultural context.

In the case of evangelical theology and its emphasis on biblical exegesis it must be remembered that exegetical work can fulfill the requirement of investigating what the sacred writer communicated to his original readers. But the bridge must still be laid between the culture of biblical times and our own. That is true cross-culturalization. We have to investigate what the biblical text meant for those readers and determine what the meaning of that text teaches us at the end of the twentieth century in the Latin American context.

The report of the Willowbank Consultation on the Gospel and [p. 113](#) Culture (January 1978) states that for a contemporary understanding of the Word of God it is necessary to go beyond the popular method that approaches the words of the biblical text 'without any awareness that the writer's cultural context differs from the reader's,' and to go beyond the historical method which 'takes with due seriousness the original historical and cultural context.' The contextual method of approaching the Scriptures that the report recommends 'takes seriously the cultural context of the contemporary readers as well as of the biblical text, and recognizes that a dialogue must develop between the two.'³

In Latin America we need to ask the biblical text not only the traditional questions related to the needs of the individual and to the hereafter. We also have to ask the questions of a social nature that are heard outside the church. There are fundamental questions that concern every human being, in any time and place; but each generation and each social group also has its own questions which must be answered. It may be that some of the questions of yesterday do not have the same importance today, and that the questions of a particular society are not the most important ones for another social group.

Latin American evangelical theology should represent at least an attempt to answer questions troubling Latin Americans. The biblical meaning should be studied in interaction with those questions, but it will not be replaced by them or by an answer that might violate the sacred text. The dialogue between Scripture and the social context should not have the purpose of injecting meaning into the biblical text. That text already has a meaning of its own which we have to relate to our own Latin American situation.

The goal is not to attribute to the text a meaning foreign to it, but to draw out the meaning it already possesses and to relate it, without distortions, to the needs of the individual and society. If it could be modified by the whim of the interpreter or in response to social transformations, Scripture would cease to be the supreme and abiding norm for the faith and conduct of the church in every time and place. Biblical meaning would be at the mercy of different moods of the interpreter and different situations in society. We would not have a stable meaning on which we could depend in order to make the right choices and live in this changing world in a way that is pleasing to God.

It should also be pointed out that by 'the biblical text' we mean 'the whole counsel of God.' One of the main problems in traditional [p. 114](#) evangelical theology has been its tendency to use only certain biblical sections and to limit the meaning of the Scriptures to the sphere of the individual and to 'spiritual' things. Thus, for example, prominence has been given to the New Testament to the detriment of the Old Testament, and only the spiritual, individual, ecclesiastical, and eternal aspects of the salvation of Christ have been emphasized. In some cases even the sense of community that the New Testament teaches with regard to the church has been lost.

³ *The Willowbank Report: Report of a Consultation on Gospel and Culture*, pp. 10–11.

Two decades ago the majority of Latin American evangelicals gave no importance to 'the social implications of the gospel.' Meanwhile, a new theology was taking form on the continent with a pendular movement towards the political left. Theological liberationism offered to fill the void that the preconciliar Catholic church and traditional evangelical hermeneutics had left in Latin American Christianity. Deluded by the splendour of an ideology robed in theological pronouncements, liberation theologians urge people to take refuge in a hermeneutic that ends up distorting the meaning of the biblical text.

There is no need to distort the Scripture in order to answer the questions of our countrymen. But we must bring back into focus those biblical elements that we have forgotten. The Bible abounds with teachings about the dignity of the human being (including both sexes); liberty and slavery; personal and social justice; private property; wealth and poverty; labour relations; peace and war; family responsibilities and privileges; the origin and nature of the State; the duties and limitations of civil power; civic duties of the Christian; Christian philanthropy ('good works' as a fruit of salvation); and human relationships within the family, in the community of faith, in the civil order, and on the international scene.

The Scriptures contain great ethical principles which the Christian community should follow and proclaim in order to truly be the salt and light of the earth. It is worth noting that non-Christian leaders have emerged as spokesmen for those biblical principles that the church has not communicated. Contemporary movements of social vindication have borrowed from the Bible some of their teachings about the dignity and freedom of men. While the church has kept silence, others have raised their voices. All we have to do to remedy the situation is restore the teachings of the Bible, 'announcing the whole counsel of God.'

A MISSIONARY THEOLOGY

Theology has to enter into dialogue with the cultural and social **p. 115** context in order to communicate the gospel effectively. In other words, it has to become a missionary theology. That should be the purpose of contextualization. Otherwise, as C. René Padilla says, theology loses the balance between faithfulness to 'the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints' ([Jude 3](#)) and the relevance to the social situation. It either becomes merely an effort to preserve a theological tradition, or it accommodates itself to the social context, thus losing its Christian identity. 'If theology in the Two-thirds World is to be both relevant and faithful, it must be based on a missiological hermeneutic.'⁴ We have to contextualize the gospel in order to fulfill the mission that the Master has given us ([Matt. 28:18-20](#)).

Everything said here about a Latin American theology suggests that our task will not be to add something to the gospel or to take something away from it, but rather to emphasize those biblical elements that have not received enough attention in our theological task or to recover those that we have forgotten. Our task will be to provide a biblical answer for the questions and needs of the Latin American people.

THE ANSWER OF CHRISTIAN PRAXIS

Jesus did not come to establish another religious group or another political party, but to establish a new community, the community of the kingdom of God, sustained and characterized by love, humility, justice, peace, service and harmony among men of good

⁴ C. René Padilla, 'Toward a Biblical Foundation for a Two-Thirds World Evangelical Theology', p. 35.

will. We understand as evangelicals that that community is made up of all those who have been born again by the power of the Word and the Holy Spirit. It is the community of those who have become sons of God by believing in the name of the Lord Jesus ([John 1:11-13](#)). This is the church, the Body of Christ, called to live and proclaim the gospel in the midst of society, not apart from the world but in the world, yet without letting itself be contaminated by the world.

The church is the people of God in this era, between the two advents of the Lord Jesus on earth ([1 Pet. 2:9-10](#)). The church is the community of the kingdom of God in the midst of 'the kingdoms of this World.' The apostle Paul says that believers in Jesus Christ have been liberated from the power of darkness and 'transferred ... to the kingdom of His beloved Son' ([Col. 1:13](#)). We also read in [Revelation 1:6](#) that Christ has made us 'a kingdom, priests to His God and Father.' p. 116 The church is the agent of the present kingdom of God. At the same time, it is called to proclaim and exemplify the virtues of the kingdom to come. If that kingdom is to be characterized by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all humanity, by universal justice, peace and brotherhood, the world should see here and now, in the conduct of each individual Christian and of the church in its totality, an anticipation of those and other blessings that Messiah will bring in fullness for all the peoples of earth.

How can we talk of that future outpouring of the Spirit and not allow Him to fill us now so that we may be able to live authentically the Christian life in the home, in the congregation, and in society? How can we talk of a justice that will reign among all peoples of the world and not be just today in our personal, family, and social life in order to support the cause of justice in society with God-given authority? How can we talk of the peace that all human beings will enjoy and not follow today peace and holiness in our personal, family, and social life? How can we talk about future universal brotherhood and love and not love each other today as the Master has commanded us?

The church is the agent of the present kingdom of God and the standard-bearer of the kingdom to come. All of that places on us a serious ethical responsibility before God and before society. We have a heavenly calling to fulfill on this planet: to live and proclaim the kingdom of God. That is what it means to be the church today in the midst of social whirlwinds. The world should *hear* the gospel, but it should also *see it* incarnated in the life of those of us who proclaim it.

Our theological response to the Word of God and to the great problems of Latin American society should be backed up by an authentically Christian praxis. We have to be Christians like the disciples who were deservedly given that glorious name in apostolic days ([Acts 11](#)). In the Latin American evangelical community many of us run the risk of becoming accommodated to the prevailing situation and playing at being Christians on Sunday mornings in servile imitation of a middle class Christianity that comes to us from affluent western societies, strangers to the painful drama that millions of Latin Americans are living.

That kind of Christianity can easily convert the churches into 'self-edification clubs,' as a professor of Christian education said in a North American theological seminary. It can also become the Christianity of 'cheap grace,' of which the young German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer spoke. It is sad to confess it, but there has been much of 'cheap grace' in our evangelizing efforts in Latin America. We have frequently preached a gospel of 'supply' without demands, motivated p. 117 in some cases by the desire to get 'decisions' and to publish statistics that in the final analysis promote a personality cult. The search for a church growth that is no more than numerical is also expressed in preaching that offers personal happiness, peace in the home, physical health, professional success, economic prosperity, and the solution to all the problems of this life. It is a preaching that

does not insist as it should on the fact that the Lord calls us primarily to solve the problem of our sin by means of faith in Him and His redemptive work, and that He is searching for *sinner*s who are ready to become His *followers* in whatever circumstances of life may be theirs in this world.

The gospel is being so cheapened in our environment that there are those who prefer, in order to win converts, not to point out the abysmal difference that exists between the way of authentic Christian discipleship and those 'Christianities' that in their doctrinal schemes deny the foundations of New Testament faith. In that way an attempt is being made to soften the gospel so that a greater number of persons may accept it without difficulty. That is not what Jesus preached. He said: 'If any one wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me' ([Matt. 16:24](#)).

Juan Luis Segundo has more than enough reason to say that the gospel is not 'cheap merchandise.' Genuine Christian discipleship has a cost that can be very high, according to the Lord's will. We are saved by the grace of God, by means of faith, to serve Him; and if the Master so demands it, we may also have to suffer and even die for His name. That is very strange language for those people who seek an evangelical church in order to be happy according to the world's idea of happiness.

Jürgen Moltmann quotes the Catholic theologian J. B. Metz, who describes the bourgeois church as a supermarket where products for all tastes are offered at very low prices. Moltmann says that in the New World there are so many varieties of denominations and so many churches that nobody has to worry about any problem that might emerge in his own congregation; it is very easy to go to another one that might be better suited to his taste. In the competition on the religious market, 'the winner—as in other markets too—will be whoever has the cheapest and most entertaining offer.' Finally, the church easily falls victim to the seduction of 'class' churches, in which 'social "like" is drawn to "like": birds of a feather flock together.'⁵

In Latin America there are evangelical churches that run the risk of becoming classists, indifferent to the great majorities who suffer the [p. 118](#) most deplorable results of our social and economic underdevelopment. It seems that the middle class, which has struggled to reach that height, easily becomes devoted to preserving its achievements and even to improving them by climbing one more step up the social ladder, all the while turning its back on the less privileged classes. The churches that emerge from that social mobility can easily forget the demands of Christian discipleship and the example of the Lord Jesus, who had compassion on the multitudes who were scattered and mistreated like sheep without a shepherd.

A North American evangelical pastor from the middle class noticed that his church was bound to itself, to its traditions in liturgy and work methods, to its social class, to its way of being a church in a great urban centre. Having a new perception of the city itself as a mission field, he encouraged the members of his congregation to take an interest also in the neglected groups, including hobos, drug addicts, and even homosexuals. His emphasis is more spiritual than social, but he had broken chains in the area of life and mission of an urban church that had not taken an interest in other social classes. His congregation is scattered throughout the city, serving the neediest sectors. The sanctuary can accommodate only 275 people, but the number of members came to more than one thousand in 1982, up from only one hundred in 1970.⁶ But the most important thing is

⁵ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Power of the Powerless*, pp. 160–61.

⁶ Frank R. Tillapaugh, *The Church Unleashed* (Ventura, Cal.: Regal, 1982).

not the numerical growth but the new type of ministry that the pastor and his church are carrying out.

Without a doubt many of our churches in Latin America have to be freed from their chains in order to serve other social segments. We must add that the challenge goes beyond the merely spiritual. It also includes the millions who cry out for social justice. The church cannot become deaf to that cry. We are told that we should see not only the effects of our social problems but also their causes, and then do something about them, in order to be consistent with our Christian faith.

This great challenge is unavoidable, and it has resulted in an awakening of social consciousness among evangelicals at the level of world consultations and congresses. The proof of that statement is seen in documents such as the Wheaton Declaration (1966), the Lausanne Covenant (1974), the Declaration on Evangelism and Social Responsibility (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1982), and the Documents of Group III, Wheaton Conference (1983). It appears that the process of reflection and conscientization on the social responsibility of the p. 119 evangelical church is irreversible. It has been a good step to begin with biblical and theological reflection on so controversial an issue. What many of us Latin American evangelicals hope is that those who are the most serene and stable in the biblical faith will participate, so that the evangelical church may fully assume its social responsibility without straying from the path marked out by the written revelation of God. May our *action* be motivated and directed, always and everywhere, by that *revelation*.

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Christian Witness Amidst Asian Poverty

Herman Moldez

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(It is said that just as the theology of mission occupied world christendom for the last three quarters of the century, the theme of poverty would occupy Christians world over for the next quarter at least. Doing theology in the Two-thirds World in general and Asia in particular, is impossible without a basic consideration of poverty as a theological category. For only by speaking to contemporary issues relevantly can theology be called theology. Though somewhat older in comparison with other articles (this was written before the revolution in Philippines) yet it is published here because it still speaks to the burning issues in the Philippines. Meant primarily for the youth, the article may lack theological as well as sociological precision but coming from the pen of a Two-thirds World evangelical, it needs to be read. Some of the examples given would also find a counterpart in other situations of poverty. This of course is one view. For other views, readers are directed to either Ron Sider's or Brian Griffiths writings.)

Ed.

Poverty affects a human person created in the image of God. And it dehumanizes man. To millions of people poverty means hunger, malnutrition, illiteracy, injustice, disease, brain damage and agonizing death. To many people, to die may even be better than to live and suffer. Poverty demands a concrete response, not empty words.

We live in a world of extreme poverty and affluence, There are now more than 4 billion people living on this planet Earth. One fifth of them (about 800 million) are destitute. All over the world, more than 80,000 people suffer from malnutrition and contract some related disease due to hunger every 48 hours. Every day about 10,000 of them starve to death. Meanwhile more than one fifth live in affluence—consuming four-fifths of the world’s income. While millions succumb to hunger and death, the affluent minority spend \$10 billion a year on cosmetics alone!¹ What is the Christian response?

GOD AND THE POOR

As we ponder the creation account in Genesis, we conclude that poverty is not God’s original plan for man. God placed man in a **P. 121** paradise—abundant in food. The garden was planted with all kinds of trees, both ‘pleasing to the eye and *good for food*’ ([Gen. 2:9](#))—all for man’s sustenance. God said: ‘You are free to eat from any tree in the garden’ ([Gen. 2:16](#), [1:29b](#)). But there was one prohibition: ‘You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die’ ([Gen. 2:17](#)).

Man failed the test! He rebelled. In defiance he ate the fruit and surely he died—spiritually, physically.

Because man rebelled against God, he was banished from the garden ([Gen. 3:23](#)). His disobedience made him a sinner and cut him off from a living relationship with a holy God. Also as a consequence life became hard, for God cursed the ground. Thorns and thistles would grow from it. Food would be difficult to produce. In order to eat, man would struggle in painful *toil*² all the days of his life ([Gen. 3:17–18](#)). It is to the Fall that we can ultimately trace back human misery and related poverty.

While poverty is related to man’s disobedience, God still longs to liberate man from it. God shows a deep concern for the poor. One primary reason that prompted God to act for the redemption of Israel was this: ‘I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and *I am concerned about their suffering*. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey ...’ ([Ex. 3:7–8](#)). God was not only aware of the suffering and poverty of His people—seeing their misery and hearing their cry; He was concerned; so He acted in power to liberate them from bondage and provide them with a land flowing in milk and honey.

From the Psalms we again read these words: ‘Who is like the Lord our God, the One who sits enthroned on high, who stoops down to look on the heavens and earth? He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he sits them with princes, with the princes of their people ...’ ([Ps. 113:5–9](#)). What makes God unique according to the psalmist is this: He does not only reign on high and look down from there on human misery, but from above God condescends with deep compassion to raise up the poor below. The Lord is a compassionate God, especially to the poor and outcast. He transforms the pauper to a prince (v.8) and the barren woman (regarded with disgrace) to a happy mother of children (v.9). Indeed God cares for the poor and destitute. **p. 122**

¹ Time Magazine, 11 December 1978: *Cosmetics: Kiss and Sell*.

² Work is God’s mandate in paradise ([Gen. 2:15](#)). After the Fall, work became *toil*.

To safeguard His command to be concerned for the poor, God instituted laws that secure material benefits for those living in poverty. Since the poor will always be around, God commanded His people to be openhanded and generous to the poor and needy ([Deut. 15:7-11](#)). When they lend money, no interest must be charged. When they sell food to the poor, no profit must be gained ([Ex. 22:25](#) and [Lev. 25:36-37](#)). Employers on the other hand must pay their workers' wages promptly, on the very day that they are earned ([Lev. 19:13](#); [Deut. 24:14-15](#)). So God's concern is that the poor must be treated with kindness and fairness. The rich must not take advantage of the poor in their dealings with them.

Consequently the whole agricultural society of Israel was structured to maintain economic assistance to the needy and to prevent further perpetuation of poverty among God's people. The farmers must *tithe* all the produce of their lands ([Lev. 27:30-33](#); [Deut. 12:17-18](#), [14:22-29](#); [Num. 18:21-32](#)). One tenth of their harvests must be set aside to build some kind of economic reserve—for the Levites who don't have any material inheritance and for the widows and fatherless who have no one to support them. When harvesting they should always leave something for the poor and sojourners. They must not reap their fields to the very borders and they must not strip bare their vineyards—this is called the law of *gleaning* (see [Lev. 19:9-10](#); [Deut. 24: 19-21](#)). Every seventh year all lands in Israel must lie unploughed and unused ([Ex. 23:1-10](#); [Lev. 25:2-7](#)). Agriculturally it preserves the fertility of the land. But more than that, it is 'for the poor ... who may get food from it' ([Ex. 23:11b](#)). At this time also slaves who have served for six years are liberated and sent away with enough capital to start a decent life. Lastly, all debts incurred during the past years are cancelled. This is presumably to restrict the widening of the gap between the rich and the poor for as God said, 'there should be no poor among you ...' Furthermore, to equalize land ownership, properties are returned to their respective owners every 50th year—the year of *Jubilee* ([Lev. 25](#)). This is because God owns the land ([Lev. 25:23](#)). So He demands that those who have lost their property right will regain it to be able to start their own way of life.

From the above discussion we take note that concern for the poor is not just an individual responsibility but must be structured in the life of the whole society. The state's economic policies must be designed to eliminate poverty, not to perpetuate it. Now if God's principles of concern for the poor are reflected in the legislation of government policies, then the needy will be protected, not exploited, and poverty will be alleviated, not perpetuated. [p. 123](#)

Of course Old Testament Israel was different. It was a theocracy. But still God's laws are for all mankind. While it is true that God's laws are primarily for the people of God—Israel and the Church—they have a universal character and application. Long before Israel became a nation, God's laws were already in effect which all men were to obey (see [Gen. 2:17](#), [2:2](#), [9:6](#) cf. [Ex. 20:11](#); [Deut. 5:16](#)). And these laws are now written in man's conscience ([Rom. 2:14-16](#)). Thus the laws given directly to Israel were meant to be applied even to strangers ([Ex. 22:21-23](#)). This must be so because God is the Lord and Creator of all mankind.

But for God's laws to influence government policies, Christians must get involved in political affairs as part of showing concern for the poor. Political involvement to work for reforms so that the state will be more responsive to human misery should be part of the Christian calling and vocation. An example from history is William Wilberforce who was a member of the British Parliament and a committed Christian. Through his persistent campaign for political reforms and intelligent propaganda with the Clapham Sect, he was able to get a law passed banning Englishmen from getting involved in the slave trade. What happened in England must not remain history. We in Asia must be able to pursue it once again in our own generation.

JUSTICE AND POVERTY

Poverty is not just an economic misfortune that befalls people. It is also caused by social injustice committed by those in power—the rich and the rulers—or by unjust structures. But God takes the side of the poor and helps them to fight for justice. God ‘stands at the right hand of the needy’ ([Ps. 109:31](#)). ‘The Lord maintains the cause of the afflicted and executes justice for the needy’ ([Ps. 140:12](#)). Indeed God demands justice for the poor.

The law of Moses forcefully emphasized the need for impartiality in the law courts: ‘You shall not pervert the justice due to the poor in his suit.’ ‘You shall take no bribe.’ ‘You shall not oppress an alien, orphan or widow.’ ([Ex. 23:6ff](#); [Lev. 19:15](#); [Deut. 24:17, 27:19](#).) Why? Because they themselves had been oppressed and the Lord had liberated them—giving them justice ([Deut. 15:15](#)).

The Psalms, on the other hand, exhorted the judges to ‘give justice to the weak and fatherless, maintain the right of the afflicted and destitute’ ([Ps. 82](#); see also [Prov. 22:22ff](#)).

During the monarchical period, there arose a widespread injustice committed against the poor masses. But God opposed it, sending His [p. 124](#) prophets to denounce it and to warn the perverters of justice of the impending anger of the Lord. Amos’ words can summarize the prophets’ plea: ‘Let justice roll on like a river, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream’ ([5:24](#)); while Isaiah echoed the prophets’ warning: ‘Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees, to deprive the poor of their rights and rob my oppressed people of justice ... What will you do on the day of reckoning, when disaster from afar ...?’ ([10:1-4](#)).

The prophets revealed too that the affluence of some was directly related to a perversion of justice. Amos had pointed out that the affluent lifestyle of Israel ([6:1-7](#)) was a result of trampling on the poor and denying justice to the oppressed ([2:7, 4:1, 5:11](#)). Similarly, the prophet Jeremiah exposed and rebuked king Jehoiakim for building a luxurious palace ‘by injustice’, by forced labour ([22:13ff](#)). In the New Testament, James made the same denunciation to the rich who have hoarded wealth and lived in luxury by not paying the wages of their workers ([James 5:1-6](#)).

The direct relationship of affluence to poverty that the prophets condemned is significant in our own time and situation. Many of those in the Third World are now convinced that the affluence of the elite minority is the factor for the worsening poverty of the masses in most underdeveloped countries. The late President Allende of Chile expressed this conviction in his famous speech to the United Nations: ‘Underdevelopment exists because imperialism exists, and imperialism exists because underdevelopment exists.’³ The same expression was used by Dennis Goulet: ‘Buried deep in the consciousness of the third world masses is the conviction that poverty is the by-product of wealth, the fruit of exploitation and injustice.’⁴ For example, the US Department of Commerce has revealed that between 1950 and 1965 American companies invested \$3,800 million in Latin America alone and received back a profit of \$11,300 million.⁵ In 1975, Third World countries had to pay \$20,800 millions just to service their overseas loans.⁶ This great wealth, says Waldron Scott is ‘accumulated through ... brutal and often bloody process,’ institutionalized and operated through international economic order.

³ Quoted by Samuel Escobar, *Christian Mission and Social Justice*, p. 37.

⁴ Ibid, p. 37.

⁵ New Internationalist, October 1978.

⁶ Ibid.

'The chief actors in the modern global economic system are those business enterprises known as multinational corporations or MNCs.'⁷ p. 125

While it is true that MNCs somehow help create new jobs and contribute aid for 'development', their operation undermines justice and is basically to the disadvantage of the underdeveloped nations. And those who suffer most are the poor, not the rich. In the Philippines, a new Western sandal factory was erected which provided work for 40 people but destroyed the local industry and consequently displaced its 5,000 workers, most of whom are poor.⁸ Another case in point was the building of a sintering plant in Northern Mindanao, Philippines by Kawatetsu, Kawasaki Steel, a Japanese-owned corporation. Because of its polluting effect the residents of Chiba Prefecture, where Kawasaki Steel has its mill, filed a lawsuit against the corporation to suspend construction of its sintering plant. Under the guise of giving economic help to the Filipino people, a sintering plant was transferred instead to the Philippines. But what has the consequence been of 'Japan's economic aid' to my countrymen? Some Filipino workers in the sintering plant are now suffering from asthma as a result of pollution. Dead fish have been found in the canal near the plant. Fishermen near the area have reported a sizeable decrease in the volume of their catch. To give way to the space needed for the plant, 110 households were evicted. In return, Kawasaki Steel employed only 75 persons from those households.⁹ As a consequence the already affluent Japanese benefited, but more of the Filipino people became ill and destitute.

Of course there are other ways in which injustice—social injustice that oppresses the poor—is committed in our respective countries. As concerned and committed Christian citizens, it will be our duty to pinpoint these social evils and boldly denounce them. Our God is on the side of the poor, so must we be.

What does it mean to take sides with the poor? How are we to promote justice in our society? To what extent can we be involved in denouncing social injustice? Is the prophetic ministry for the Church as well? If so, how?

In the Philippines, taking sides with the poor can be a life and death situation. It is to take the risk of being labelled guilty of subversive activities to win the confidence of the poor masses for a violent overthrow of the government. And indeed there are church leaders (both Protestant and Catholic) who have already opted to support and join the rebel groups to fight injustice and to liberate the poor from oppressive power structures. Others just limit their activities to giving p. 126 material aid and self-help programmes of 'development', but close their eyes to the blatant injustice happening around them.

So far our discussion of poverty and affluence has been set within the context of society in general where there are both believers and unbelievers. For Israel, whose laws were directly derived from God, had a majority who were idolatrous and exploiters. Only a minority remained faithful to the Lord. But the closer a society builds its laws to God's mandate for economic provision for the poor and for preserving justice for the needy and powerless, the healthier and more responsive the relationship between the poor and the affluent will be. Poverty may not be completely eliminated, but at least the poor will be served with compassion and justice. So Christians, as 'salt and light of the world' must get involved in the affairs and shaping of society as part of their calling to care for and to champion the cause of the poor. Not only that, the Christian community must reflect a

⁷ *Bring Forth Justice*, Waldron Scott (Eerdmans), p. 136

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 134.

⁹ *The Nationalist Alternative*, Renato Constantino, pp. 27–28.

model for a godly relationship between the rich and the poor. So now, let's concentrate our study on the Church.

SHARING OF WEALTH IN THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

The relationship between Christians is governed by two principles unity and love. Both love and unity are expressed not only in spiritual terms but also in terms of material and economic sharing.

John poses this question: 'If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of Christ be in him?' ([1 John 3:17](#)). Love must be concrete and practical. It shares with those in need. Although the poor Christians may have no rightful claim to the wealth of their more affluent brethren, nevertheless, the rich Christians have an inescapable moral duty to extend material help to those in great need. And while our responsibility to do good because of love is first to our brethren, we must extend charity all men. As Paul instructed us: 'As we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers' ([Gal. 6:10](#)). To show love by serving those in need is to follow what our Master did, who 'went around doing good' ([Acts 10:38](#)) because of His deep compassion for the people.¹⁰

The Christians in Jerusalem experienced a deep sense of unity: 'All the believers were one n heart and mind' ([Acts 4:32](#)). This unit found concrete expression in the sharing of their wealth and property. 'No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared p. 127 everything they had' ([Acts 4:32b](#)). Indeed among the early disciples, 'there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them ...' ([Acts 4:34](#)). What a vivid description of their strong and deep commitment to one another and sincere love for each other. They viewed their wealth and possessions as being for the benefit of the whole Christian community. This was not a forced collectivization of property. It was voluntary (cf. [Acts 5:4](#)), for others still retained some of their private property (see [Acts 2:46](#); [5:4](#)). But when love and unity are strong, wealth becomes available for the needs of the community.

To be united in Christ is to foster some degree of economic equality. Paul explained this to the Corinthian Christians when trying to stir them up to continue collecting gifts for the famine-stricken Christians in Judea. 'Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. Then there will be equality' ([2 Cor. 8:13-14](#)). However, extending help should not create unnecessary burdens and dependence, but should rather lift our brethren from poverty so that they may rise to an equal status with those who have more materially. Such concern arises only from a mature understanding of our spiritual oneness in Christ and of our equal standing before the Lord (see [Gal. 3:28](#)). If we are truly one in Christ then we must not hesitate to share our affluence with our needy brethren so that their poverty may be alleviated. As it is written, 'He that gathered much did not have too much, and he that gathered little did not have too little' ([2 Cor. 8:15](#); [Ex. 16:18](#)).

The Chinese in the Philippines have unwittingly applied this principle of helping one another to foster some degree of economic equality. They started poor. At the beginning they were just small 'sari-sari' store (variety store) owners and street peddlers of meat dumplings and noodles. Now they are owners of the big supermarkets and first class restaurants. One estimate contends that they own 40% of the total resources of banks

¹⁰ For a down-to-earth study of Jesus' compassion for people, John R. W. Stott's book, *Walk in His Shoes* (IVP) is a must.

(excluding government and foreign bank branches) in the Philippines today. At one time they accounted for 45% of the total sales volume of the top 200 Philippine corporations.¹¹ In fact, in the Philippines to be a Chinese is almost synonymous with being moneyed.

What accounts for their sudden rise to affluence?

A key factor is their community spirit and concern to help one another as fellow Chinese to improve economically. They have a strong sense of oneness. Some financial assistance is extended to members of the Chinese community as capital for business to help fellow Chinese become economically productive. A Chinese friend of my family for example was given three chances until he finally got established in business. And in Chinese establishments, fellow Chinese are given first preference for employment. Indeed, their common Chinese heritage is demonstrated by extending help to give each one an equal opportunity to get out of poverty.

CHRISTIAN ATTITUDE TO WEALTH AND POSSESSIONS

God's concern is clear: the affluent must help those in extreme want. However, most people today never take the poor seriously. The heartbreaking situation is, while millions suffer in poverty, the rich minority continues to live in luxury. Thousands of people have hardly anything to eat, but others waste food extravagantly.

A major cause of man's self-centred hoarding of wealth and maintaining an ostentatious lifestyle is his basic attitude towards wealth and possessions. It is natural for man to idolize riches. He has an insatiable desire for more and for more and more—even to the extent of violating his neighbour's basic God-given rights. Money and wealth matter more than people who are created in the image of God.

It is important then that we understand what the Bible teaches about wealth and possessions. Is it worldly to be affluent? Are we called to live frugally?

1. God owns everything

'The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein' ([Ps. 24:1](#), see also [Job 41:11](#); [Ps. 50:12](#); [Deut. 26:10](#); [1 Chron. 29:14](#)). God is the creator of heaven and earth Everything belongs to Him. He is the source of all the material blessings we enjoy. Because of His grace 'He causes the sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous' ([Mt. 5:45](#)). So God alone has an absolute right over the natural riches of the earth.

Man, on the other hand, is appointed to exercise dominion over the rest of creation. He is appointed a trustee of God's world. Man's trusteeship carries with it an obligation to use God's resources efficiently and productively. He has no right to devour the world wealth for himself a one but must make it available for others as well. God's world is entrusted to all men; so each one must give his fellowmen an opportunity to taste the goodness of the Lord. [p. 129](#)

2. All things richly to enjoy

All things God has created are given to us to enjoy ([1 Tim. 4:4, 6:17b](#)). Therefore we should not feel guilty for enjoying God's rich material gifts. We are not ascetics, denying ourselves God's good blessings.

But we can succumb to another extreme—the danger of materialism, 'the love of money' ([1 Tim. 6:10](#)), of wealth, of possessions, of material things. 'Materialism is not the

¹¹ Renato Constantino, p. 37.

mere possession of material things, but an unhealthy obsession with them.¹² It is the 'harmful *desire* that plunges men to ruin and destruction' ([I Tim. 6:9](#)). To possess wealth is not wrong, but it is wrong to be possessed by wealth.

How are we to enjoy things without being tyrannized by them? First, we must receive material things 'with *thanksgiving*' ([I Tim. 4:4](#)). We must acknowledge that they are good gifts to praise the Lord for, not things to be coveted and idolized. Second, we must learn to be *content* ([I Tim. 6:6-8](#)). Contentment is the recognition that 'we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it' ([I Tim. 6:7](#)). It is to be satisfied by simply having the basic necessities of life. 'If we have food and clothing, we will be content with that' ([I Tim. 6:7](#)). It is to say 'enough is enough'. Thirdly, we must learn to *share*. The rich must be rich, that is: 'rich in good deeds, generous and willing to share' ([I Tim. 6:18](#)). For the richness that God has entrusted to us is for everybody's enjoyment. And it is when we share generously that we begin to enjoy fully all the things that God has blessed us with. Yes, there is deep joy in sharing with those in need.

3. Laying up treasure in heaven

To share, Paul said, is to 'lay up treasure for themselves ... for the coming age' ([I Tim 6:19](#)). This is an echo of Jesus' teaching to his disciples to store up heavenly treasure instead of earthly treasure ([Mt. 6:19-21](#)).

This does not mean that Jesus favours poverty and condemns making provision for the future. He is contrasting the value of two treasures: earthly treasure is contemporary and corruptible while heavenly treasure is eternal and incorruptible. Jesus wants his disciples to put their value on eternal things rather than on material possessions. It is also an injunction to develop an eternal perspective while living in this world.

These two values compete with each other, each one demanding our wholehearted commitment. 'For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also' ([Mt. 6:21](#)). It is impossible to be loyal to both; we [p.130](#) hate the one and love the other ([Mt. 6:24](#)). Earthly treasure is dangerous. Unless we know our priority and maintain it, it will draw us away from our supreme loyalty to the Master.

Jesus demands our utmost and undivided commitment to put our material concerns in His care. We should not worry about our material needs because our heavenly Father knows them all and promises to provide for them as well. If our priority is right, we will never lack anything. 'Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you all well' ([Mt. 6:33](#)), Jesus assures us. So what we need is to live in full submission to our Lord and His will, and in Him to find an inner solitude that transcends the materialistic aspirations of this present evil age.

The Christian view of wealth and possessions is a healthy one. It neither condemns private ownership or possessions nor idolizes material things. It views material prosperity as a good gift from God to be enjoyed unashamedly and to be shared generously. It liberates us from the agony of being consumed by wealth, having placed all our material concern in the loving care of our heavenly Father. By submitting to the lordship of Christ, we find freedom to live untroubled by the world's materialism and we find joy to help those in great material need.

WHAT CHRISTIANS CAN DO

1. Learn to live simply

¹² John R. W. Stott, *The Christian and the Poor*, All Souls Papers.

Those who are affluent must radically and sacrificially adjust their lifestyle to the basic necessities of life to be able to share with those in need. 'Those of us who live in affluent circumstances accept our duty to develop a simple lifestyle in order to contribute to both relief and evangelism,' so states the Lausanne Covenant. Or as aptly stated: 'Live simply so that others may simply live.' It means saying 'no' to many non-essential things being advertised on the consumer market, not because we consider those things as essentially evil, but because we want to be good stewards, generous and kind to the poor.

Simplicity results from godly contentment. To be content is to be satisfied with the basic *needs* of life. It rejects waste and clutter. It enjoys the good things of creation but is not greedy and covetous of them. 'It wants to be free of distraction, in order to love and serve God and others.'

'... we resolve to renounce waste and oppose extravagance in personal living, clothing and housing, travel and church buildings. We also accept p. 131 the distinction between necessities and luxuries, creative hobbies and empty status symbols, modesty and vanity, occasional celebrations and normal routine, and between service of God and slavery to fashion. Where to draw the line requires conscientious thought and decision by us, together with members of our family ...'¹³

Whenever developing a simple lifestyle, the temptation is to impose hard rules and regulations upon each other. In doing so we fall into the trap of legalism. But our commitment is not to simplicity but to Jesus. We want to be sacrificial because we want to follow Jesus' example of being compassionate to the poor. We will want to live simply to be obedient disciples of Christ in an age of great poverty and hunger.

2. Exercise our profession to serve the poor

Generally we have emphasized the need to consider our profession as our vocation, and to realize that as Christian doctors, engineers, businessmen, nurses, lawyers etc. we are to seize opportunities to share our faith with our colleagues and strive to wrestle with issues related to our profession and present the Christian alternative or perspective of them. This is a noble vision. But it is still lacking in terms of exercising our profession to serve the poor.

What we need today is more Christian doctors who will be willing to go to rural areas to offer medical assistance to the poor;¹⁴ Christian lawyers who will defend the powerless to secure justice for their cause; Christian businessmen who will not suck the blood of the poor for profit; Christian agriculturalists who will help the farmers improve their farming techniques; Christian politicians who will oppose corruption in government; Christian teachers who will brave the remote corners of the earth to engage in literacy programmes.

To exercise our profession in the service of the underprivileged is to serve others without expecting material gain in return.

It is to give up our 'small ambitions' and to be willing to be regarded as unsuccessful by the world's standard. For many Christian graduates this is where the struggle lies, simply because they have adopted a distorted view of success.

Many view success in terms of material prosperity and career advancement. On the contrary, the Christian must view success in terms of doing the will of God. It does not matter whether we receive p. 132 the world's applause and recognition as long as we are

¹³ *An Evangelical Commitment to Simple Lifestyle*, held at Hoddesdon, England 17–21 March 1980.

¹⁴ In the Philippines, while 70% of medical needs are in the rural areas, most physicians tend to flock to Metro Manila and urban centres simply because they have better paid clients' there. *Bulletin Today*, 5 December 1982.

faithful in serving the Lord whether it be in the remotest district. To serve the poor as a calling from God with the rest of our life is to be successful in the eyes of God.

3. Seek changes that promote justice on behalf of the poor

We have already pointed out that the situation of social injustice causes the poverty of many; that in our times, it has been established that extreme poverty and excessive wealth are perpetuated through unjust structures.¹⁵ The Lausanne Covenant again states, ‘All of us are shocked by the poverty of millions and disturbed by the *injustices which cause it ...*’ Unless there is some degree of structural change the rich will become richer while the poor will become poorer. I don’t suggest the possibility of any earthly utopia nor do I advocate violence as the only way to achieve a more just society. However, the Christian cannot remain a pessimist explaining the unjust order simply as part of the deterioration of the world. To stand by and let the status quo lie undisturbed is to take sides—the side of those in power who deprive the oppressed and powerless of justice. The Christians must get involved, expressing the lordship of Christ ‘in their political, social and economic commitment and their love for their neighbours by taking part in the political process.’ Christians must initiate reforms—in government and in society at large—to bring about changes that will promote fairness towards the poor. In practice, what can we do to contribute to changes in structures?

First, *pray for the rulers of the state* ([1 Tim. 2:1-2](#)). Pray that in the exercise of their power they may be just and kind in dealing with the poor and afflicted (see [Ps. 72:2, 4, 12-13](#)). If those in power are really established by God, our prayers can influence the rulers to function closely to their God-given authority.

Second, *become responsible citizens*—not just in paying our taxes and casting our votes, but also in actively supporting the state’s just and humane policies. It also involves firm insistence on our civil and political rights, demanding that the civil authorities function faithfully and honestly in the performance of their duties. For example we see Paul insisting on his civil rights as a Roman citizen. He insisted that the magistrates should escort him out of jail to demand his rights for just protection by the state ([Acts 16:35-40](#)).

Third, *those who have training and competence must be encouraged to get involved in politics* and to influence government legislation. As [p. 133](#) they do this, we must commit ourselves to backing them up fully and wholeheartedly especially by our prayer and encouragement.

Fourth, *shape public opinion through the available public forums* for example by writing articles in secular magazines or by presenting papers on our position to people of influence—politicians and the media. To do so, we should engage in study and research to be thoroughly conversant with the issues involved. This should include educating the Christian community regarding the prevailing sociopolitical realities to ‘clarify their vision and raise their expectations’.

Fifth, *co-operate with all men of goodwill*. God is Lord of all. So He is not limited to using Christians as His instruments of justice. In the Old Testament, the pagan ruler Cyrus was called to be God’s shepherd ([Is. 44:28](#)). Today, there are men and secular organizations who are equally concerned for the poor and for promoting a more just and humane society. We should be willing and prepared to work with them and to support them.

To work for change in structures will entail great risk. Part of our Christian calling, however, is to be willing to suffer, even to the extent of giving our life to promote justice and righteousness. ‘It is better, if it is God’s will, to suffer for doing good ...’ ([1 Peter 3:17](#)).

¹⁵ *Bring Forth Justice*, Waldron Scott, pp. 132-143.

The Evangelical Heritage of Australian Protestantism

David Parker

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(This thoroughly documented article by David Parker gives an historical perspective on Australian Evangelicalism up to the early eighties. It traces not only the strength and the growing influence of Evangelicalism in this continent but also honestly faces the question of polarisation among the Australian Christians as well as the need for greater theological creativity. The article also reveals that Australian evangelicalism is closer to its American counterpart than the Asian!)

—Ed.

Australia's oldest Protestant heritage is evangelical. It has persisted as an important force in the religious life of the country for almost two hundred years, even if it has not had the same prominent impact that the 'Born Again' movement and revivalism in general has had in U.S.A.¹ There have been periods, however, when the evangelical strength has been considerable and its influence widespread.² The Graham Crusade of 1959 was perhaps the most notable of these occasions.³

However this was not an isolated occasion; around the turn of the century, for example, the visits of Rev. G. Grubb and evangelists R. A. Torrey, J. W. Chapman and C. M. Alexander aroused wide interest and created a deep and lasting impression.⁴

I. THE EXTENT OF EVANGELICALISM IN AUSTRALIA

Evangelicalism in Australia, as in other countries, flourishes within the Protestant denominations and also in a large number of para-church or inter-denominational agencies. P. 135

¹ R. Quebedeaux, *The Worldly Evangelicals* (New York, Harper and Row, 1978), 3f. *Newsweek*, June 20, 1970, 42-47.

² J. E. Orr, *Evangelical Awakenings in the South Seas* (Minneapolis, Bethany, 1976), chs. 8, 15, 20, 21.

³ C. P. Skinner, 'Australia's 1959 Awakening', *The Australian Evangelical*, vol 5 no 2, Nov-Dec 1977, 7-9. *Current Affairs Bulletin*, June 1959, 'Billy Graham in Australia'. S. B. Babbage and I. Siggins, *Light Beneath the Cross* (Kingswood, The World's Work, 1960), 2f. A. Nichols and W. Olsen, *Crusading Down Under* (Minneapolis, World Wide Publications), 1970, 6.

⁴ R. E. C. Millard, *What God hath Wrought* (London, E. Marlborough, 1891 (?)) C. P. Skinner, 'Giants in the Land', a 10-part series beginning in *The Australian Evangelical*, vol 2 no 4, Jan 1975, 9.

Denominational Evangelicalism

Australia's colonization coincided with the development of the evangelical revival in the United Kingdom, so that it was not surprising to find that as the other denominations began to work alongside the Church of England in Australia, the evangelical tradition should be well represented among them as well. The colonies did not, however, benefit to any extent from the rapidly developing missionary movement, for being British colonies, they did not qualify as non-Christian countries!

By the end of the first century of settlement, the British churches had all been firmly established in Australia, complete with many of the characteristic features of religious life at home.⁵ The evangelical Protestant interpretation of the Faith was the norm for the nonconformist churches, and the evangelical party of the Church of England was to the fore in Sydney and Melbourne.⁶

It seemed that the pattern was set for the future. The Baptists, for example, were drawing heavily on the graduates of C. H. Spurgeon's Pastors' College for ministers and evangelists, and Methodist evangelists such as Rev. W. G. Taylor swept through the country in the spirit of their founder.⁷ As if to clinch it all, the Presbyterians in Victoria successfully opposed one of their number, Rev. Charles Strong,⁸ whose attitude to the traditional views of salvation and the Bible/ science issue in particular caused offence. His 'Australian Church' commenced in 1885 with a flourish, and survived until 1957.

But, as Willis B. Glover points out in his study of English nonconformity,⁹ by 1895 a change had come over the British evangelicals as a result of the virtually complete acceptance by scholars of the new type of interpretation of Scripture known as 'the higher criticism' which for the first time applied rigorous historical and critical methods [p. 136](#) to the study of the Bible.¹⁰ Although it was not accompanied at that time by any serious alterations to the received doctrines, as had been the case on the Continent where the new discipline had originated, higher criticism with its emphasis upon the human origins of the Bible and its abandonment of the concept of biblical inerrancy did mean a new approach to Scripture. It paved the way for a critical approach to Protestant doctrine, which was to have increasing impact as time passed.¹¹

⁵ R. W. Dale, *Impressions of Australia* (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1889), 217. There is no comprehensive history of the church in Australia available. Each denomination has its own series of histories for each state or regional area. *The Australian Encyclopaedia* entries for each denomination provide a concise summary of their development. K. S. Latourette, *Christianity in a Revolutionary Age* (Exeter, Paternoster, 1970), vol 3, ch. XIII, and vol 5, ch. VI, provides one of the few surveys available.

⁶ A. de Q. Robin, *op. cit.* M. L. Loane, *Hewn from the Rock* (Sydney, AIO, 1976). regards the bishopric of W. G. Broughton with his Tractarian sympathies as an atypical interlude in the evangelical heritage of Sydney diocese (54–65, 141).

⁷ C. P. Skinner, *The Australian Evangelical*, vol 3 no 4, Jan 1976, 22. R. S. C. Dingle, *Annals of Achievement* (Brisbane, Q.B.D., 1947), 81, 251.

⁸ *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (A.D.B.) vol 6, 'Strong, Charles'.

⁹ W. B. Glover, *Evangelical Nonconformists and Higher Criticism in the Nineteenth Century* (London, Independent Press, 1954), 286.

¹⁰ J. D. Douglas, (ed.) *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church* (N.I.D.C.C.) (Exeter, Paternoster, 1978 2nd ed.), 469.

¹¹ S. L. Greenslade (ed.) *The Cambridge History of the Bible: The West from Reformation to the Present Day* (Cambridge, University Press, 1963), 294–338. R. J. Coleman, *Issues of Theological Conflict* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1972).

In the U.S.A. in particular, there was considerable resistance to higher criticism. The implications for doctrine were more apparent in U.S.A., so that there was also resistance to doctrinal liberalism or 'modernism'. Taking their name from a series of booklets called 'The Fundamentals' which defended the basis of traditional Protestant teaching, conservatives in U.S.A. came to be known as 'fundamentalists'. The term 'conservative evangelical' was also sometimes used in the United Kingdom.¹²

It was during the 1920s that the fundamentalist-modernist controversies rocked the American churches, resulting in divisions in denominations, and the emergence of a new conservative movement, complete with churches, training schools, and missionary agencies.

By mid-century, the extreme or militant wing of this movement had, in its zeal in contending for the faith, gained for itself an image of belligerency, obscurantism and separatism. This produced a reaction from moderates who wished to retain the conservative theology, but at the same time to be 'intellectually respectable, socially concerned and co-operative in spirit'.¹³ This renewal movement, known at first as 'Neo-evangelicalism' and then later as 'evangelicalism' which shares many of the same characteristics as its British counterpart, conservative p. 137 evangelicalism, has developed strongly in the three decades since, and sees itself as heir to the heritage of the original 'fundamentalists' and the nineteenth century evangelicals.¹⁴ Today it is a major force on the American religious scene.

The separatist fundamentalist group has also continued to flourish, so that as E. Jorstad¹⁵ puts it, there are 'two on the right', both of which have made a mark on U.S. religion, politics and social life, as the events surrounding the election of Presidents Carter and Reagan illustrate.

In Australia, the conservative reaction to higher criticism and modernism was not so spectacular, with only a few cases of overt controversy on record. The case involving the distinguished scholar, Dr. Samuel Angus of St. Andrew's (Presbyterian) Theological Hall, Sydney was undoubtedly the most notable.¹⁶ Australian religion, in general, has been

¹² Readily available references to the emergence of 'Fundamentalism' include: J. I. Packer, *Fundamentalism and the Word of God* (London, IVF, 1958), ch2; and especially *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (15th Ed.) 'Fundamentalist and Evangelical Churches', See also the bibliography supplied with the Enc. Brit. article by a leading authority on the subject. It should be noted that the terms 'fundamentalism' and 'evangelicalism' may be used in both a broad inclusive manner, in which case they are nearly synonymous but too vague to be helpful, and in a restricted specific manner, in which case they refer to two distinct sections of contemporary conservative Protestantism unless reference is being made to the period of the 1920s when the term 'fundamentalist' was first used. The term 'evangelistic' refers to the activity of evangelism.

¹³ NIDCC, 396.

¹⁴ For a contemporary analysis, see D. F. Wells and J. D. Woodbridge, *The Evangelicals* (2nd ed.) (Grand Rapids, Baker, 1977). The present author's unpublished M.A. thesis (University of Queensland, 1978) *Revelation and Scripture in Neoevangelical Theology*; analyses this movement's claim to an identity separate from that of fundamentalism.

¹⁵ E. Jorstad, 'Two on the Right: a comparative look at Fundamentalism and New Evangelicalism', *The Lutheran Quarterly*, May 23, 19 107-117, and E. Jotstad, *The Politics of Doomsday; Fundamentalists of the Far Right* (Nashville, Abingdon, 1970). For an insider's view see G. W. Dollar, *A History of Fundamentalism in America* (Greenville, Bob Jones University Press, 1973).

¹⁶ ADB vol 7, 'Angus, Samuel (1881-1943)'. A. Dougan, *A Backward Glance at the Angus Affair* (Sydney, Wentworth Books, 1971). Mr. Parer, *Australia's Last Heresy Hunt: Samuel Angus* (Sydney, Wentworth Books, 1971).

largely conservative so that there were few examples of a strong and widely influential modernist school against which 'fundamentalists' could react.

However, significant sections of Australian Protestantism have retained a conservative theology, and there exist in all the main Protestant denominations considerable numbers of evangelicals, many of whom have formed organizations such as the Westminster Fellowship within the Presbyterian church and the trans-denominational Evangelical Alliance.¹⁷

The most obvious example of a sizeable and influential conservative evangelical group within these denominations is the evangelical wing of the Church of England. Its main concentration is in Sydney but it is strongly represented elsewhere as well. It is in this group that the p. 138 concept of the evangelical heritage of Australian Christianity is preserved most conspicuously. Archbishop Marcus Loane's 1976 Moorhouse Lectures (published as *Hewn from the Rock*: AIO, 1976) trace the development from the first chaplain to 1958 from this perspective.

Denominational evangelicals have mostly operated in a rather low key manner, but the creation of the Uniting Church in Australia (officially formed June 22, 1977) was one case where more concerted and spirited action took place. In the process of re-organization that occurred at this time, continuing Congregational and Presbyterian churches emerged which are more consistently evangelical than were their predecessors.

Besides these evangelicals within the main Protestant denominations, there are also, of course, smaller denominations which are more or less solidly evangelical in theology, having been relatively unaffected by liberalising trends. These include the Baptist Churches, Churches of Christ, Reformed Church of Australia, Lutheran Church of Australia and the Christian (Open Plymouth) Brethren.

There are also counterparts in Australia to American fundamentalists. The most prominent examples are the independent Baptist churches which have been formed since the mid-1960s by missionaries coming from fundamentalist Baptist churches in U.S.A.¹⁸ There are also some other small American churches of Methodist and Presbyterian polity of comparatively recent origin, as well as independent churches and denominations of indigenous origin scattered throughout the country. Some of these are members of small associations such as the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches of Australia (FECA) and the Australasian Alliance of Bible Believing Christian Churches (AABBCC) which also come into the fundamentalist category, although few apart from the independent Baptists welcome the use of the term.¹⁹ p. 139

Para-church Evangelicalism

¹⁷ The Evangelical Alliance (NIDCC, 359) dates from 1846. It had wide influence in U.S.A and Europe during the 19th century and also existed in Australia at this time. (Robin, *op. cit.*, 139). Its present operations in all states of Australia and as a national body dates from the mid-1960s.

¹⁸ *New Life*, June 25, 1964. The independency of these churches makes it difficult to trace as a movement, but the paper, *Biblical Fundamentalist*, published in Brisbane which circulates widely throughout Australia reflects their position.

¹⁹ A good example of this reticence can be seen in Marcus Loane's remarks in commendation of the Billy Graham crusade in Nichols and Olson, *op. cit.*, 140f: "The word "fundamentalism" has been transferred from America to Great Britain and a deliberate attempt has been made to use this word in order to smear conservative evangelicals. They have been called Fundamentalists in order to imply that they represent something effervescent, obscurantist, anti-intellectual, and hostile to true learning. But this kind of misrepresentation in the long run will recoil on those who refuse to treat the views of conservative evangelicals with the calm and balanced consideration which should be the hallmark of the enlightened and progressive mind."

As well as these denominations and churches, evangelicalism and fundamentalism are expressed in a large number of inter-denominational para-church agencies. Some of these existed prior to the twentieth century, but many are more recent in their origin. The movement as a whole has taken on greater ideological cohesiveness and distinctiveness since ca. 1920 in the context of evangelical-liberal theological differences.²⁰

There are a large number of these agencies in Australia, particularly in view of the relatively small place organized religion has had within the community during this period. The Evangelical Alliance *Directory of Missions* (3rd edition, 1978) alone lists some 91 organizations and a further 25 Bible and theological colleges, of which at least 80% could be regarded as evangelical. These agencies embrace virtually all of the fields of their overseas counterparts, including missions, evangelism, clergy training, Bible teaching, professional interest groups, learned disciplines, media, welfare and political lobbying.

Some of these agencies are grouped into voluntary association for the development of common interests, but they have no legislative power over members all of which have arisen spontaneously and operate independently of each other, yet with a high degree of unity of purpose and spirit.

Most of these agencies are functional groups, having as their objective evangelism, welfare work, the promotion of the deeper spiritual life or such like. They seek personnel and support from all of the Protestant denominations. There is therefore relatively little emphasis placed upon controversial doctrinal matters, with the result that a high degree of co-operation is possible on the basis of similar conservative evangelical doctrinal statements which they adopt.

II. BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

This common doctrinal basis sums up the essential points of the theology of the Protestant Reformation as it was re-emphasized in the subsequent movements such as English Puritanism, Continental P. 140 Pietism and the Evangelical Revival. A typical exposition²¹ of the main distinguishing features of evangelicalism may be found in an article in the widely circulating evangelical newspaper, *New Life* (Sept. 12, 1968). The author has set out these features in five points.

Leading the list is the view of Scripture which sees it as the inspired Word of God through which God's will is made known. It also sees it as the supreme and sufficient authority and source of Christian doctrine and guide for Christian practice.

Then follow the doctrines concerning Jesus Christ—his deity, sinlessness, saving death, resurrection, ascension and his expected glorious return to the earth. The third characteristic belief is the salvation of the individual believer through the 'new birth' or spiritual renewal by the work of the Holy Spirit and the incorporation thereby of such believers into the one invisible true church.

The final two distinguishing features mentioned relate to the believer's evangelistic concern for other people that they might also share the new birth and the fact that his life should be godly, humble and faithful.

Such an understanding of evangelicalism would find wide acceptance from a cross-section of Australian evangelicals. But these principles represent the distinctives held in

²⁰ *E.g.*, Evangelical Missionary Alliance; South Pacific Association of Bible Colleges.

²¹ Other readily available examples are, Packer, *op. cit.*, J. R. W. Stott, *Basic Christianity* (London, IVF, 1958) and, *Christ the Controversialist* (London, IVF, 1970); Billy Graham, *How to be Born Again* (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1977). For the historical background, see K. S. Latourette, *A History of Christianity* (New York, Harper and Row, 1953), 813f, 894–7, 1022f.

common by all. Beyond this there are several doctrinal options, not all of them mutually exclusive.

Represented in Australia are the historic doctrinal systems embraced by the major streams of Protestantism, *viz.*, Calvinist or Reformed, Anglican, Arminian/Holiness, Lutheran and Baptist.

Also strongly represented are the emphasis upon the deeper spiritual life as taught at the 'Keswick' conventions held annually in many parts of the country, millenarianism, and the charismatic movement/ pentecostalism.

Fundamentalist tendencies in these doctrinal options may be distinguished by their stress on such themes as the inerrancy and literal interpretation of Scripture, the extremely high priority placed on 'soul-winning' evangelism, dispensationalism,²² and the need for Bible-believing Christians and churches to separate from and militantly denounce unorthodox, non-biblical beliefs. p. 141

III. FACTORS AFFECTING DEVELOPMENT OF EVANGELICALISM IN AUSTRALIA

During the nineteenth century, Australian Protestantism was able to build upon its evangelical birthright by drawing upon the traditions of British Protestantism which at that time was enjoying a period of remarkable vitality.

These British influences were supplemented by American influences, especially over the last century, and increasingly so in recent decades. Even before U.S.A. emerged onto the world political scene, it was making an impact upon evangelicalism world-wide, and by mid-century had taken the lead from Britain as the epi-centre of the movement.

These influences were mediated through the circulation of literature, the visits of Australians abroad for travel, conference and study, and especially in the visits of British and American preachers and leaders to this country. The media, especially T.V., has been increasingly influential in disseminating information in more recent times. However, it should not be overlooked that at the end of the nineteenth century there was enough informed interest in Australia concerning D. L. Moody's evangelistic work in U.S.A. and U.K. to produce an invitation for him to visit Australia.²³ He was unable to come, but his assistant, R. A. Torrey, a noted contender for the evangelical faith, and his song-leader, Charles Alexander, conducted a highly successful tour instead, and thus set the pattern for regular visits by overseas evangelists which has continued to the present.

Similarly the Bible training institutes set up under the inspiration of Moody at Chicago²⁴ and Glasgow were well enough known at this time to attract a significant number of Australian students. More than one similar agency in Australia was modelled on these institutions, which has in turn led to a virile Bible college movement with an aggregate alumni in excess of eight thousand persons.²⁵

²² Dispensationalism (NIDCC, 303) of which J. N. Darby (1800-1882), an early Plymouth Brethren teacher, was the main originator, is a variety of premillennialism which teaches that history is divided into several eras or dispensations in which God's mode of dealing with man differs. The system was popularised by the *Scofield Reference Bible* (OUP).

²³ C. R. Skinner, 'Giants in the Land', *The Australian Evangelical* vol 2 no 4, Jan 1975, 9.

²⁴ S. A. Witmer, *The Bible College Story: Education with Dimension* (Wheaton, Accrediting Assoc. of Bible Colleges, 1970), 35-7.

²⁵ *On Being*, Nov 1980, 27-42. D. Parker, 'The Bible College Movement in Australia', paper read at 9th Conference of the South Pacific Assoc. of Bible Colleges, August, 1980.

In the later period, revivals of interest that occurred overseas in Pentecostalism, Fundamentalism and Calvinism were effectively transmitted to Australia by medium of these channels of influence and have become important elements in the Australian evangelical spectrum. p. 142

A further factor in favour of the development of evangelicalism in Australia is the practical and Biblical nature of its beliefs and practices, which suit the needs and abilities of untrained lay-people. The literal method of Biblical interpretation requires little scholarship, and, in good popular Protestant style, places a premium on the divinely-given right and ability of believers to read and understand Scriptures for themselves. The type of worship used which places emphasis upon preaching and simple gospel songs is easily appreciated, while the doctrinal and ethical tenets of the faith are readily applied to the individual's daily life without the need for a sophisticated knowledge of the intricacies of sociology, politics and the like.

There are a number of factors, however, which have limited the impact of evangelicalism as a recognizable movement in Australian public life. It will be recognized that some of them also relate to other forms of Christianity, but notice will be taken of their implications for evangelicalism in particular.

It has often been remarked that the role of the church in the days of the penal colony of New South Wales as part of the Establishment has had a marked influence upon its later image and its reception by the community. The fact that the early chaplains were evangelicals, and one in particular, Reverend Samuel Marsden, was notorious for his work as a magistrate, did not help to create a good impression for evangelical Protestantism. Reverend John Dunmore Lang's stormy career in public life also did little to help the cause. Whatever may have been the virtues of its earliest clergy and membership, Australia's original evangelical heritage did not succeed in producing anything like a powerful religious movement.

One of the legacies of these pioneering days is the 'moral policeman' image of the church and Protestantism in particular.²⁶ It has emerged at various times since, especially at the end of the nineteenth century in the period of 'wowsersism' and again a century later in the Festival of Light.²⁷ While not appreciated by sections of the Australian community, this insistence upon a correlation between beliefs and behaviour and the need for public morality is a characteristic trait of evangelicalism. It was also apparent in Britain in the hey-day of evangelicalism in the form of the Non Conformist Conscience' and was an understandable response of the puritan p. 143 element in evangelicalism to what it saw as a serious departure of the nation's ethical standards from the divinely-given order.²⁸

A further factor that worked against the influence of evangelicalism was the secularism and pluralism of the Australian religious settlement, worked out in the period from Governor Bourke's Church Act (1836) through to the establishment of free and secular education in the 1870s. It was essentially a pragmatic decision, based on the peculiar conditions of the colonies where, as Bourke perceived, the mixture of religious beliefs in the colony meant there could be no possibility of favouring one denomination

²⁶ e.g., J. Stebbins, *Australian Christianity* (Canberra, The Gospel in Australia File, Reading Guide No 3, Zadok Centre, 1980), 2.

²⁷ F. Crowley (ed) *A New History of Australia* (Melbourne, Wm. Heinemann, 1974.), 211f. *Current Affairs Bulletin*, Feb 1974, vol 50 no. 9, 13-19.

²⁸ E. A. Payne, *The Free Church Tradition in the Life of England* (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1965), 112-6.

over another as had been the case in England and Scotland.²⁹ In the absence of denominational co-operation, the only practical alternative was to remove formal institutional religious matters from public life and relegate them to the domestic concerns of the churches themselves. This procedure was also, of course, in line with the wishes of the advocates of 'moral enlightenment', the 'chief secular creed of the play (which) tended to be egalitarian, and hostile to privilege and pretension, especially of the clergy'.³⁰

This secularizing process had profound effects for religious developments in Australia. The policy of secular education effectively removed serious consideration of religious questions from the curricula of every level of schooling, except the private religious school sector.³¹ Thus, generations of government school and university students were brought up to assume that religious questions were to be segregated from ordinary affairs.

This ran counter to the evangelical's Bible-centred approach to life, making him justifiably suspicious of the values inculcated by the educational system. It helped to create the separatist or ghettomentalities whereby it was assumed that it was necessary to separate oneself from the secular world in order to find opportunity to develop one's faith and practice and to do so in a proper biblical manner. p. 144

During recent decades it has been possible to relax the secularist nature of education because of the increased spirit of co-operation on the part of the churches, and because of the development of the non-dogmatic 'studies in religion' approach to religious education. However, neither of these factors is welcomed by fundamentalists since they perceive them to involve serious threats to the purity of their doctrine and practice. They have responded by beginning to develop their own educational system in which an attempt is made to relate the curricula to biblical teaching and perspectives as explicitly as possible. One of the disciplines affected most conspicuously in this regard is science, in which creationism is taught as a valid interpretation of the origins of the world and man.³²

The extension of education in recent decades has meant that evangelicals, in common with other groups, have increasingly been in a position to avail themselves of higher education and so to broaden their horizons. One result of this development is that the traditional isolation of evangelicalism from the wider affairs of culture has begun to break down. However, this poses the evangelical with a new and complex range of questions as he seeks to discern his attitude towards issues which previously were of no great concern to him. The 'Zadok Centre', a national research and resource centre established at Canberra in 1977 by the Scripture Union and Australian Fellowship of Evangelical Students (A.F.E.S., formerly I.V.F.), and the independent periodical, *On Being*, are examples of positive response to this new situation.³³

²⁹ J. S. Gregory, *Church and State* (Melbourne, Cassell, 1973), 14ff. G. L. Buxton, in Crowley, *op. cit.*, 209f.

³⁰ M. Roe, in Crowley, *op. cit.*, 112. See also 162.

³¹ The theological training of candidates for the ministry was particularly affected by the exclusion of divinity studies from the universities. An attempt to reverse this situation as late as 1910 at Melbourne University was unsuccessful and resulted instead in the establishment of a separate body, The Melbourne College of Divinity, whose governing body is made up of representatives of the churches. See A. de Q. Robin, 'Theology and Theological Training in Australia: an Outline Historical Survey' (*Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, vol 54 Pt 4, Dec 1968, 362ff).

³² The Creation Science Association of Australia with its headquarters in Brisbane is the leading exponent of this view in Australia. Its views are similar to those expressed in J. C. Whitcomb and H. M. Morris, *The Genesis Flood* (Grand Rapids, Baker, 1961). C.S.A.'s first book, *Man: Ape or Image—the Christian's Dilemma*, by Prof. J. Rendle Short of the University of Queensland, was published in 1980.

³³ J. & M. Prince, *Tuned in to Change* (Sydney, Scripture Union, 1979), 234.

Another factor arising out of the nineteenth century religious settlement which had its effect upon evangelicals was the decision to restrict religious instruction in schools to general religious and moral teaching and the use of Bible lessons, rather than permitting the use of sectarian or denominational material (except for that extra-curricular period of instruction conducted by visiting clergy). As both the Anglican Bishop Broughton, and the Catholic Bishop Polding saw at the time, this would be detrimental to the efficient propagation of denominational tenets.³⁴ p. 145

Evangelicals were content with the move because the practice of using biblical material alone seemed to be in harmony with their view of the authority and sufficiency of Scripture, an assessment which had its share of practical wisdom. However, the combined effect of the elementary, neutral nature of the Bible teaching, and the exclusion of religious topics from the educational process meant that the evangelical's need for in-depth doctrinal study of the Bible and its relation to fundamental values was as difficult to achieve under the system as was the propagation of Anglican or Catholic dogmatic theology.

It was not surprising then that evangelicals, instead of developing a strong doctrinal profile, developed their strength in other areas such as puritan morals (in which they could find support from a wider section of the community) and pietistic practice. The long term effect of this development was that when occasion presented itself, even evangelicals were ill-equipped to sustain an intellectually effective debate with the advocates of higher criticism and liberal theology. Instead, they rested their case largely on the merits of traditional Bible teaching, evangelism and the deeper spiritual life, and so failed to meet the challenge on its own grounds.³⁵

This tendency was a reflection of the influence of the British type of evangelicalism. W. B. Glover has pointed out that in the nineteenth century when higher criticism was first being debated, there was no strong school of conservative theology in Britain as there was in the Princeton Theological Seminary in U.S.A. Thus there was a marked absence of theological debate in Britain, although there was some resistance to higher criticism.

British evangelicalism was in fact characterized in large measure by a non-intellectual pietistic Christianity, epitomized in the 'Keswick' deeper life convention, which was influential in Australia at the early stage of the closing decades of the nineteenth century.³⁶

It is noteworthy that the controversial reactions against the few outstanding examples of liberalism in Australia tended to be linked p. 146 with either the American conservatives (such as the Calvinists from Princeton Theological Seminary, and later, its conservative rival, Westminster Theological Seminary, or the Fundamentalists) or the few British controversialists (such as C. H. Spurgeon and the I.V.F. movement). The normal British evangelicalism, which was also largely reproduced in Australia, while holding the same doctrinal views, was not given to controversy. While personality and circumstance

³⁴ Manning Clark, *A Short History of Australia* (Sydney, Tudor, 1969), 99f, 106–108, 153–9.

³⁵ See, for example, the response to the Angus Case as represented by *Was Jesus God? and other addresses* (Sydney, Life and Service Campaigns, 1934), the printed record of sermons preached in Sydney and Melbourne by Dr. W. G. Scroggie whose visit was intended to help counteract Angus's influence. A similar response may be found in the words of leading contemporary Baptist, Dr. C. J. Tinsley, who said, 'We shall not reach the masses ... by modernizing the Gospel by emasculating its doctrinal content. I believe it is going to be done by re-affirming ... the truths that have created the Church ... One of the most vital things to be re-affirmed is evangelism.' (A tract entitled, 'The Case for Evangelism', 5, 6).

³⁶ For an analysis of the 'legacy of Pietism' see D. G. Bloesch. *The Evangelical Renaissance* (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1973), 101–157.

had their part to play in this, due recognition must also be given to the introspective spirit of pietism which focused evangelical attention upon spiritual well-being rather than upon doctrinal and ecclesiastical disputation.

Another factor arising from the nineteenth century religious settlement which had important implications for evangelicalism was the decision to adopt a policy of religious pluralism, rather than the establishment of one religious denomination. Coupled with such factors as the legend of Australian 'mateship' and the pragmatic priorities dictated by the needs of pioneering the church in the difficult circumstances of a new and growing country like Australia, the policy of pluralism meant that it was difficult for a distinctive party within the church to claim any dominance or superiority for itself.

During the nineteenth century, the sectarian battles were fought on matters of denominational theology, resulting in intense rivalry across and even within denominations. Such behaviour further discredited the church in the eyes of its liberal critics, and tended to increase its alienation from any meaningful engagement in public life. This was particularly important during the latter part of the century when the challenges coming from the development of science and from political movements abroad were at their critical stage.³⁷ It meant that the church, in a badly divided and intellectually impoverished state, was in a poor position to cope with a major ideological assault. Accordingly, public support for institutional religion has shown a steady proportionate decline in Australia since the turn of the century, although the churches are vigorous, and growing in absolute terms.³⁸

The claims of evangelicalism, with its characteristic appeal for a serious commitment to an increasingly unpopular doctrinal position, were difficult to sustain in these circumstances. By contrast, in U.S.A., the revivalist tradition, long a part of the national heritage, was [p. 147](#) beginning to create a situation where it was as natural to be 'born again' as it was to be a 'good mate' in Australia.³⁹

It was not therefore until after World War I that the evangelical-liberal tension emerged as a major trans-denominational issue. By this time, rationalist principles had begun to have some effect upon theology, thus bringing the challenge *within* the churches. Further, in Australia, the pioneering stages of the churches were over and the institutional structure of the denominations had taken shape. Since the spread of the churches across the country had required centralized assistance and regulation, a strong denominational bureaucracy was in the process of emerging, leaving virtually the entire Christian population in communion with a small number of denominational hierarchies.

This created a situation where there was little scope for ecclesiastical independency or the division of denominations. This was in strong contrast to U.S.A. where a strong independent church movement grew up, favouring those like the Fundamentalists, who dissented from denominational trends.⁴⁰

With the institutional form of Christianity in Australia established, the churches could begin to turn their attention to other matters. With the gradual worldwide emergence of ecumenism, there was a lessening of sectarian rivalry, although it was a long process

³⁷ Walter Phillips, 'The Defence of Christian Belief in Australia, 1875–1914: The Responses to Evolution and Higher Criticism', *Journal of Religious History*, vol 9 (1976–7), 402–423.

³⁸ J. Harrison, 'The Declining Influence of Religion in Australia', *The History Teacher*, Oct 1975, 14–27.

³⁹ W. G. McLoughlin, *Modern Revivalism: Charles Grandison Finney to Billy Graham* (New York, Ronald Press, 1959).

⁴⁰ H. Lindsell, in W. C. Harr, *Frontiers of the Christian World Mission since 1938* (New York, Harper Bros., 1962), 198–9.

before any inter-church union schemes came to fruition.⁴¹ This co-operative spirit was noticeable within the denominations also as mergers of Methodist and of Presbyterian bodies took place, and there developed a federal framework for each denomination across state boundaries.⁴²

The co-operative spirit was also evident in the para-church area, with the rapid development of the network of organizations mentioned earlier in this paper.

The growth of ecumenism in the churches meant that it was less appropriate for evangelicals to seek their own independent path. They p. 148 needed to find a way of retaining their own identity, and to do so without offending the spirit of good will that had arisen.

For fundamentalists who stood outside the churches, or who cared little for the approval of the churches, this was no problem. They simply proceeded to propagate their own views and to condemn those whom they considered had departed from biblical beliefs. However, for all their activity they registered no dramatic gains in overall numerical strength.

It was more difficult for those within the church to maintain the fine balance that was needed. Their moderate policy was not viewed with approval by those of more extreme views, who by this time were receiving the benefit of the influence of the revival of fundamentalism abroad.

Under this influence, Australian fundamentalism has made gradual gains, especially in the last decade. Its numerical and organizational strength is indicated by two events which took place in 1980. In May, one group sponsored the visit of the fiery American fundamentalist, Dr. Carl McIntire, for a conference and protests on the occasion of the World Council of Churches Commission on World Mission and Evangelism Congress in Melbourne.⁴³ In November, another group sponsored a National Congress of Fundamentalists in Sydney at which the chief speaker was the equally well known Northern Irishman, Rev. Ian Paisley.

Conservative evangelicals were misunderstood also by their more liberal fellow-churchmen who were anxious to move forward to take advantage of developments in recent biblical and theological scholarship.

The net result has been in recent years an increased polarization between evangelicals and fundamentalists in Australia. The situation is increasingly similar to that of U.S.A. where there is a clear line of demarcation between these groups, and less like that of U.K. where the differences are more muted.

IV. SIGNIFICANCE

⁴¹ Early moves for the union of Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational churches took place in the early 1920s, but were unsuccessful. G. Yule, 'Approaches to Church Union in Australia,' in D. M. Taylor (ed) *We Were Brought Together* (Sydney, A.C.C., 1960), 151-5.

⁴² The Methodist Church of Australasia composed of state conferences and the results of mergers of earlier Methodist bodies such as the Wesleyans, Primitive Methodists and Bible Christians was established in 1902. Similarly, the Presbyterian Church of Australia was formed in 1901. The Baptist Union of Australia was formed in 1926 and Lutheran Union was finally achieved after lengthy negotiations in 1966.

⁴³ *New Life*, May 22, 1980. This type of polemic activity was typical of McIntire who formed the International Council of Christian Churches in Amsterdam in 1948 as a fundamentalist alternative to the World Council of Churches which was being formed there at the same time. L. Gasper, *The Fundamentalist Movement* (The Hague, Mouton, 1963), 44.

Absolute figures for the strength of evangelicalism and fundamentalism in Australia are not available, but the evidence supplied by an [P. 149](#) examination of the various institutions referred to in this paper suggests that the conservative wing of Protestantism constitutes a vigorous and significant element in Australia's religious life.

Mention can be made almost at random of other indicators. The Anglican evangelicals conducted a second National Evangelical Anglican Congress (N.E.A.C.) in Melbourne in May 1981 on a similar basis to a previous congress and a successful series in Britain.⁴⁴ An evangelistic and training enterprise for young people, Explo 80, held in Brisbane in May 1980, drew support from all major Protestant churches and attracted several thousand young people from all states of Australia. It will be repeated in other states in later years. Evangelical Bible and theological colleges report large enrolments, while the Evangelical Alliance Relief Fund (TEAR Fund) is enjoying rapidly increasing support

Australian religion is not noted for a strong and creative intellectual tradition. But in a survey of theology produced in Australia, Dr. J. Davis McCaughey noted that 'one exception which comes to mind is the strength of conservative evangelical scholarship'.⁴⁵

Along with other sections of the church, evangelicalism is now virtually self-sufficient in its leadership, but there is still need to draw upon overseas resources for post-graduate and other specialized training. The development of training facilities in Australia, such as the Pacific College of Graduate Studies, and the Bible colleges, will further the indigenization process. Appreciation of broader intellectual and cultural pursuits appears to have some potential with the establishment of agencies such as the Zadok Centre where there are some early signs of a creative application of conservative theology to Australian conditions. It remains to be seen, however, what will become of the distinctive evangelical principles in this quest, since they seem to have received only minimal attention to date.

Evangelicalism, however, is still influenced by its pietistic tradition which can inhibit rational reflection on intellectual issues and social concern adequate to meet the needs of complex modern society when its individualistic and spiritual distinctives are unduly emphasized.

However, developments in some key indicators, such as the [p. 150](#) Keswick and Bible college movements, suggest a decay of this influence is taking place.⁴⁶ It is not clear however if this is due to the creative development of a theology that is relevant to the late twentieth century, or simply to the exhaustion of traditional spirituality in an environment of secularism, hedonism and materialism.

Evangelicalism in common with other branches of the church has largely been a religion for the middle class, and has had little success in relating itself positively to such areas of concern as civil rights, industrial relations, urbanization and aboriginal affairs. Some sections, however, have had an appeal to those with higher education (the Australian Fellowship of Evangelical Students, formerly I.V.F.), while many of the churches established for ethnic groups are decidedly conservative. In contrast, some agencies which have had success among counter-culture groups, such as the House of

⁴⁴ *New Life*, Oct 23, 1980. The report of the first conference held in May 1971 was edited by L. R. Shilton, *New Obedience* (Sydney ANZEA, 1971). British N.E.A.C. congress were held at Keele (1967) and Nottingham (1977). See J. Capon, *Evangelicals Tomorrow* (Glasgow, Collins, 1977).

⁴⁵ J. Davis, McCaughey, 'The State of Theology in Australia', *Crux*, Aug-Sept 1968, 14. He was referring particularly to Dr. L. L. Morris, at that time Principal of Ridley College, Melbourne.

⁴⁶ *The Australian Evangelical*, vol 1 no 5, [Mar 1974](#), 9. *Church Scene*, Nov 17, 1977, 17-21.

Freedom in Brisbane and the Truth and Liberation Concern, have had questions raised about some aspects of their evangelical orthodoxy.⁴⁷

CONCLUSION

In an analysis of the reasons for the marked decline in the main-line churches in U.S.A. and the simultaneous sharp growth in conservative churches, Dean Kelley has pointed out that decline in social strength of churches is related to their effectiveness in meeting the unique religious needs of their members. He suggests that religion is a necessary aspect of human life because it provides ultimate meaning. He argues, therefore, that a religion will be strong if it makes life meaningful for its members by combining powerful concepts with high demands of commitment, discipline and missionary zeal.

Kelley also points out that this kind of strong religion is consequently strict, requiring total belief in the correctness of its tenets, conformity to its controls and fanaticism in propagating its beliefs.

In a secular age, the temptation a church faces is to make itself more relevant to the social and political needs of the community and to tone down its strictness. However, such leniency does not produce growth, but, by misunderstanding the function of religion, leads to social weakness and decline.⁴⁸

On the basis of this analysis, fundamentalist churches in Australia p. 151 can be expected to have potential for growth, because they, like their American counterparts, score high points in the way they meet the religious needs of their constituency by imposing high demands of loyalty, conformity and zeal upon them.

Because of their unwillingness to stand out sharply from aspects of the prevailing religious environment, evangelicals are not likely to score so well. This of course does not preclude success in their aim of the development of an alternative form of high commitment faith which is at the same time appropriate to the late twentieth century Australian religious context, but it will require the development of a greater degree of separate identity than presently exists.

In relation to this, the decline of institutional Christianity in Australia, as indicated by census and public opinion polls,⁴⁹ could well have a beneficial effect for evangelicalism, in that the trend to elimination of nominal religious adherence will favour the voluntary principle, and magnify the need for thoughtful personal commitment. Evangelicalism can meet this situation if it continues to mature through internal growth and if it continues to make the most of the influence of the increasingly stable and confident international evangelical movement.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ *New Life*, June 5, 1980 and subsequent correspondence.

⁴⁸ D. M. Kelley, *Why Conservative Churches are Growing* (2nd ed.) (New York, Harper and Row, 1977) especially chs. 3-5, 8 and p.84.

⁴⁹ *The Bulletin*, April 29, 1980.

⁵⁰ Examples of this development are clearly seen in three international evangelical congresses held in Berlin (1966) Lausanne (1974) and Pattaya (Thailand) (1980) at which Australia was well represented. Bishop A. J. Dain of Sydney took a leading role in the second of these. A symposium on the Lausanne Covenant, *The New Face of Evangelicalism* (edited by C. R. Padilla, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1976) indicates the main directions of this development. For a description of Berlin and Lausanne, see John Pollock, *Billy Graham, Evangelist to the World* (Sydney, Harper and Row, 1979), chs. 15, 16 and A. Johnston, *The Battle for World Evangelism* (Wheaton, Tyndale 1978) chs. 5, 7, 8.

Blaikie's sociological study reveals a clear line of demarcation between evangelicals and secularists in Australia.⁵¹ If fundamentalist denominations are taken into account as well, the cleavage is even more pronounced. Should evangelicals succeed in developing a more coherent and conspicuous position, the fundamentalist reaction will sharpen and a third mediating element will come into prominence, representing a more realistic expression of Australia's undoubted but largely unexamined evangelical heritage.

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Recapturing the Initiative in Theology in Africa

Tite Tiénou

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(We are grateful to the Chairman of Africa Update: 1986 for sending the conference material to ERT for publication. The following article by Tite Tiénou is one of the two major papers presented. (See Theological News Vol. 19 No. 1 for details of the event). Concerned with African Evangelical Theology, Tite Tiénou reflects, with a mature and constructive critique, the state of initiative of African Evangelical Theology, its effects and remedies. The exhortation 'the church must become the centre of theological instruction and discussion' will find spontaneous echo in any third world situation.)

Ed.

INTRODUCTION

The primary objective of this paper is to help evangelicals understand the current status of theology in Africa and its implications to fulfilling the Great Commission, and to suggest correctives which are needed.

In the 1978 Byang Kato Memorial Lectures I delivered at Igbaja Theological Seminary in Nigeria, I raised a question which intrigued the committee. The context was one of attempting to map out an evangelical theological strategy in Africa. I asked then, how shall we, African evangelicals, recapture the initiative? As you can see, the title of the present essay suggests that the matter is not yet settled. Consequently, it shall be our purpose to answer the following three questions: How was the initiative lost? What have been the effects? and How can evangelicals recapture it?

HOW DID EVANGELICALS LOSE THE INITIATIVE?

⁵¹ N. W. H. Blaikie, *The Plight of the Australian Clergy* (Brisbane, University of Queensland Press, 1979) Indicated by charts on 67 and by summary remarks on 158 *et al.*

Many of us recall the second General Assembly of the Association of Evangelicals of Africa and Madagascar (held in 1973) as a turning point in evangelical theological development in the continent. Shaken from their slumber by the late Byang Kato, evangelical leaders and missionaries realized that African theology was being developed without them. They called for the establishment of graduate schools of theology. The Bangui Evangelical School of Theology and the Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology are a direct result of the 1973 evangelical consensus.

Actually, the very excitement at Limuru 1973 was, in many ways, an [p. 153](#) avowal of a certain malaise among evangelicals. As I recall, Kato did not have to do any convincing. The leaders knew that the lack of theology was one of the chief problems of African Christianity. Their resolution to create graduate schools of theology, an AEAM Theological Commission, and scholarship programmes was strikingly similar to actions of the All Africa Council of Churches (AACC). In that sense the AEAM 1973 General Assembly was both a recognition of a problem and a cry for help.

What is the situation thirteen years after the second General Assembly of the AEAM? There are at least four institutions which are the direct result of actions taken in 1973. The two graduate schools, the Theological Commission and the Accrediting Council for Theological Education in Africa are examples of evangelical theological initiatives since 1973. I am not a prophet of doom but, beyond the facade of each of these institutions, chaos and disintegration are ever present threats. Surely, evangelicals have not yet fully captured the initiative on the theological scene in Africa. How did that happen?

There are, of course, many possible answers to the question of how we got where we are. I would suggest the following two reasons as the most important causes of the loss of evangelical initiative in theology in Africa: the evangelical dilemma and fragmentation.

The evangelical dilemma in Africa can be best described with the words *proclamation not reflection*. Evangelicals generally perceive themselves as primarily *proclaimers* of the Word. In that sense, they are concerned with making the gospel kerygmatically universal. In their emphasis on gospel proclamation, evangelicals tend to neglect reflection and theological expertise. Sometimes reflection is even perceived as an adversary of zeal in gospel proclamation. The irony is that such a choice is, in itself, theological decision. So, in a paradoxical way, evangelicals in Africa (and elsewhere?) have a theology of no theology!

The second reason for the evangelical loss of initiative in theology is fragmentation. I am speaking here of denominational and doctrinal fragmentation which prevent us from *really* working together at a common theological agenda. Suspicion of ecumenical liberalism, outside influences, and inherent African realities all contribute to the fragmentation of evangelicals in Africa. The result is that many groups try to do alone some things which could best be done co-operatively. Even when we agree to co-operate, each group wants to do it on its own terms. That can only lead to disastrous results.

Harold Fuller kindly sent me the following quote of John S. Mbiti heard on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation network on May 26, [p. 154](#) 1985: 'The Christians in Africa have a faith but not a theology. Western missionaries agreed to contextualize Christianity in music and church decorations, but not in theology'. This reminds one of Mbiti's thesis in his article 'Theological Impotence and the Universality of the Church'. What Mbiti says of the Christians in Africa generally is especially true of evangelical Christians.

EFFECTS OF THE LOSS OF INITIATIVE

The *first* and most notable effect of the evangelical loss of initiative in theological development in Africa is that African theology is made without us. Observers attribute the

origin of the debate on African theology to a 1956 article in the *International Review of Missions* by Paul D. Fueter entitled 'Theological Education in Africa'. In the same year a group of Black French-speaking priests published their *Des Prêtres Noirs s'interrogent et suggèrent*. Do you know of a similar evangelical event dating back to 1956?

Even when we sample the recent literature on African theology, evangelicals are conspicuous by their absence. In 1984 Orbis Books published *Theology in Africa* by Kwesi Dickson. Orbis Books also published *The Origins and Development of African Theology* by G. H. Muzorewa in 1985. The year 1984 saw the release of *African Theologies: A Profile* by Justin S. Ukpogon (Gaba Publications). These are monographs. To the best of my knowledge, no African evangelical theologian has recently published a monograph.

I know that some of you are aware of *Biblical Christianity in Africa*, by Byang Kato (a 1985 release by Africa Christian Press). You would note that this is a reissuing of previously published articles.

Articles and other short essays continue to be written by evangelical authors in Africa. Mention should be made of O. Imasogie's 'The Church and Theological Ferment in Africa' published in *Evangelical Review of Theology* (Vol. 9, No. 4, Oct. 1985). This is a sequel to his *Guidelines for Christian Theology in Africa* (Africa Christian Press, 1983).

The lack of presence of African evangelical theologians in publication means that in the arena of public debate their voices cannot be heard. This is serious because ideas have a way of shaping history.

The *second* and more serious effect of the loss of evangelical initiative in theological development in Africa is the impact on evangelism, church growth and spiritual maturity. An observer puts it this way: 'Africa has the fastest growing church in the world, it may have the fastest declining church also!' The point being made is that p. 155 numerical growth far outpaces spiritual depth and maturity in African Christianity. In time, we will see decline in numerical church growth. This is already taking place. As you can see, theology and evangelism are not necessarily antithetical. Theology can sustain depth and zeal in Christians. An evangelical theology will have as its main aim spiritual maturity and Christlikeness (cf. [Ephesians 4:11-13](#)). And, if we believe D. J. Bosch, good theology is always missionary in nature (1984:15). A missionary theology in Africa will not refuse to face the various challenges presented by the current status of Christianity in Africa.

HOW CAN EVANGELICALS RECAPTURE THE INITIATIVE?

It may be providential that in the current development of theology in Africa, there is a gap between academic theology and popular theology. Adrian Hastings repeatedly calls attention to this fact. Academic theology is rather aimed at an international audience. In this category we find the writings of Mbiti, Pobee, Tshibangu, Sawyerr and Fashole-Luke; to name only a few. Popular theology is found in hymns, preaching and even counsel given by pastors and other spiritual leaders.

The providential fact is that evangelicals are numerous in popular theology. After all, many of us pride ourselves in being practitioners! The problem is that popular theology is not always grounded in Scripture. That is where academic theology may be of help. Evangelicals in Africa can recapture the initiative by experimenting with a third way which neither remains in scholastic discussions nor disdains real life issues. That is how evangelical theology will remain missionary.

Once we recapture the initiative in theology, will we then be content to congratulate ourselves? No! Our basic purpose is not just to be on the cutting edge. It is more comprehensive than competition with this or that group. Our basic motivation is obedience to our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. The Great Commission cannot be

considered fulfilled unless and until there is teaching and discipleship. This underscores the role of theology. I agree with Imasogie that ‘mission is much more comprehensive than bringing people to initial commitment of their lives to the Christ’ (1985:369).

I am conscious of the fact that I am addressing strategists and decision makers. The question you may be asking is: How can we do what you tell us needs to be done? Let me first remind you of the need that ‘the Church must become the centre of theological instruction and discussion’ (Imasogie 1985:369). With Imasogie I am suggesting that p. 156 we should not put all our eggs in one basket. I am alarmed at the overemphasis on theological schools and institutions. That is a very narrow strategy. We should rather develop a more comprehensive strategy which includes the local church, theological training institutions as well as a vigorous programme of publications. I will leave specific discussions to you. But we need more creativity in this area.

CONCLUSION

I would like to conclude my presentation with a summary and a challenge. We have seen that evangelicals have been rather absent in the thirty-year debate on African theology. We have mentioned the evangelical dilemma and fragmentation as contributing factors to this loss of initiative. We have also reviewed two consequences of evangelical absence from the theological scene in Africa: evangelical theologians are forced to react because they do not participate in the public arena of debating the ideas; the lack of theology is detrimental to church growth and Christian maturity.

The situation is critical but not hopeless. It is still possible for evangelicals to recapture the initiative. As we look to future trends, evangelical theologians will need to probe into three basic problems of current Africa: cultural identity, the issue of race and colour, and the problem of poverty. Are there biblical and theological answers to these problems? Can they be dealt with in church, theological training institutions, and in society adequately? What role, if any, can foreigners play in the finding of solutions? These are the challenges for the future!

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Creativity—Human and Divine

Harold M. Best

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(The following is a very refreshing way of doing theology in non-theological jargon! Though written by one who is essentially a musician, yet the article contains enough theological analysis to be included in ERT. The plea here is to look at human creativity apart from modern consumerism—as a gift in itself. The seven ‘theses’ are somewhat involved by way of terminology; yet looking at ex nihilo creation, Lucifer, imitation, ... from new angles makes the reading compelling. It is interesting that the author discusses the category of

creativity primarily in the area of aesthetics. Hidden underneath the concepts considered here is the very basic constitution of man, as passed on from Greek thought as consisting of will, emotion and intellect. It is interesting that the Bible, especially the Old Testament, speaks of man in terms of the heart primarily. The open-mindedness of the author is heart warming. There is of course need to consider the whole area of creativity under the fall (provocatively, the author brings not creativity but imitation under the fall). In any case, in our time of utopias, projections and visions, the article raises the fundamental question concerning the nature of man: after all, if the first statement of theological anthropology is that God created man in His image, then the inference that man himself therefore is a creator is necessarily the second.)

Ed.

It is not at all easy to construct a grounding view of human creativity based solely on the artifacts, aesthetic theories and larger cultural contexts of a collection of cultures. And it is outright foolishness to attempt this task only with one's own culture as a reference point.

The creation, God's handiwork, is the best and only pre-cultural, trans-cultural display of handiwork that we have. The whole world has the creation—is the creation—and the creation has only one Maker with only one world view. God has created—has imagined and executed—so thoroughly that to turn to human handiwork and world view before ever considering what He has done and what it means is quite possibly the reason why artistic ideology turns out so often to be crimped, insular and aloof. Between the doctrines of revelation and creation there lies a magnificent body of principle which we would do well to study.

The following will serve as a working statement for the rest of the paper:

A doctrine of the creation provides the model and God's actual creation provides the raw materials for human creativity. [p. 158](#)

It is extremely important that creativity be viewed not exclusively as an artistic trait, but as a human one. Creativity is everybody's possession. Therefore an all inclusive definition of the term becomes important. Let me try a simple one. (Although certain terminologies from here on out may have a western ring, I am quite convinced that they substantially apply to any culture anywhere.) Creativity is the ability to imagine something and then execute it. Making something without thinking it up is more properly termed crafting or fabricating. For example, an architect thinks up a building and executes a plan; craftsmen then fabricate accordingly. A craftsman may turn creative when, in the process of fabricating, he may have to think up and make a tool or a logistical system for executing all or part of the task at hand.

Technique and skill are means of executing a thought-up thing expeditiously, with efficiency, and if more than one is executed, with enough similarity to allow for interchangeability. Technology is the larger integration of technical means into an all inclusive network of effectiveness. If technique and technology are means, skill is the degree of means necessary to accomplish a task. The more sophisticated the technology and the more advanced the skill, the more capability there is for similarity or subtlety. That which is mass produced demands similarity. That which is individualized demands subtlety.

Some activities demand highly developed skills: doing a coronary by-pass or hitting a fast ball; others demand less: using a socket wrench or playing a C Major scale. By the same token, creativity can take place at a high level, composing a string quartet, or a comparatively low level: thinking up a paper clip. In each case, something has been thought up. The special quality lies in the thinking up—the imagining.

Once again, the examples I have used are western, although any set of activities from any culture may be put in their place. I used western examples because it is not within my capability to judge what is easy or difficult for another culture. Only the insiders truly know. It might even be that there are some cultures which do not differentiate between easy and difficult the way we do. Even so, I believe the concept to be fundamentally correct.

Creativity, technique and skill often get mixed up with each other, especially in the artistic world. In short, being in the arts does not necessarily mean being creative. Allow me to illustrate by using the concept of penmanship. In a broad sense, penmanship may be defined as the skill of copying anything as closely as possible, whether simple [p. 159](#) or complex, whatever the medium. Copying an intricate illuminated medieval manuscript, forging a Picasso, or attempting to copy the way a Horowitz plays Schubert, are examples of penmanship carried over into various media at exceedingly difficult levels. Those who do only these things are craftsmen or technicians who, because of the exercise of consummate skill and sensitivity in the context of artistic creativity, may be thought to be artistic or creative.

But creativity is not just skill and sensitivity, however the art world may easily confuse them. If skill is the executor of creativity, creativity is the imagined difference. Thus, Horowitz must imagine the performance of Schubert differently from Rubenstein to be considered creative. He must then possess the skill to execute this difference. If Rubenstein copies Horowitz, however difficult this may be, he is not being creative, but consummately skilful. There is, then, a difference between being musical, making music, and being musically creative.

Allow an example from outside the arts. A philosopher is skilful only if he can reason well and critique accordingly. He is creative if he imagines a new way of asking why or saying because, to which then the skill of reasoning becomes attached. In this sense, more philosophers are technicians and their work a collection of skills than is often thought to be the case. They may work skilfully within the world of ideas without necessarily having any of their own.

Here is another way to put it: there are creative persons and technician persons; better yet, poets and grammarians, in every walk of life. There are creative philosophers and technician philosophers; creative musicians and technician musicians; creative linguists and technician linguists, and so on.

This is not meant to imply that a given individual is a technician only, or creative only. Everyone, in some way, both imagines and crafts. The question is the degree to which one is more the technician or more creative, and vice versa.

It must be understood that the creative mind and the technical mind are special and necessary. It is obvious that God purposed it this way, for He thought up and crafted both kinds of doing, each important and each capable of exceedingly far reaches, each profoundly in need of the other. Humanity, not God, is in error for confusing the two, or worse, holding one or the other in suspicion. In the creational scheme of things, it is God, the All in All, Who is both the supreme imaginer and supreme technician, the consummate poet and the consummate grammarian, both the artist and the craftsman. His creation is totally at one with itself; that which is imagined 'works'. It may even be said that in the Incarnation both ways of doing were synthesized perfectly in [p. 160](#) Jesus the Man. He was at once the poet-teacher and the craftsman-carpenter.

What does the Creator and His creation show us then? Very briefly, seven things. There are more or perhaps less, depending upon how we divide, add to, multiply, or merge our concepts. But let's try these as a start. In brief, they show how human beings who think up and make things are to follow the way God thinks up and makes things. If there were

time, it would be useful to discuss the significant difference between revelation and creation, truth and beauty, or closer to home, world view and artifact. But this is another subject, just as crucial as the one at hand. Suffice it to say, I believe there are Biblical grounds for holding the position that artifacts do not contain world views.

I. CREATIVITY AND COMMUNITY

God creates out of nothing, of which He is not, into something, of which He is not. Man creates out of something, of which He continues to remain a part. The creation is dependent on its Creator. It lives, moves, and has its being in the One Who thought it up and made it. The creation is a community of interdependence and artifactual intercourse. Creative man is not only utterly dependent and contingent on God for what he is and how he acts, but on the creation itself, and all of its natural potential, richness, material, and process. Man is farther dependent on the unique part of creation called fellow man, on the diversity of human making called culture, and on the process and extent of human activity called history. Within these, he imagines and makes. Without these, he is helpless. His imagination and urge to shape are dependent on givens and context in order that he continue to be creative. He cannot create ex nihilo; he must have raw material, precedent, model, example, counsel. He must experiment, sketch, compare, reject, develop, synthesize, start over, refine, and review.

Thus, whether man knows it and likes it or not, he participates in a vast community of creativity, not just of people, but of everything. The network is rich and complex. Whether man's creativity issues in rapaciousness, for he can negatively imagine and shape, or usefulness, it is nonetheless within community. The more intelligent, the more gifted and creative man is, the more he will understand this vast intercommunal matrix; the more he will take advantage of it all.

II. THE IMAGINED CREATION AND HUMAN IMAGINATION

Before the creation appeared it had to be thought up. As simple as this **P. 161** sounds, it is still the great mystery: God thinking up a giraffe, a cucumber, the overtone series, sexual reproduction, gravity, dolphins, and strawberries. He is none of these and there were none around for him to copy. There was simply no information that he could gather outside of his own imagination that would give him an inkling as to what to make and how to make it. He thought up what was not. This is every bit as mysterious as calling it forth into substance.

In a very real sense, God was the first 'abstract' non-representationalist, for that which He imagined and made did not represent anything. Each thing was, purely and simply, in and of itself, without reference. A great deal is made over non-representation, especially in the visual arts. Through a complex conceptual evolution, our culture has been taught that art should imitate, that it should be a picture OF, instead of simply a picture. The result is often judged in direct proportion to an ability to imitate or somehow be 'realistic'. If it 'looks like', it is more acceptable than if it doesn't, quality notwithstanding. People and artists thus taught are robbed of a richness. It may well be that this proclivity to imitate started with the fall, not of Adam, but of Lucifer, who wanted to be 'like the Most High'. It may well be that the urge to imitate also comes from a lack of trust, a fear of newness, a strangeness, even disturbance, which covetousness generates. By contrast, creative action finds its full merit and justification in the first day of creation when all was new and all was strange. The creative person has an obligation to continue this precept of firstness.

Creativity which imitates so effectively that the perceiver has an equal choice between the imitation and the thing imitated, is not creativity at all, but cloning.

Furthermore, the creation was not only imagined, but continued. That is, there was not just a first artichoke, but countless others, no two of which are alike. They do not imitate but re-present each other. Representing is a way of saying a thing differently each time: of saying it 'in other words'. The first tree was thought up; all others are representation. God revealed Himself in truth; all linguistic endeavours are representations. Re-presenting, in a most profound sense of the word, is every bit as difficult as not representing. Once again, I want to stress that re-presentation is not imitation but creative, imaginative paraphrase.

Now the nature and extent of the creation are such that these concepts of abstraction and re-presentation may simply be different ways of going about the same thing. In other words, the only thing a creative person can achieve, even the most radically non-representational, is re-presentation. Anything anywhere ever painted, sculpted, [p. 162](#) danced, or chiseled, can only be a personal or communal stylization and extension of something already in existence, whether seen or not yet seen by the artist, because all of this is in his 'dust', and he is of the dust of all of these things. He can see into the creation without seeing all of it.

Thus, we may say that because it is impossible to step outside the creation and because God has thought up more shapes and substances than man ever can, all art is somehow re-presentative of something already in existence. Man cannot out-think God, but since he is an individual, made in the image of God, and capable of participating most profoundly in the creation, he does not necessarily have to see something before he can imagine it. This is as close as one can ever come to creating *ex nihilo*, but how delightfully close!

III. CREATION, CREATIVE STYLE AND VOCABULARY

The creation, at first glance, appears full of anomalies. Because there are lobsters and humming birds, deserts and rain forests, turtles and men, one is tempted to believe that there are a variety of creative opinions at work—a collection of deities, if you will—either having gone into executive session and compromised with each other or having concluded their business in outright disagreement. How could the same Someone think up a hippopotamus, then turn around and imagine an orchid?

The answer to this affords another insight into creativity. There is but one God, one Author of all creation. He is changeless and proceeds unchangingly in all that He is and does. The creation, which He imagined, turned into handiwork and called good, unites and coheres in Jesus Christ. Its astonishing variety—these supposed anomalies, these stylistic nuances—really issue out of oneness and singular consistency. In short, there is a common personal style, a common linguistic if you will, a unity of process issuing in a richness of vocabulary. For it is out of a singularity of process, the way things are personally and consistently done, that individual style issues. This singularity then allows for virtually limitless variety. The singular linguistic issues in a plethora of languages.

The creation itself tells us that multiple vocabularies are not an indication of creative schizophrenia, or a compromise of personal style. The creation is our reminder that our Creator created riotously, popularly, seriously, multi-idiomatically, lumberingly, elegantly, humorously, seriously, prickly, and smoothly. And we must remember that there is no preferred part. We must return to our easels, potter's wheels, [p. 163](#) keyboards, choreographic charts, tribal dances, ethnic hymnodies to do the same. We are to observe, accept and celebrate creative man in all his creativity everywhere, all around the world,

in all its richness, variegation and dignity—just the same way we are to honour that of God.

Presently the church is employing two contradictory strategies in its missions outreach. On the one hand, it beams the gospel everywhere, forcing a kind of theological, cultural and artistic Esperanto on everyone. This kind of Christian giantism is especially hard on the backward citizens of the third world, whose poverty is so variegated, whose spiritual needs and technological inferiority are so intertwined that to transmit the gospel technologically runs the risk of equating one Messiah with another, while stridently implying that one's own indigenous ways are suspect.

On the other hand, there is the rise everywhere of indigeneity, of dignifying every tribe, every cultural style, and every creative nuance. There is an urgency among sensitive Christians that the gospel is best preached personally and contextually, that the receiving culture, with all of its creative dignity and worth, is to be honoured and preserved, and that once the people come to Christ their own art forms are the best for worshipping God. In other words, the gospel can break into any cultural system without necessarily breaking it up. The gospel is at home in the eastern highlands of New Guinea, among the native Americans, and the Bantu. Jesus wants to hear their songs, their rhythms and scale patterns, see their dances, and their art forms all turned to His praise. He wants to accept as offering every artistic style from every kind of people in the world. There is nothing in the Scriptures which suggest that God has a chosen culture.

This is the age of Pentecost, and one thousand tongues is not enough. 'O For a Thousand Tongues', in the face of New Guinea alone is an already answerable prayer. And the thousand tongues of our pentecosted church is not just a thousand spoken tongues, but thousands of sung, danced, sculpted, painted, and dramatized tongues. 'O For a Thousand Tongues' is also a ringing protest against the over-presence of non-cultural media evangelism which reduces the richness of creation and the multiple nuances of human expression down to a pitiful caricature of imagination and doing.

Pentecost as history is Babel reversed; Bible translation is Pentecost slowed down. And it is all of God. Let's be sure that we don't limit this Pentecostal outburst to language alone. Let us make sure that we open it up to all of culture and all of human creativity.

It is both culturally and theologically anomalous to assume that While preserving and honouring a culture's spoken language, we can [p. 164](#) blithely overlook its artistic languages and ship in our own hymn tunes, guitars, quarter notes, finger paintings, and films. Wycliffe, of all of God's harvesters, must have the most integrative and consistently applicable methodology known to the church. To compromise this, to question its basic work—to overlook the wonder of the slightest artistic turn anywhere, is to breach a solemn creational mandate: let a thousand tongues ring out, and ring out, and ring out again. Let us not forget that our views of worship and witness have been shaped by a western evangelical church which has not had a properly constructed theology of creativity and artistic responsibility. For us to view the arts as lead-ins, as aids to worship as behavioural devices, as means and end instead of offering, is to begin with an improper view of the arts, no matter how well we do them.

IV. THE CREATION, INTRINSIC WORTH, AND FUNCTION

Any serious discussion of the arts is bound to include the subject of function or functionalism, wherein an art piece serves a purpose to which its specific aesthetic content may be subordinate. In high western culture the concept has gradually evolved that art means itself, is inherently complete and needs little or no exterior reference to justify or explain it. Within this there are the institutionalized settings for art: concerts,

exhibits, museums, and theatres. Accompanying the doing of art is an equally enriched and fermentive world of theoretical study, scholarship, criticism, and social liturgy. It is this idea of art for art's sake—art providing for its own functional independence—which has allowed western art to variegate and develop more rapidly than that of any previous culture in history. At the same time, this phenomenon has created increasing perceptual distances between the artist and the layman.

By contrast, the functionalist maintains that the arts need not be thus isolated and singularly prescriptive, but useful, at hand, at work, and more easily understood. They are meant to unite easily with other things and functions. In so-called primitive and oral tradition cultures, this is exactly what happens. In the west, this happens as a supposed contradiction to art for art's sake. Thus, advertisers want music and art to help in the selling of a product; the church expects its art forms to serve the liturgy, even to assist in the inducement of worship, or to lead up to the sermon or another supposed structural high point. Within these and other contexts, art becomes a tool with which to do other things or to enhance their doing. It is neither an end in itself, nor contextually independent. Purely and simply, it is a means. And the p. 165 church is caught between these concepts. High art and co-functional art endure an uneasy co-existence—a combination of recital and sing along. Means, end, faith, conditioned reflex, aesthetic legalism, market research, and artistic sacramentalism vie for position depending upon the situation.

That worth and function can be united is shown in the creation itself. It is at once beautiful and useful. Each thing created has both intrinsic worth and functional value. There is not a separate 'Muzak' creation and a 'concert hall' creation, a symphony creation and a folk tune creation. A sunset is beautiful, but it is also a consortium of usefulness: clouds holding moisture, light refracted and coloured by an atmosphere to be breathed, reflecting off things which in turn are useful and beautiful. The sun warms the earth, controls its weather, gives light, and in its regular absence, allows cool and dark. However complex or extended anything in the creation is, it still functions. However simple and orderly anything is, it still has its own integrity and specific beauty, whether it is a molecule or an armidillo.

This suggests something further. Did God make certain parts of the Creation more beautiful than other parts? Is His handiwork of unequal aesthetic worth? And does it suggest a hierarchy of values? Is a cactus less beautiful than an orchid, or a platypus than a bird of paradise? Why, within a species, is one pine tree admittedly more beautiful than another? When we speak of the beauty of creation, we may really be speaking of our own favourite things, not the entire handiwork. We choose its parts the same way we choose a fugue, a sonnet, or a new dress. We, in a sense, imply that God's handiwork can be graded like a term paper. In so doing we overlook the generic wonder and beauty of creation, the sum of the essential wholeness and of each created thing. We have no more ultimate right to say that a sonnet is more beautiful than an artichoke than we do to say that classical music is preferable to that of the Usarufa, or Gothic better than Bantu.

V. THE CREATION AND THROW-AWAY CREATIVITY

The concept of function and worth goes further. If a thing is intended to be used up quickly, it is most likely not to be as carefully made as that which is to 'last'. There is throw-away technology—planned obsolescence, and throw-away art—faddism. Lastingness is irrelevant; quality is in direct proportion to immediacy and early disappearance. Or, we may view a tribal artifact as transient simply because it is made by hand or improvised, or more tragically, because we have a low view of non-western creativity. P. 166

The creation is meant to be used up also. But in God's economy, the creation does not participate in the values of the throw-away. Roses wither and die, living things perish quickly, an apple which takes months to grow, is eaten in a trice. Richly grained wood is burned in the fire; fire itself, in all of its beauty, is but an instant. God thinks and works differently from man. Even though His handiwork is used up, some more quickly than the rest, every speck of it is carefully and lovingly made. The rose, the earth worm, the mosquito, and the cabbage leaf are as lovingly constructed, richly variegated, and as profoundly fascinating as a galaxy. There is no division of purpose. There are no two qualities of workmanship, one for the instant, the other for the ages. Being quickly used up does not justify being sloppily made. The integrity of the Maker never changes with the transience of the creature. There is no model whatsoever in the creation for a division between worth and function, or immediacy and lastingness.

Human creativity would regain much of its dignity if this example in the creation were followed. There would no longer be the crassness and cynicism of throw-away art, nor the pomp and pretence of art for the ages. Both are artificial, in that integrity is relativized. Each is end justifying means: the one in immediacy, the other in timelessness.

The stewardly and creative person invests time and energy intensely into the imagining and making of everything, because God alone is to be glorified and because God alone made it clear from the beginning that function, worth, usefulness and lastingness are to be conjoined in the same stewardly purpose.

VI. THE CREATION, SIMPLICITY AND COMPLEXITY

Just as there p. error in the separation of worth and function, so there is in simplicity and complexity. What is simplicity? What is complexity? If complex means more and simplicity less, then Wagner's 'Tristan und Isolde' is complex and Brahms's 'Lullaby' simple. If complex means complicated and simplicity clear, then Karl Barth's writing is complex and C. S. Lewis is simple; or the Taj Mahal complex and a Dogon shrine simple.

Which of these is better? More profound? Does complexity guarantee superiority and profundity or does it simply provide a larger space within which these qualities must take place? Is a Sursurungan dance or one of Matisse's line drawings of less quality than Schubert's 'C Major Quintet' or the music of the gamelan?

Only if quality is carried out over a large expanse can complexity p. 167 make a claim over simplicity. The Mona Lisa is complex, a hymn tune simple. Each in its own way may be great; each in its own way is a mystery. The one is distinguished from the other only by the expanse of quality. To be sure, carrying quality out over an expanse is a rare and precious gift, not to be taken lightly. It is rare only in the way a galaxy is rare. Even so, the galaxy is no excuse for overlooking the blade of grass. The blade of grass and the galaxy are different only in the expanse of quality. Each is made exactly the same way: simplicities are chained together in the one case to make something small, and in the other to make something large. It is their simplest parts, the elemental particles of matter, that are yet to be explained. This is the greater fascination. Simple creativity is no less important to the whole of human creativity than the simplicities of creation are to its whole.

VII. KENOSIS AND ARTISTIC CREATIVITY

Finally, just as in the creation and within human creativity the simple and the complex may be joined, so in the Incarnation. In point of fact, the Incarnation is the final model for the human being, whatever he does. Kenosis is used in the great Philippians passage ([2:5-](#)

[11](#))in describing the emptying of Christ when He became Man. This is not the place for the theological and doctrinal complexities of the Incarnation. Suffice it to say, when Christ came to earth, He somehow mysteriously limited Himself as God, yet fully remained God, while becoming fully human.

In a way, God simplified Himself. Yet this, as with so many simplicities, is the greater mystery. For all that the Incarnation means to the salvation of human kind, it means significant things for human creativity as well.

An analogy may help. If, before becoming man, Christ could be likened to an oratorio, in His Incarnation He became a hymn tune. But in this, He lost nothing of His eternal character and excellence. Becoming a hymn tune was not a compromise, a dilution, or a weakening. Nor did it mean that He refuted His being an oratorio. Rather, becoming a hymn tune was a uniqueness in itself, with its own wholeness and usefulness. It is in this way that we can once again say that a hymn tune is not a skeletal oratorio. Now we can say that it is an emptied oratorio.

There is a difference between putting something aside and losing it. Christ showed us this difference and the true artist—may I now say the serant-artist—must likewise learn this well. He must come to [p.168](#) experience the dignity, worth and eventual joy of putting things aside, of emptying himself and taking the form of a servant. He must be able to move from the oratorio to the hymn tune, from the drama to the couplet, with grace, elegance, power, and imagination.

To lay aside is still to remain the same, as long as one's integrity, imagination and sense of excellence are at hand. The lessons of simplicity and complexity, worth and usefulness, variety and unity, familiarity and strangeness, are corollary to the lesson of laying aside. The servant-artist proceeding this way has finally learned artistic wisdom. He has acquired the gift of functional integrity the ability to maintain excellence, high purpose and artfulness in the fulfilment of any creative task in any context to which he may be called.

Which is the greater mystery, that Christ is God or that He could lower Himself while remaining God? Likewise, which is the greater mystery, that man is artistically creative or that in his creativity he may empty himself and still remain artistic? A servant-artist has his reward, just as Christ has His. Once the hymn tune has been written, the right to do another oratorio has been earned.

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Evangelicals, Evangelism and Theology *A Missiological Assessment of the Lausanne Movement*

Peter Beyerhaus

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(Beyerhaus, an evangelical thinker of world repute, belongs to that group of theologians who have fought for the defence of the classical understanding of mission in modern times and needs no introduction to the readers of ERT. He has several definitive works on the theology of mission to his credit, in English as well as in other European languages, in addition to numerous articles and addresses in theological journals and consultations. The following article presented in Leuven, Belgium last June is a fine and incisive assessment of Lausanne Movement—a sister movement of WEF—and has been acceptable to the LCWE leaders. The final part of this paper, ‘New tasks and theological challenges facing the Evangelical Movement’—emphasizing the urgent need for faithful education for mission, the generation shift in the international evangelical movements, mission amidst the exponential growth of urbanisation—calls for immediate and drastic decisions by, and united effort of, evangelical leaders. At no time have evangelicals needed one another more. As such this paper makes a good example of doing theology at international/ecumenical level.)

—Ed.

In July 1974 at Lausanne took place a historical International Congress on World Evangelization which brought together 2,700 spokesmen of evangelical churches. Mission agencies and colleges from 150 countries in order to reconsider the Great Commission of Jesus Christ as a still unfinished task. The watch word therefore was ‘Let The Earth Hear His Voice’.

Ours is a century of many Christian world conferences, assemblies, consultations and congresses, and it is hard to keep pace with all of them or to simply register their occurrence. Some Christians rightfully ask how many of them are worth all the investment of time, finance and manpower, if we measure them by their results in the life and ministry of the churches in the six continents, which thereby are often deprived of the services of their chosen leaders. But Lausanne was not just another conference among many others: it made a profound [p. 170](#) impact upon the thinking and acting of its participants and through them as multipliers of the life of the evangelical community at large, probably even of other Christian bodies who do not call themselves evangelical. Moreover, the stimulus of the Lausanne Congress is still felt in many places. One could even argue that its full and lasting impact will only be realized and evaluated in the future, when the Lausanne Movement, as it now is called, will have grasped the deeper implications of its mandate and communicated them to the Church at large.

I. LAUSANNE AS A DECISIVE BREAKTHROUGH IN THE HISTORY OF EVANGELICALISM

Let me start with a sobering reflection: every historian knows that a new age is never born through one single event. Everything for which the Lausanne Movement has come to be known was not initiated there. It can, in fact, be argued whether Lausanne as such has given birth to any single concept or movement at all. Most of the ideas expounded at ICoWE had already been suggested by their proponents or others, and this was the main reason why they were invited to address the Assembly. That which made Lausanne '74 a unique event was that small rivers, some of which had been rather unnoted before, became confluent, and by their union formed one mighty stream, which was deep enough to carry a fleet of evangelistic fisherboats, and which had water enough spiritually to fertilize the dried soil of latter 20th century christendom.

Let us remember that evangelicals in the first half of this century found themselves in a rather awkward position. Much of the spirit of the Great Revival which had given birth to the movement in the 18th and 19th centuries had cooled down. Divided among

themselves by many theological dissensions, group rivalries and their own notorious individualism, their persuasions were contested strongly by liberal thought in the main line churches and by the famous institutions of academic learning that once had been founded by evangelicals, but later taken over by liberal theologians. Evangelicals found themselves in a rather ghetto-like situation of self-defence.

But since the Second World War, the international missionary movement, initiated in Edinburgh in 1910 and co-ordinated by the International Missionary Council, became the WCC's Commission and Department of World Mission and Evangelization after New Delhi in 1961. This commission lost more and more of its original impetus and sense of biblical direction. Words like 'crisis in mission' or 'frustration p. 171 of missionaries' became notorious for the situation between 1950 and 1970, a development which reached its nadir at what Donald McGavran called the 'betrayal of the 2 Billion', i.e. the neglect of the unevangelized pagan masses at Uppsala in 1968 and the call for a moratorium of western missions at the 8th World Missionary Conference at Bangkok in 1973.

Meanwhile a new resurgence of evangelistic zeal had captured evangelical groups especially in the U.S.A., bringing about what Pierce Beaver called the second missionary movement. Evangelical leaders in mission and evangelism started to convocate their own national and regional congresses on mission and evangelism and to articulate their indispensable principles of missionary theology. I will just mention the Wheaton Congress in 1966, the first World Congress on Evangelism in Berlin in 1966, convened by Carl Henry, Billy Graham and their friends, and the world-wide catalytic effect of the Frankfurt Declaration on the Fundamental Crisis of Christian Mission in March, 1970.—When, through several regional congresses on evangelism, the movement had grown sufficiently, Billy Graham confidently voiced his persuasion that the time had now come for the evangelicals to take the lead in calling the churches to a re-thinking of their position and to new vigorous evangelistic ventures. 'We stand on the threshold of a new era', he stated. 'Never before have the opportunities been so great. I believe that God will ... direct our strategy toward total world evangelization in our time.' The platform from which this call was to be voiced was the Plenary Hall of the Palais de Beaulieu, that magnificent modern congress centre at Lausanne where the assembly took place.

The achievements of ICoWE can be summarized in four major points:

Firstly, Lausanne served as a rallying point to *unite* the great majority of evangelical mission agencies to jointly pray and think about their common evangelistic calling. A new willingness to overcome petty dissensions and to co-operate was born, resulting in the formation of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization the following year, 1975, in Mexico City. This group of 50 men and women was going to take the lead in the follow-up work of the congress and keep its impetus alive.

Secondly, a new vision of the unfinished task of global evangelism was opened up before the spiritual eyes of the participants. The cry of the 2.7 billion people who never had been confronted effectively with the invitation of the saving gospel of Jesus Christ was the direct answer to the defeatism voiced in many ecumenical quarters that the age of missions had passed and that it would be better for missionaries to p. 172 return home to look after their own churches' domestic business. Exciting testimonies of unprecedented opportunities to offer the gospel to receptive populations shattered the pessimistic notion that mankind in two-thirds of the world was turning a deaf ear to a religion which was irreparably stung with the notion of Western colonialism. This vision was answered by a new spirit of dedication, in which 2,000 participants pledged themselves 'into a covenant with God and with each other to pray, to plan and to work together for the evangelization of the whole world'.

Thirdly, Lausanne's evangelistic zeal was not just an outburst of sentimental enthusiasm where sounding promises were made without regard for the real conditions of their practical implementation. One of the key concepts at Lausanne was the call for working out realistic and specific methods of evangelism within the wider framework of a universal strategy of winning people out of every nation for Jesus Christ. Strategists amongst missiologists like Ralph Winter and Ed Dayton made their first international appearance at Lausanne and were soon going to take the lead in the entire follow-up programme. The demanding cry: 'It *must* be done' was matched by the confident assurance: 'It *can* be done!' What was meant was the virtual completion of world evangelization before the end of this century. Without literally repeating the battle cry of the old Student Voluntary Movement, the strategies that evolved from Lausanne definitely aimed at its final implementation: the evangelization of the world in this generation.

The *fourth* merit of Lausanne '74 was the new grounding of our evangelistic activities on a firm theological foundation, in faithful continuity with the doctrinal stance of our predecessors in the classical missionary movement. As Billy Graham pointed out in his opening message, loss of these biblical persuasions was the greatest single cause of the gradual disorientation and fatigue of the international missionary movement in the decades that followed the historic Edinburgh Conference and the formation of the International Missionary Council in 1921. The great dilemma of the IMC had been that it never possessed a clear cut theological basis to protect it from doctrinal deviation.

The evangelical leaders who sponsored Lausanne were all in agreement: they wanted the congress to frame a biblical declaration on world evangelism. The result which we know was the Lausanne Covenant which combined in its 15 paragraphs such a doctrinal affirmation with a practical guidance for missionary action in our changed situation and with a pledge of the participants to dedicate their lives to the unfinished task. [p. 173](#)

Time does not allow me to unfold the entire theology of evangelism as enshrined in the Lausanne Covenant. Let me instead point out what I believe to be the most crucial re-affirmations of truly evangelical convictions about evangelism:

1). The Lausanne Covenant affirmed the divine inspiration, truthfulness and authority of the Bible as the only infallible rule of faith and practice in Christian mission work. Evangelicals look for their missionary instruction not on the world's agenda, nor do they listen to people claiming to interpret God's message to us prophetically through revolutionary events in secular history. Rather they try to be faithful to Christ's own gospel and commission as it is recorded in this precious book.

2). The salvation which Christians are to announce and even to mediate through evangelism was described in authentic soteriological terms as the forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ and the reception of the liberating gift of the Holy Spirit. This was a direct answer to the WCC's Bangkok Conference in 1973, which under its theme of 'Salvation Today' tried to suggest that the humanization of the social and political order was the way in which people in our time experience the redemptive work of God and in which the church as well, participating in God's mission, should organize its missionary activities. Lausanne definitely pleaded for a combination of evangelistic proclamation and social involvement in mission, but it maintained emphatically the priority of evangelism in the Church's total mission (§ 6).

3). The final central insight of Lausanne was the affirmation of the eschatological nature of world evangelism. Ever since the time of the apostles, missionaries have been invigorated greatly in the vision that this gospel of Jesus must be proclaimed their zeal by in the whole world as a witness to all nations before the end would come with the glorious return of the Lord Jesus to set up his kingdom in power ([Matt. 24:14](#)). The loss of this eschatological incentive in exchange for evolutionary or revolutionary concepts of world

history was again one of the most fatal causes for the pitfall of the conciliar missionary movement which replaced the biblical prophecies of the kingdom by political or pan-religious utopias.

I am especially convinced that the re-affirmation of these three basic tenets—the revelatory, the soteriological and the eschatological affirmations—are contributing much to the vigorous line of action which the evangelical mission movement has been taking ever since Lausanne 1974; but I am also convinced that the future of the evangelical movement will entirely depend on the vigilance of its p.174 leaders to defend this position against new temptations, from which evangelicals, too, will not be exempted.

II. THE EVOLVEMENT OF THE NEW MOVEMENT FOR WORLD EVANGELIZATION SINCE LAUSANNE 1974

The development of the World Evangelistic Movement that followed the Lausanne event has been a remarkable one. The message of the congress was received attentively in many countries, and it has given orientation and dynamic impulses. Mission societies, churches and individual Christians received new vision and encouragement. Congresses for world evangelization were convened according to the Lausanne pattern on national and regional levels. The Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization (LCWE) has attempted to give guidance and stimulus to these ventures. At the same time, it has resisted the temptation to build up a new, ecclesiastical superstructure in analogy to the World Council of Churches which is evolving in such a direction. It has not even been possible to merge the Lausanne Movement with the World Evangelical Fellowship. To most evangelicals it does not seem desirable to create a monopoly for one single evangelical body, which would be the umbrella for all evangelical organizations and activities, for this is not at all congenial to the evangelical spirit.

Rather, the LCWE has been endeavouring to develop a multifaceted ministry, whereby the Committee acts like the head of a flying arrow—a comparison that struck me when, in January, 1983, we held our annual meeting in the headquarters of Campus Crusade for Christ at Arrowhead Springs. Leighton Ford, the present chairman of the LCWE, expressed it like this: 'Lausanne has become more than a place, an event, or a committee. It has become the symbol of a movement of likeminded believers who long to see the day when the Gospel will be preached to the whole world and the Lord will return.' The Lausanne Movement is serving evangelicals world-wide as an instrument of spiritual motivation, which has helped them to follow a clear trajectory. This trajectory has been marked by a number of significant events, which followed each other in a logical and consistent sequence. I am referring to the various consultations—some of which were cost-sponsored by the World Evangelical Fellowship—which were held to implement or to explore the mandate of Lausanne 1974.

1). Missionary strategy has been and is still ranking very high. This was not accidental. The great conciliar-evangelical debate on mission was opened in 1965 by an article that appeared in the July issue of the p. 175 International Review of Missions under the heading: 'Wrong Strategy—the Real Crisis in Missions'. According to Donald McGavran, the author, the only adequate mission strategy aims at disciplining receptive groups of people and organizing them into self-propagating, rapidly growing indigenous churches. Under the directorship of Ralph Winter, Peter Wagner and Ed Dayton, a strategy has been developed which steadily focuses on global dimensions. Their guiding motive is the idea of constantly crossing cultural frontiers. Like St. Paul, evangelicals want to break new ground and preach the Gospel to people who have never been reached before. But unlike St. Paul, they now have access to scientific tools like communication methods, statistics

and system analysis, which they readily make use of. In this way, new instruments are placed at the disposal of evangelical missionaries. Each year, tables are published which enlist such people groups as have only recently been identified as lacking the knowledge of the Gospel. *Country Profiles* indicates the numerical strength of Christianity in different countries as well as the mission agencies which are at work there.

A new *terminology* has been introduced into the language of evangelical missionaries. We now speak of E1, E2 and E3 types of evangelism, indicating thereby the cultural gap which has to be crossed by missionaries to reach the respective groups. We use expressions like 'hidden peoples' or 'homogeneous units'. This serves to divide up the unevangelized billions into social entities of which one can get a clear perception. The Lausanne Working Group on Strategy, jointly with the Mission Advanced Research Centre (MARC), annually publishes reports on unreached peoples and also issues manuals on strategical procedures in evangelism.

All of these endeavours converged at the Consultation on World Evangelization which was held in Pattaya, Thailand, in June 1980. The Lausanne theme 'Let the Earth Hear His Voice' was complemented by the guiding question of [Romans 10:14](#): 'How shall they hear?' In response 17 mini-consultations tried to elaborate distinct strategies suitable to reach each major block of the still unevangelized mankind, such as Buddhists, African Animists or Marxists. The same concern for the unreached was also displayed by the Congress of Frontier Missions, which in commemoration of the historic first World Missionary Conference in 1910 was convened by Ralph Winter in Edinburgh in October 1980.

2). But Lausanne did not only work for missionary strategy in the technical sense. The concern of the Strategy Committee was complemented by the work of the Theological Committee under the able [p. 176](#) leadership of John Stott and later of Bishop John Reid. Both working groups were asked to co-operate as closely as possible since strategical concepts, too, have their theological premises and consequences, and they can lead to tensions and blockades even within the evangelical constituency. This was experienced for the first time at the consultation on the Homogeneous Unit Principle (HUP), which was held in the spring of 1977 in Pasadena. At Fuller Theological Seminary, the cradle of the Church Growth movement, a heated discussion was held between its supporters and critics concerning how far the HUP, if pushed as the only concern that matters, could lead to ecclesiastical segregation and thereby petrify and sanctify existing social and racial barriers, in open contradiction to St. Paul's doctrine on the Church as the body of Christ. This was the first occasion when it dawned upon the new movement for world evangelization that a sound missionary strategy could only be developed on the basis of a thorough reflexion on biblical ecclesiology, a concern which had not really come into focus in Lausanne 1974. The Pasadena Report endeavoured to arrive at a viable synthesis between the ethnic principle as a helpful method in the pioneering stage and the catholicity of the church as the goal of mission.

3). Lausanne was a global event. The leaders had successfully attempted to have representatives from all corners of the earth actively involved in the programme. In the evangelical movement since then we have been discovering the spiritual riches of churches and Christians in the Third World. One of the most important consequences was that we have realized that the traditional Western patterns of organization and working are by no means the only valid carriers of evangelization. Instead, we have gratefully accepted what God has given to us through the ministry of our fellow Christians in Asia, Africa and Latin America. When I make this point, I am referring both to the manpower and to the cultures of these continents as carriers of the Christian Gospel to their populations:

A. One of the most exciting discoveries was the emergence of Third World missionaries and mission societies as a new, vigorous potential for world evangelization. While, in 1974, the statistics had been accounting for approximately 1000 missionaries from Third World churches, the latest estimate is already 15,000! In view of the often unstable political situation on those continents, this introduction of non-western forces into the common cause is very important.

A double missiological problem arises from this: Firstly, how can these younger organizations benefit from the experiences of the older Western missionary movement and enter into a fruitful relationship with it? Secondly, how will they be able to avoid the fatal mistake of p. 177 western missionary societies and make use of their advantage of originating from such cultures which resemble those of the populations which they want to evangelize? These questions are especially a challenge to re-think theological education in the Third World and to re-adjust it to local conditions. The programme of Theological Education by Extension, which makes use of correspondence and cassette courses is already a decisive step in the right direction.

B. At the same time, Lausanne's global perspective has also led to a new discovery and evaluation of indigenous cultures, which had been unprecedented in former times. This was the cause for convening the second theological consultation of the Lausanne Movement, which in January 1978, at Willowbank, Bermuda, dealt with the theme 'Gospel and Culture'. For the first time, missiologists, church-leaders, theologians and anthropologists joined their forces in order to outline a new missionary policy sensitive to foreign cultures. We must, however, realize that a huge task still lies ahead of us, which is threatened by many snares and pitfalls. From now on the question will never disappear from our agenda: What is the relation between the eternal and unchangeable content of the Gospel and the culturally conditioned expression of the faith which it has found in the mission work of the historical churches?

4). The new awareness of the social dimension of our evangelistic task also led to a further emphasis on the theory and practice of social ethics which goes together with the ministry of proclamation. The lack of such awareness among many evangelical groups in the past—in reaction to the Social Gospel of the liberals—has burdened us with a painful handicap in some mission Fields which are ridden by socioeconomic problems. This has been the pretext for the 'radical evangelicals' to demand a complete re-evaluation and re-conception of evangelical mission work among poor populations. The challenge was taken up by two consultations. The first one was held in 1980 in Hoddesdon to explore the implication of the Lausanne Covenant's call (§ 9) for a 'simple life style' in world evangelism; the second one took place in June 1982 in Grand Rapids, Michigan, where the Relationship between evangelism and social responsibility was treated, a problem which according to Arthur Johnston had not been solved well enough biblically by the well-known antithetic phrases in Article 5 of the Lausanne Covenant.

While the Hoddesdon Report—on account of some ideologically infected phrases appearing in it—found a rather mixed reaction, Grand Rapids really succeeded in preventing a threatening schism between two wings of today's evangelical movement, i.e. those in p. 178 mission adamantly defending the primacy of oral proclamation and those who want socio-political concerns to rank much higher on our missionary agenda. Three terms or images were employed to express the relationship between evangelism and social action: the latter might be regarded either as *fruit*, *bridge* or as *partner* of evangelization; but in each case, in accordance with article 6 of the Lausanne Covenant, the primacy of evangelization in the church's mission of sacrificial service was dearly maintained. This was reassuring to most participants and has encouraged evangelicals

world-wide to develop mission programmes where both concerns are integrated according to the mentioned order.

It can't, however, be taken for granted that the Grand Rapids Report will be considered by all evangelicals as the final word in this matter. There can be differences of interpretation, and already some people, who feel that their concerns did not find adequate attention at the consultation, are pursuing their own means of further exploration. It is a familiar experience that conferences which are staged to produce a consensus between people of different view points may succeed in arriving at it, due to the willingness of both sides to meet each other halfway; but when the partners return to their familiar setting they will be gripped by the same old sentiments of their associates and then go back to or even strengthen those positions which they had begun to soften or modify in response to other viewpoints. Conference reports are at their best stepping stones towards a possible solution, points of reference; but only a few people will ascribe dogmatic authority to them. This observation applies to both schools of thought represented at Grand Rapids.

5). Let me conclude this second part by pointing out—last but not least—the spiritual dynamics of the evangelical movement for world evangelization which experienced its renewal in Lausanne.

The Lausanne Committee is sub-divided into four working groups, each of which plays an indispensable part in its enabling ministry. There are the two committees which we have spoken of, those for Theology and for Strategy; and there is the Committee on Communication to mediate information and new insights to the constituency. The fourth committee, which I like to count as number one, is the Intercession Advisory Group. It reminds us of the most important truth that it is not we human missionaries who are the primary agents in mission, but it is the triune God, who allows us to be His instruments. As such, however, we are totally dependent on His continuous presence, guidance and support, and this is given in its fullness only in answer to ardent and faithful prayer. [p. 179](#)

Western mission agencies—whether conciliar or evangelical—will always be tempted to conduct their business in an intellectual or technocratic mentality, and the strategic planning and theological reflection of LCWE are not exempted from this temptation. To the modern western mind, almost everything appears to be possible or theoretically solvable. Even the evangelization of the three billion unreached people by the year 2000 appears to be a solvable task. One leading official in the Lausanne Movement told me that his missiological career was initiated by the perplexing question of a wealthy American business man: 'How much does it cost to evangelize the world?'

It was, therefore, extremely timely and fortunate that the next consultation under the auspices of the Lausanne Committee was to be sponsored by its Intercession Advisory Group. Due both to the strong international interest in its theme and to the wise choice of country for our venue, Korea, this meeting assumed the dimensions of a congress. In the week leading up to the feast of Pentecost, 1984, the first international Congress on Prayer for World Evangelization took place in Seoul. It has, as I can confirm as one who was deeply engaged, forcefully contributed to open anew the eyes of all participants to the tremendous importance within the total task of world mission that God has assigned to the ministry of prayer as praise, thanksgiving, intercession and, let us not forget, spiritual battle with the demonic powers of heathen darkness. But only the future development of our evangelical mission movement will show how far the vision of Seoul 1984 has been implemented: A movement of prayer in every Continent, city and church of the world, co-ordinated by a network of mutual exchange with regard to intercession needed or answered

I whole-heartedly agree with the words by which Vonette Bright outlined the purpose of the prayer congress in Seoul:

'The Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, ... has endeavoured to serve the Church by sharing evangelization strategies through congresses and publications. These are valuable tools in the hands of those who have a burden for the evangelization of the world in this generation. Basic to everything, however, is that directive from God which reminds us: 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord Almighty' ([Zechariah 4:6](#)).'

III. NEW TASKS AND THEOLOGICAL CHALLENGES FACING THE EVANGELICAL MOVEMENT

It is vital to the new movement for world evangelization not only **P. 180** to attend to the opportunities and duties as seen at any given moment, but at the same time to keep also a watching eye on the future. I am speaking about future partly in the sense that it can be extrapolated from present trends, but also in the sense that it clearly can be predicted from biblical prophecies, which is very important.

Already from its inception, the Lausanne Movement was intensely captured by the awareness that the end of the twentieth century is approaching. Evangelical mission strategies are often framed with the goal in mind to complete the evangelization of the world by the year 2000. This does not mean that we expect (by this time) all nations and population groups to be christianized, but we certainly are entitled to aim towards the goal that all unreached peoples will have the opportunity to listen to the offer of salvation in the name of Jesus Christ in a language comprehensible to them.

There are several implications in this idea, of which the following four are especially crucial:

1). Much effort has been spent on the task to discover who and where the unreached population groups are. Mission strategists like R. Winter and David Barrett believe that Christianity does have the potential to reach all these people. But they will only be reached if this potential is discovered and mobilized. This is the task not only of further inspirational congresses, but of faithful education for mission.

2). The mobilization of the missionary potential of our churches includes the realization that we are heading for a *generation shift* in the international evangelical movement. Most of the founding fathers of the Lausanne Congress will be at retirement age by the end of this decade. It is, therefore, most encouraging to watch the attraction of such congresses which are convened specifically for the young generation. The TEMA Conferences are attended by several thousand young people.

3). The completion of world evangelization also implies the realization that large sociological changes in world population are taking place. The process of urbanization is assuming a remarkable speed. (As Dr. Raimund Bakke, a senior Lausanne associate, has pointed out, we are confronted with exciting statistics: By the year 2000, 94% of the United States' population will live in large cities. The respective figures for the other continents are as follows:

Western Europe: 82%

Eastern Europe: 80%

Latin America:	73% p. 181
Australia:	85%
Asia:	60%
Africa:	45%

It is estimated that, provided the present speed of population growth will continue, Mexico City will be the largest city in the world with at least 31 million inhabitants!)

For the time being, the evangelical movement is by no means ready to take up this task. Dr. Bakke, therefore, spends much time in travelling all over the world in order to set up consultations for church leaders, by which he wants to help them to interpret the sociological development and its challenge to world evangelism. What is urgently needed is a combined effort of all evangelistic forces. A whole network of urban evangelistic ministries is already in the process of being formed.

4). We have to consider that a large section of non-christian mankind is not made up of the so-called unreached, but rather by those who are turning their backs to the Christian faith due to the alarming speed of secularization, especially in the Western world. The new battle cry heard in many evangelistic speeches in Western countries is the word 'Re-Evangelization'.

The open question is, however, whether we can follow the same strategy which has been developed to evangelize the not yet reached two-thirds of the world. This is not only a question of strategy, but even more one of theological and homiletical implications. I know that many brilliant minds are struggling with this problem. May the Lord himself give us the answers!

What are the future problems one can anticipate for the Evangelical Movement? My own basic concern with regard to the future is that the Lausanne Movement really be faithful to the three basic theological reaffirmations which I pointed out within the Lausanne covenant: the normative authority of Scripture; the soteriological interpretation of salvation as reconciliation of sinful man with God; and the eschatological terminal of missions.

Are there any indications that these affirmations might be challenged and threatened to be dissolved? I am afraid there are. Evangelicals do not live on an idyllic island, but they are exposed to the influence of spiritual and theological cross-currents in Christianity at large. When new concepts or quests come up which claim to make new discoveries in the field of theological understanding, they might be intrigued by them and follow the direction to which they are pointing.

Three of these seemingly fresh and fruitful concepts are 1). the p. 182 hermeneutical method of a 'contextual exegesis', 2). the offer of a 'holistic Gospel', and 3). the programme to re-think biblical theology in terms of the *Kingdom of God* found in the synoptical gospels rather than by the categories of the Church which are used in the N.T. epistles.

Each of these new trends that seem to fascinate quite a number of evangelical missiologists contain certain elements of truth. But, in each one, there are also hidden snares and pitfalls.

1). The programme of contextual hermeneutics seems to intrigue theologians especially in the Third World. Here, the attempt is made to read Scripture not so much in

analogy to the Christian doctrinal tradition, which is said to be permeated by Western ideological presuppositions, but rather in the light of socio-political conditions in which the present reader is involved. He now looks to the biblical texts for answers to his problems. He might find them by discovering new aspects in these texts which were seemingly overlooked by previous exegetes. He may regard the biblical text as simply a *model* of divine redemptive action within the socio-political situation of the original readers, which could be transposed into analogous answers relevant to our conditions. In this way, at the surface the evangelical affirmations of scriptural inerrancy could still be maintained,—but they are secretly undermined by a hermeneutical method aimed at satisfying our present quests rather than allowing them to give their authentic message.

2). The programme of bringing a holistic gospel has its truth and temptation at the same time. It contains truth in as much as it can point out that the historical Jesus conducted a ministry by words and deeds, applied to the souls and bodies of men. But it is misleading if it regards these two dimensions as absolutely equal and if it leads to the understanding that, under certain conditions, socio-political action is a redemptive activity which is even more important than the forgiveness of sins. In this way, contrary to our original purpose, we may finally end up with another 'social gospel'. The biblical concept of salvation would be blurred and lost again.

3). The idea of preaching the Gospel in world evangelization by using the so-called kingdom language as Jesus himself did appears to be fine. But we must not overlook the fact that to Jesus the kingdom was a mystery. In this mystery some elements already became visible through his earthly ministry; other elements, however, remain hidden until his Second Coming. The realized elements of his kingdom message are exactly those which can be found in St. Paul's ecclesiology, while the prophetic elements are preserved in his [p. 183](#) eschatology, as pointed out in [1 Cor. 15:24ff.](#) or [Romans 8:17ff.](#) The programme of reverting from Paul's gospel to the kingdom message of Jesus, therefore, might easily mislead us to a loss of true biblical hope for the sake of a realized eschatology which does not take realistically into account the satanic evil which is still to be dealt with in the final victory at Christ's Second Coming.

I see a direct relevance of this argument with regard to our understanding of non-Christian religions. The Lausanne Movement up to now, especially at its Pattaya Consultation in 1980, has dealt with non-Christian religions mainly under the aspect of strategy and communication: how to reach the unreached blocks of Asia's high religions, to dispel false pre-suppositions in the minds of their adherents and to communicate Christ in terms and images truly perceptible to them. If we are able to do this, it is secretly assumed that the conversion of the Muslim or Hindu blocks could be achieved. The same argument can be discovered in the report of the mini-consultation dealing with Marxism.

What is lacking here is a realistic insight that non-Christian religions and ideologies are not only mistaken and illusionary products of the human minds, or expressions of their thirst for salvation, but, at the same time, they are also incorporations of the spirits of God p. enemies which finally join forces in the universal reign of the Antichrist. What the Lausanne Movement still has to produce, therefore, is a realistic theology of non-Christian religions and ideologies which is analytically mindful of all components in their systems: the human, the divine and the demonic.

My final concern in this survey is closely related to the previous argument. The excitement of the new breakthrough of evangelistic concerns in the evangelical constituency has proved to be a mighty impulse up to now. The 'spirit of Lausanne' has produced the optimistic vision of a world to be totally evangelized and largely won for Christ within the reach of our present generation. This vision, however, can degenerate into euphoric enthusiasm if it does not take heed of the other side of the authentic

eschatological vision of the Bible. The biblical authors, the apostles and Jesus himself, nowhere predict a total triumph of the missionary church within the period of this present age. Scripture promises us that this Gospel will be proclaimed among all nations until the Lord comes ([Matthew 24:14](#)), but it also shows that this witness will provoke resistance and hatred and persecution of the messengers and their converts as well. Such persecutions have been experienced by the Christian Church throughout the history of her mission. p. 184

In fact, such persecutions were the occasions for the proclamation of the Gospel in its most solemn form and convicting force, the witness in the form of martyrdom. *Sanguis martyrorum est semen ecclesiae*.

A large portion of Christianity today lives under conditions of harassment and persecution, especially in nations ruled by totalitarian ideologies and religious movements. I am sad to observe that the rest of the church in the free world is not really mindful of their persecuted brothers and sisters. The plea for the persecuted church is made in a very low voice not only at ecumenical assemblies, but also at the meetings of the Lausanne Committee and other evangelical bodies. This is in contrast with the Lausanne Covenant, which in its 13th paragraph clearly states: 'We also express our deep concern for all who have been unjustly imprisoned, and especially for our brethren who are suffering for their testimony to the Lord Jesus; we promise to pray and work for their freedom.'

I do not deny that prayers for the persecuted have been offered by individual members of the Lausanne Movement. But these concerns are not voiced in its public statements and activities. The reason is that we do not want to be an embarrassment to our evangelical brethren who are still living in relative freedom in such totalitarian countries. But I do believe that the concern for the suffering ones must figure highly on the agenda of the Church. They themselves use every opportunity to send messages to their fellow Christians, asking them to lend their voices for raising their case before international political and ecclesiastical forums, and experience has shown that merely mentioning their names has rescued them from falling into oblivion and disappearing forever.

But the main incentive for solidarity on behalf of the persecuted church is a theological one: the Church is the body of Christ made up by many members. The service of each member is needed for the healthy functioning of the whole body. The witness of the persecuted is, at the same time, a glorification of the triumphant God and a persuading force for the still unbelieving world, it also serves to intimately unite the afflicted member to the suffering and to the redemptive death of Christ our Redeemer, carrying with it a new enrichment and blessing for the entire Body, the Church universal. I think there should soon be convened an evangelical consultation for exploring exactly these dimensions of martyrdom for the upbuilding and evangelistic growth of the whole church.

It would be an important service to strengthen the ties with our afflicted fellow Christians for the benefit of the whole Church. It would also be a most necessary inner preparation of all Christians for such a p. 185 time, when suffering for Christ's sake will be the ultimate test of our faithfulness, carrying with it a decisive victory over the forces of the great adversary. It is in view of this final battle that St. John in [Rev. 12:10-11](#) says:

And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even on to death. Rejoice then, o heaven and those that dwell therein! But woe to you, o earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short! p. 186

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Book Reviews

LIBERATION THEOLOGY

by Emilio A. Nunez C

Translated by Paul E. Sywulka

(Moody Press, Chicago: 1985)

304 pp. N.P

Reviewed by Sunand Sumithra

If your theology or praxis is evangelical and if you are interested in Liberation Theology, this is the one book you must buy. The author, an evangelical Latin American theologian—necessarily in that order!—who has the experience of preaching the gospel to the poor for forty years in the regions of Central America, and the publishers, the Moody Press, both confirm this.

Written with a loyalty to evangelical faith and to the Latin American people, this book makes an absorbing reading, especially as Liberation Theology is no passing fad. The approach of the book is to discuss Liberationism from a Biblical/theological point of view, particularly considering the Roman Catholic contributions. But the nature of the subject demands also delving into politics, sociological analysis, the questions of poverty, capitalism and the like and the author does not fight shy of the same. It is a risk in Latin America to criticize Liberation Theology and the author has taken this risk in his bold and frank criticism. Primarily, it is written for pastors and theological students, thus is well suited for Seminary class room situations.

The book contains four parts: the historical and social conquest of Liberation Theology; historical outline of Liberation Theology; the method of Liberation Theology; and some fundamental themes of Liberation Theology. There is at the end the author's conclusion. The historical background traces how colonial rule became a hierarchy of oppression, even priestly. Of specific interest is the fact that Christianity in Latin America was an implantation of Christendom, that is the European cultural, social, political system of which the church was only a part, and served the political and economical interests of the elite. Hence, the author affirms, 'the Christianization of Latin America in general (is) ... an imposition of medieval Spanish and Roman Christianity but not an evangelization that would convert the people to New Testament Christianity'. Under the system, Roman Catholic priests had come to power. The Criollos (the native born Spaniards) started the movement for independence and justice. Amid the growth of political liberalism and unrest, it was Protestantism which supplied the weapon to fight against the clergy. Underdevelopment and dependence on the North gained sway. Vatican II radically changed [p. 187](#) Roman Catholic attitudes, and since then there was a rejection of development in favour of revolution, as a solution for the situation.

The next part, the historical outline has four chapters: European influence in Liberation Theology, Church and Society in Latin America, the new Catholicism and the Origin of Liberation Theology. There is a wealth of material in both this and the preceding part giving new insights and historical analysis of the Latin American situation. In tracing the roots of liberation theology in Europe, the author follows the well trodden path of the Barth-Bultmann-Moltmann line whose theologies gave birth to secular and political hermeneutics. He rightly affirms that liberation theology owes its most to Jüergen Moltmann's theology of hope. Other European theologians such as J. B. Metz, and ideologies such as Marxism also are dealt with. The next chapter sketches the history of ISAL (Church and Society in Latin America) taking insights from Marxism, Paule Freiere,

W.C.C., Richard Shaull—the last mentioned was the founder of the ISAL. The achievements of ISAL included establishing an agenda for Latin America, inculcation of greater determination amid worsening conditions, a shiftover from theology to action, participation in the struggles, creation of clear political commitments, mobilisation for social change. This turn of the ISAL to the left was tragic indeed. The book demonstrates how ISAL turned left and died! It was even declared illegal in many Latin American countries. The author meets the theology of ISAL head-on: he assesses that its concept of humanization was only a type of humanism, its stress on the 'New Wavelength' an effective rejection of the revealed scriptures, and that its theology of revolution was diametrically opposed to the Gospel of the Cross. Still, he is fair in affirming, 'ISAL is to be admired for its concern to understand the Latin American social reality in depth and for its attempt to formulate within that context a theology that is pertinent to the basic necessities of its people'. The use of theology as an instrument for social change thus becomes a challenge to the Latin American evangelicals. The next chapter describes what the author calls 'the official new Catholicism' which starts from Vatican II and finds Latin American expression in Medellin (1968) and Puebla (1979). Both the Popes, John XXIII and Paul VI, were tremendously influential during these years. While the former understood social order as established by God for the common good, the latter opened the door to Marxist revolution. Discussing some crucial issues such as the nature of the Church, universalism, the social involvement, the post-Vatican reflections show the struggle of the time to take the context of oppression in Latin America seriously. Thus many episcopal meetings came to justify the praxis of liberation [p. 188](#) and the revolutionary ferment. All the big names connected with liberation theology are discussed: Ernesto Cardenal, Camilo Torre, for their revolution-oriented approach; Helder Camara and his personalist socialism; and so on. The next chapter which deals with the immediate origin of the Liberation Theology is in a way a summary of earlier historical developments, but concentrates on contributions from theologians like Gustavo Gutierrez, Juan Luis Segundo, Ruben Alves and many others.

The next part with only a single chapter, 'A New Way of Doing Theology', is really the heart of the book dealing with the central question of the theological methodology. In the author's own words, '... in liberation theology we are confronted with a new theological method having its own point of departure, its own special relationship to the theology of the church, its own hermeneutic norm, and, of course, its own philosophical framework.' The point of departure is that the Text is the New American context. As such, theology becomes a critical reflection in community from the perspective of liberation praxis, and upon liberation praxis. This blurs the demarcation line between theology and sociology, necessarily. Theology hence becomes 'a second act' (Gutierrez), or a 'second word' (Assmann), or it is equated to the praxis of following Jesus (Sobrinho). In assessing this theological method, the author convincingly shows how a commitment to action becomes a pre-condition to theologisation and a new understanding of the Scriptures is developed: theology is thus turned into an ideology.

The next part containing three chapters dealing with soteriology, christology and ecclesiology gives a clear summary of the *loci* of Liberation Theology. The issues include: social aspect of sin and salvation, Universalism, creation and redemption, exodus as a political event, utopia as the bond between man's political action and God's salvation, eschatological promises and earthly realities, the question of historical Jesus, the Chalcedonian formula, cosmic Christ, the unfolding of the deity of Jesus in his human perception, the death of Jesus as a death of a martyr/prophet, the universality of the church beginning with the poor. Church's unity in working for justice, Kingdom of God, the political option of the Church. An evangelical assessment of these themes is a key

contribution of the book. The last chapter, 'Evangelical theology and praxis for Latin America', is the author's vision and is reproduced in this issue.

Though the titles of the parts and the chapters may not indicate, the book is thoroughly systematic. One regret is that the book lacks substantial exegesis of key biblical passages. Naturally, the context is [p. 189](#) exclusively a Latin American one, so there is also a good amount of interaction with other Latin American Evangelicals. The format and the printing are very good. The titles are precise. The indices at the end—7 pages small print of bibliography, general and Bible reference indices—are very valuable. I commend the book without hesitation to pastors and theologians alike for serious study of liberation theology.

ANTHROPOLOGICAL INSIGHTS FOR MISSIONARIES

by Paul G. Hiebert

(Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985)

315 pp. N.P

Reviewed by Samuel F. Rowen

The right book has finally arrived. Paul Hiebert has produced a much needed book which makes the insights of anthropology accessible to the field missionary. Technically speaking, the book is broader than 'anthropological insights', incorporating useful information from several other behavioural sciences, including communications, psychology, and sociology. The value of the book is enhanced by this interdisciplinary approach. It is not easy to translate the technical elements of a discipline so that they are accessible to non-technicians, but this is a good translation.

The author was born of missionary parents in India and later served there as a missionary himself. (This explains the large number of Indian illustrations in the book.) He received a Ph.D. in anthropology from the University of Minnesota and taught anthropology for eleven years at public universities. He has been Professor of Anthropology and South Asian Studies at Fuller School of World Mission since 1977.

The book is divided into four sections: The Gospel and Human Culture, Cultural Differences and the Missionary, Cultural Differences and the Message, Cultural Differences and the Bicultural Community. The first section is the most explicitly anthropological. Three reasons are given for the value of anthropological understanding: (1) It will assist the missionary in understanding how cross-cultural understandings and misunderstandings emerge in our attempts to communicate the gospel; (2) It provides many insights into mission activities, such as translating the Bible; (3) It can help missionaries understand the processes of conversion, including the social changes that occur when [p. 190](#) people become Christians. In his approach to these topics, Hiebert does not allow these disciplines to instruct the missionary task in a haphazard fashion. He immediately addresses the theological issues which underlie the task of applying anthropological insights to the missionary task. He is first and foremost committed to the task of Christian mission.

The focus of the book is revealed by the word that runs through the last three sections of the book—'differences'. This is of great practical import to the missionary, for it is the understanding of and appreciation for the things that are different which so greatly affect the effectiveness of mission work. The fact that there are similarities is recognized by the author, but not dealt with in detail. One significant omission is the absence of any discussion on possible similarities in the cognitive thought processes of various cultures. Nevertheless, Hiebert's approach acknowledges the fact that it is the differences which first confront the missionary and with which he or she must effectively cope.

Practical issues like stress, the family and the missionary child are dealt with in constructive ways. Missionary parents would do well to read the section on missionary children. Each of these concerns greatly affects the adjustment of the missionary and his or her incarnation of the gospel. The family itself, as a creational structure, communicates the gospel, and Hiebert's anthropological insights are intended to help missionary families in their modelling of the message.

The book is good anthropology, though not technical. Technical concepts are explained clearly. There are points where readers may disagree with Hiebert, especially when theological presuppositions are stated. For example, the author asserts that every culture is capable of receiving and understanding the gospel. Is this true? It all depends on how one answers the question, What is the gospel? Is the gospel of hope to include the eschatological return of the Lord, i.e., the Blessed Hope? If so, what about those cultures which do not have a concept of the future or use the future tense? All agree that this topic is biblically important and presents a difficult problem both for the translator and the missionary. However, is it an essential part of the gospel?

Such questions can be usefully pondered by the reader. However, even if one disagrees with the author, it does not diminish the value of the book. It is clear that the Bible is the norm for his theologizing.

Even people more technically involved in the discipline of anthropology will benefit from reading it. They can learn how to make a technical discipline benefit the non-technical practitioner. [p. 191](#)

Journal Information

Publications Referred to in this Issue

The International Fellowship of Evangelical Student Review

Published by The International Fellowship of Evangelical Students, 10 College Road, Harrow, Middlesex HA1 1BE, England. Subscription rates £2.50, US \$5.50 for two-year (2 issues per year).

The Evangelical Quarterly

Published by The Paternoster Press, Paternoster House, 3 Mount Radford Crescent, Exeter EX2 4JW, UK. Subscription rates £8.40, USA \$21.00 per annum.

Urban Mission

Published by the faculty of Westminster Theological Seminary, P.O. Box 27009, Philadelphia PA 19118, USA. Subscription rates per annum \$10.00 (five issues).

Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society

Published quarterly by Evangelical Theological Society, c/o Reformed Theological Seminary, 5422 Clinton Boulevard, Jackson, MS 39209, USA. Subscription rates: \$15 per year.

Evangelical Mission Quarterly

Published quarterly by Evangelical Missions Information Service Inc., 25W 560 Geneva Road, Box 794, Wheaton, IL 60189, USA. Subscription rates \$10.95, air mail \$17.95 per annum.