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The Structure of Ecclesiastes

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I remember that once I saw a book advertised entitled *The Structure of Love*. That struck me initially with the impression that some things are best left unexplained! But this attempt at understanding the structure of Ecclesiastes is not just an attempt to divide the book into sections for its own sake. Its ultimate purpose is to provide a better understanding of the meaning of the text. It is also an apologetic against the majority view which (out of frustration or confusion) would deny a literary structure for the book of Ecclesiastes.¹

This paper attempts to demonstrate that Ecclesiastes possesses a remarkable, architectonic unity with each verse set like a jewel in a crown—or, better, stitched like a knot in a Persian carpet. Like a carpet, the divisions or seams of the composition have consistently frustrated literary analysts who, like bugs on a carpet, each differ in their perspective. This is perhaps the genius of the work, for the numerous literary analyses have each individually provided a glimpse or insight from a particular angle, as people might differ who view a prism or finely cut diamond from a different angle. The structure is best described by the German term *gestalt* which speaks of a highly integrated, untied whole whose specific properties exceed the sum of its component parts. Each verse and paragraph bears a relationship both to its immediate context and to the book as a whole. This interconnection of thoughts is supplied by parallel words and ideas found in a network of parallel passages. The work of a superior mind, the book magnificently exceeds the sum of its parts and appears to be purposely impervious to analysis in order to accomplish one of its literary purposes, namely, to show man that he is limited in his ability to discover and know the real essence and significance of a matter (cp. 8:17).

As if it were composed by an architect, the structure of Ecclesiastes may be perceived best through mathematical analysis, with each verse representing a number. So argues A. A. Wright. The results of this p. 196 approach appear to verify the assumption that the verse divisions reflect the original autographs. The 222 verses suggest that a multiple is intended with the key word 'vanity' used as a motto and a refrain to divide or sub-divide sections or paragraphs. Corresponding to the 222 verses, the word 'vanity' has a numerical value of 37, a multiple of 222 by six ($37 \times 6 = 222$). Similarly, by adding the numerical value of each letter in the motto (1:2b, 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity') we produce the number 216, the number of verses in the book without the epilogue of [12:9–14](#). The first word of the book, 'words' (*dbry*), also has a numerical value of 216. It is possible that the five occurrences of the root for 'vanity' (*hbl*) in [1:2](#), with a numerical value of 185 (5×37), represent the central 186 verses, the body of the book ([2:1–11:6](#)). Further numerical analysis supports such observations which dovetail with the rhetorical structure, dividing the work into meaningful sections, paragraphs and smaller units.²

¹ For various views, see Brevard Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), p. 587; James L. Crenshaw, *Ecclesiastes: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1987), pp. 34–49; Graham Ogden, *Qoheleth* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), pp. 11–13; Addison G. Wright, 'The Riddle of the Sphinx: The Structure of the Book of Qoheleth', *CBO* 30 (1968), 314–320.

² see Addison G. Wright, 'The Riddle of the Sphinx Revisited: Numerical Pattern in the Book of Qoheleth', *CBO* 42 (1980), 38–51.

A. G. Wright asserts that Ecclesiastes possesses a bifid or two-part structure with 111 verses in each half, based on rhetorical, numerical, and thematic analyses. By identifying the location and repetition of key words, Wright claims to have discovered the author's careful use of the *inclusio* and the refrain to break down the text into meaningful sections and paragraphs. He notes, for example, the strategic clustering of refrains at the end of major sections to provide greater impact. Examples include the repetition of 'vanity' (or 'futility') at the end of ch. 2 (2:15, 17, 19, 21, 23, and 26) and the threefold uses of 'cannot discover' (8:17) and 'do not know' (11:5-6) at the end of chs. 8 and 11.³ Examples of the *inclusio* include the terms 'explanation [-devices]' in 7:25 and 7:29, and the phrase 'wise man' in 8:1 and 8:17.⁴ Wright argues that the structural use of words does not undermine, but assists in developing, a tightly reasoned, coherent argument. In other words, the structure is beautifully interlocked with a logical unravelling of content and ideas.

This study provides further evidence to corroborate Wright's basic thesis and outline of the book. However, there are some differences with Wright, chiefly in the identification of chapter 3 and 9:1-12 as central passages in each half. Rather than focus upon refrains, as Wright did, I want to focus upon the cluster of words and ideas at parallel positions in adjoining and complementary passages. F. p. 197 Zimmerman pointed out that most of the verses are carefully stitched or strung together by at least one common word or phrase in adjoining verses.⁵ I believe that the same principle works on a larger scale between extended passages.

To summarize, I do not propose to attempt to trace carefully the development of the argument in a linear fashion, but will try to show how it coalesces with an architectonic or overarching structure for the whole book. Nevertheless, before we turn to the structure of the book, we do well to sketch the progress or order of argument. The author skilfully switches back and forth between discussions of *work* and *wisdom*. Each major development in the outline first analyzes some aspect of work followed by a treatment of wisdom. Like a pendulum swinging in an ever-widening arc until it completes a full circle, the book presents various analyses of activity or labour that can be observed on the earth as one looks from the present to the past (1:4-8; 1:13-15; 2:1-11; 3:9-15; 4:1-16; chs. 7-8).⁶ Each passage is then followed by a perspective that looks from the present to the future while formulating a sober, wise assessment of man's fate (1:9-11; 1:16-18; 2:12-

³ Wright, 'Riddle', *CBO* (1968), 321-323.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 331.

⁵ Frank Zimmerman, *The Inner World of Qoheleth* (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1973), p. 132.

⁶ The bifid structure within each successively larger section begins with the first poem in 11:4-11, where there is a comparison between the world of nature (1:4-8) and the experience of man (1:9-11). Similarly, the following double introduction assesses the activity in the world (1:13-15) and the wisdom of man (1:16-18). Such a division into two parts carries through the rest of the book. The relationship, for example, of 1:3-11 and 3:1-22 is evident from the parallel verses (1:3, 9, 11=3:9, 15, 22), not just from their similar structure of conjoining the programmatic question of the book with a poem (3:1-8 with 3:9). The following two sections, 2:1-26 and 3:1-22, possess similar formats to the previous units and to each other. The phrase 'I said to myself' heads the second half of each passage (1:16; 2:15; 3:17-18). The relationship between the first parts of each section suggests that 3:10, for example, spins off from 1:13-14, probably for the purpose of reviewing the source of man's dilemma—God. This method continues into the second half where the first part, chs. 7-8 (as opposed to the second part of the second half, chs. 9-11) begins by announcing the investigation to follow (the work of man in 2:3; the work of God in 8:17). It is also worth noting that the second half of the book has a similar format with the initial question of 6:12 answered in chs. 7-8 (see 8:5) and the final question of 6:12 in chs. 9-11.

[23](#); [3:16-22](#); [5:8-6:9](#); chs. [9-11](#)).⁷ The former [p. 198](#) passages look for what is 'good' for man as he works amidst God's work ([2:3](#); [3:11](#); [7:18](#)). The latter passages turn from dwelling on the past ([1:11](#); [2:16](#)) to consider man's present, grievous condition ([1:18](#); [2:17](#), [23](#); [5:13](#), [16](#); [6:2](#)) and his imminent death ([2:14](#); [3:19-20](#); [5:15](#); [9:2](#), [10](#)). It is the genius of Ecclesiastes that such a well-organized argument fits within the grid of a larger literary structure; and to this we now turn. We will examine the book as a whole before analyzing its individual parts.

A. G. Wright's discernment of a bifid structure for the book, in two halves of 111 vv. each, provides a starting point for our method. The comparison of the halves of the book provides some remarkable parallels for our thesis. Each half begins with an introduction of similar length ([1:1-11](#); [6:10-7:12](#)), followed by sections of 32 and 34 vv. respectively, which conclude with the exhortation to enjoy life ([1:13-2:26](#); [7:13-8:17](#)). Some parallels often occur on (nearly) the same line number of each half, like the introductory proverb about not straightening what God has bent ([1:15](#); [7:13](#)) and the pivotal verses in the middle of each section where the author decides to pursue a wise solution ([2:12](#); [7:25](#)). The introductory comments of each half include the admonition to 'see' or 'consider' in terms of what is 'good' ([2:1](#); [7:13-14](#)). Other parallels include the author's determination to 'test' what is good ([2:1](#), with pleasurable experiences; [7:23](#), with wisdom) with adjoining verbs in the first person ([2:1ff](#); [7:23ff](#)), followed by disappointing results characterized as 'futile' ([2:15-22](#); [8:10](#), [14](#)) and a reference to 'the hand of God' ([2:24](#); [9:1](#)).

The centre pieces of each half of the book ([3:1-22](#); [9:1-12](#)) occur in the exact centre of each half, containing 22 and 12 vv. respectively. The *inclusio* 'sons of men' begins and ends these sections, again at (nearly) the same point ([3:10//9:3](#); [3:19//9:12](#) occur at the sixty-first lines). The fifty-sixth line (or centre verse) of each half again advocates the enjoyment of life under God ([3:12](#); [9:7](#)). The sovereign presence of God dominates both passages, occurring eight times in [3:10-18](#) and heading each half of [9:1-12](#) ([9:1](#), [7](#)). Other parallels, showing the close correspondence of chs. [3](#) and [9:1-12](#), include the predominance of the words 'all' ([3:11](#), [14](#), [19-20](#); [9:1-4](#), [6](#), [8-11](#)), 'fate' ([3:19](#); [9:2](#)), 'time' ([3:1-8](#), [11](#), [17](#); [9:8](#), [11-12](#)), 'share/lot' ([3:22](#); [9:6](#)), and the allusion to ([3:20](#)) and mention of Sheol ([9:10](#)). Note also the death of animals in [3:18-19](#) and [9:4](#) and the words 'love' and 'hate' in both [3:8](#) and [9:1](#).

The final sections of each half ([4:1-6:9](#); [9:13-12:14](#)) contain 45 and 50 vv. respectively. Thus, with the initial introduction and poem, the first half has a sequence of 44+22+45 vv. and the second half a sequence of 49+12+50 vv. The chief admonition to enjoy life again [p. 199](#) occurs as a conclusion at the thirty-fourth line of each section ([5:18](#); [11:9](#)) as in the first parallel sections above ([1:12-2:26](#); [7:13-8:17](#)). Other parallels include the references to a king just before ([4:13ff//9:14ff](#).) and after ([5:9//10:16ff](#).) centre paragraphs ([5:1-7](#); [10:2-3](#)), the poor wise man ([4:13](#); [9:15-16](#)), 'many words' ([5:3](#), [7](#); [10:12](#), [14](#)), the fool's lack of knowledge ([5:1](#); [10:15](#)), the fool's words ([5:3](#); [10:12-14](#)), the word 'mistake' ([5:6](#); [10:5](#)), the word 'land' ([5:9](#); [10:16-17](#)), the mention of sleep with rich men ([5:12](#); [10:20](#)), the word 'sweet' ([5:12](#); [11:7](#)), the phrase 'an evil I've seen' ([5:13](#); [10:5](#)), the conjunction of 'days', 'darkness', 'vexation' and 'many' ([5:17](#), [20](#); [11:8-10](#)), the

⁷ These second parts of each section are connected in the same way as the first parts. For example, the phrase 'what will occur after him' in [3:22](#) derives from [1:11](#) (cp. also [1:9](#) and [3:15](#)) and also becomes the 'final question' of the second half of the book ([6:12](#); [7:14](#); [8:7](#); [10:14](#); [11:5-6](#)). For another example, [5:15-17](#) takes off on [3:16-22](#) by stressing the unique grievance of man's inability to accomplish anything between birth and death. Similarly, note the reference to the grave as 'one place' in [3:20](#) and [6:6](#).

verbs 'remember' and 'rejoice' ([5:19-20](#); [11:8](#)), the use of one's 'eyes' ([6:9](#); [11:9](#)), and perhaps the conjunction of 'more' with 'wise man' ([6:8](#); [12:9](#)).

Parallels between these sections suggest there is intended interaction and interplay between the halves of the book. Do the halves speak to each other? For example, is the depressing reference to 'darkness' (i.e. death) in [5:17](#) intended to be dissipated by its corresponding occurrence in the second half ([11:8](#), [10](#)) where the antidote to death's cloudy pall is subscribed? Why not? The author states in [7:18](#), 'It is good that you grasp one thing, and also not let go of the other; for the one who fears God comes forth with both of them.' Perhaps this verse should be applied to the reader who is supposed to balance or juggle the significance of parallel lines or passages.

Though it is remarkable to find so many instances of alignment between the halves of the book, it is no less astounding to find that the same phenomenon occurs within each half of 111 verses, between the quarters of each half. Just as the central teachings on each half can be found exactly in the middle verses of each half ([3:12](#); [9:7](#)), the middle verses of each quarter of the book ([2:10-11](#), [5:2-3](#), [7:25-26](#), and [10:17-18](#)) serve as thematic centres in the 32 or 34 verse passages compared above, which (we will see) are chiasmic. The only exception is [10:17-18](#), which is located in the conclusion of the fourth and last chiasmus. The importance of recognizing the four chiasmi in order to understand the structure of the book is evident. The remainder of this paper will focus upon the viability and relationship of these four chiasmi, which will enable a better understanding of the strategy and focus of the book.⁸ p. 200

The first chiasmus of 32 verses is thematic, containing an introduction ([1:13-18](#)), personal experiences ([2:1-9](#)), central summary ([2:10-11](#)), personal reflections on experiences ([2:12-23](#)), and conclusion ([2:24-26](#)). This chiasmus is also a bifid structure, with parallels between [2:1-9](#) and [2:12-23](#). The two passages first discuss the role of folly, then evaluate the results of labour, ending with a conclusion that there is no profit in labour. Finally, some parallels with the second chiasmus should be noted. There is (1) the initial mention of 'pleasure' as a measure for experience ([2:1](#); [4:8](#)); (2) the loss of the 'fruit of one's labour', at death ([2:18-20](#); [5:15](#)); (3) the relationship of sleep to one's labour, preceding the admonition to enjoy life ([2:23](#); [5:12](#)); and (4) the need for divine enabling noted after the admonition to enjoy one's labour ([2:25](#); [5:19](#)).

After 11 vv. of prologue and 33 vv. of autobiography (or 44 vv. to the end of ch. [2](#)), the author spends the middle 22 vv. ([3:1-22](#)) of the first half of the book ([1:1-6:9](#)) elucidating God's role in the world. After the introductory verse ([3:1](#)), each section of seven vv. ([2-8](#), [9-15](#), [16-22](#)) begins with a reference to time (vv. [2](#), [11](#), [17](#)), respectively dealing with the events in time, the undiscoverable precedents set in the past by God (v. [11](#)), and the unknowable prospects of man in the future (vv. [21-22](#)). As noted already, there are parallels with the centre of the second half of the book in [9:1-12](#).

The second quarter section ([4:1-6:9](#)) has a more elaborate chiasmus. It has two parallel parts ([4:1-16](#); [5:8-6:9](#)) separated by a centre passage [5:1-7](#). There are two halves in this centre passage ([5:1-3](#); [5:4-7](#)) marked by the *inclusio* 'God' ([5:1](#), [7](#)) and 'word(s)' ([5:2](#), [7](#)). Each half of [5:1-7](#) concludes with a reference to 'dreams ... many words' ([5:3](#), [7](#)). The shift from much effort in v. [3](#) to emptiness in v. [7](#) may be parallel to the frustration accorded to labour in [4:1-16](#) and the greater stress upon the lack of satisfying

⁸ The inverted parallel structure of a chiasmus (e.g., a-b-c-d-c'-b'-a') can be understood more clearly by the Western mind if we begin with the middle point and work outward to the end. This method compares similar points (e.g. c with c', then b with b'). As one synthesizes similar ideas or contrasts different ideas into two parallel columns, the content and meaning of the chiasmus becomes discernible.

reward from one's labour in [5:8-6:9](#). The central section of [5:1-7](#) would then serve as a turning point in the second quarter of the book, as would be expected.

This centre paragraph is framed by comments about a king and government ([4:13-16](#); [5:8-9](#)) just like the corresponding centre paragraph of the fourth quarter ([9:13-11:6](#)). Its final verse ([5:7](#)), the middle verse of the second quarter, contains man's highest obligation to fear God, a command also central to the first half of the book ([3:14](#)) as well as the second half where it serves as an *inclusio* for the third quarter ([7:18](#); [8:12-13](#)) and a conclusion for the whole book ([12:14](#)).

Just as [5:1-7](#) has two halves, so does [4:1-16](#), the first half of the second quarter. The *inclusio* 'living' demarcates [4:1-16](#) which is then divided into halves by the introductory phrase 'then I looked again' p. 201 ([4:1](#), [7](#)), the refrain 'striving after wind' ([4:6](#), [16](#)), and the *inclusio* 'there is no end' ([4:8](#), [16](#)). The second half of ch. 4 shifts from the advantage of one (vv. [1-6](#)) to the advantage of two (vv. [7-16](#)), or from the advantage of having no enemy to the advantage of having a companion.

Finally, like the first half and centre part of this quarter, the second half of this quarter can also be divided into halves ([5:8-17](#); [6:1-6](#)) which have many parallels with each other⁹ and also with [4:1-16](#). The first half of this quarter ([4:1-16](#)) discusses oppression ([4:1](#)), death ([4:2-3](#)), the dissatisfaction of riches ([4:8](#)), and a poor lad ([4:13](#)). The last 22 vv. ([5:8-6:9](#)) also contain the same sequence of ideas. Like the first half, the second half also begins with the idea of oppression ([5:8](#)), followed by two parallel sequences which refer to the earning of riches ([5:10-12](#), [18-20](#)), the hoarding and dissatisfaction of riches ([5:13-15](#); [6:1-3](#)), and death and poverty ([5:16-17](#); [6:4-8](#)). Common words and ideas are lack of satisfaction ([5:10](#); [6:3](#), [7](#)), eating ([5:12](#)//[6:2](#); [5:17](#)//[6:7](#)), riches ([5:13](#); [6:2](#)), grievous evil ([5:13](#); [6:2](#)), fathers ([5:14](#); [6:3](#)), good things ([5:11](#); [6:3](#), [7](#)), birth and death ([5:15-16](#); [6:3-4](#)), darkness ([5:17](#); [6:4](#)), and advantage ([5:16](#); [6:7](#)).

Stripping life of any advantage, these issues in [5:8-6:9](#) focus on the concluding exhortation to rejoice ([5:18-20](#)), which occurs in the middle of [5:8-6:9](#) and is highlighted with the term 'behold'. The exhortation appears to serve as a final conclusion to the first half of the book and is echoed in the concluding proverb of [6:9](#) at the end of the 'supplementary' parallel sequence. The location of the exhortation is intriguing, for it could serve as a beginning, middle or end section. (1) The phrase 'here is' (lit. 'behold') begins an earlier section ([4:1](#)) and could serve to introduce [5:18-6:9](#). As a beginning statement for [5:18-6:9](#), vv. [18-20](#) would parallel [5:10-12](#) which also deal with the problem of making a living and enjoying life. (2) Better as a middle statement, vv. [18-20](#) stand at the centre of [5:8-6:9](#) and would be the main teaching of the section, wrapping up the advice of vv. [10-17](#) and introducing ideas developed in [6:1-9](#) (such as one's years or length of life, and the ability or empowerment to enjoy life). (3) But best of all, one can see [5:18-20](#) as a final statement for [5:8-17](#), occurring at the thirty-fourth verse of a quarter section like [2:24-26](#), [8:15-17](#), and [11:8](#). As a conclusion, vv. [18-20](#) would parallel [6:9](#), which also stresses the importance of enjoying the present rather than preoccupying p. 202 oneself with the future. Hence, [5:18-20](#) and [6:7-9](#) would be parallel and function as a fitting double conclusion for the second quarter, or indeed, for the entire first half.

There is good reason to apply [6:8-9](#) to the entire first half of the book. The relationship between the first and second quarters is suggested appropriately in the concluding verse of the first half: 'What the eyes see is better than what the soul desires' ([6:9](#)). The first quarter represents the good use of eyes or the best of what man could see and experience ([2:10](#), [14](#)) while the second quarter represents the futility and frustration of souls caught

⁹ See the recent article by Daniel C. Fredericks, 'Chiasm and Parallel Structure in Qoheleth 5:6-6:9', *JBL* 108 (Spring, 1989), 17-35.

up in the trap of seeking to attain the desires of their appetites (4:8; 5:10–11; 6:3, 7). Desires, by this definition, always exceed available resources. Like 6:9, 6:8 applies to the first six chapters. The first question of 6:8 recalls the relationship of wise and foolish men in ch. 2 and the second question (v. 8b) recalls the issue of riches and poverty in chs. 4–6. These questions also serve to introduce crucial issues left to the second half of the book regarding the relative importance of wisdom (7:11–12; 8:12–13; 10:2–3, 10). Similarly, 6:7 is not just a conclusion for 6:1–6, but deals with the issues of endless labour and eating that permeate all of 4:1–6:6.

The second half of the book begins much like the first half with introductory questions about man’s existence on earth followed by a uniquely conceived group of verses. The evocative string of proverbs in 7:1–12 thus functions like the analogic poem in 1:3–11. The questions in 6:11–12 present the issues of the second half. The question of 6:11, ‘What then is the advantage to a man?’, has already been answered and simply leads to further questions in 6:12. The first question of 6:12 has already been answered to some extent in the first half (cp. 2:3, 24; 3:12, 22; 5:17). The second question of 6:12 is answered most fully in the second half (7:14; 8:7; 10:14). The two questions deal with the chief issues of the third and fourth quarters: (1) ‘finding’ or ‘discovering’ what is good for a man to do (chs. 7–8); and, (2) ‘knowing’ what is the future (chs. 9–11).

The collection of proverbs (vv. 1–12) focuses on seven ‘better’ sayings (the quote of v. 10b makes eight). The twelve verses begin the second half of the book much as 1:1–11 did the first half. Their import is summarized in vv. 13–14 which introduce the second half. To show the consistency of the writer’s method, we should point out that the word ‘futility’ appears to divide the collection between vv. 6 and 7; which would make the word ‘oppression’ begin the second half of the collection of proverbs just as it began the second half of chs. 1–6 (4:1) and the second half of chs. 4–6 (5:8). The twelve verses function to give the better side of life—that of wisdom. One can cope., with life p. 203 better with wisdom and the rest of the book demonstrates the advantage of wisdom in the face of the unknown (8:1; 9:16; 10:10).

The third quarter (7:13–8:17) is clearly chiasmic. Setting off the centrepiece of 7:25–29, the three sections of ch. 8 correspond inversely to the three sections of 7:13–24:

7:13–14	A Man cannot discover the work of God (with exhortation)
7:15–18	B Fear God despite the prosperity of the wicked
7:19–24	C The vicissitudes of the wise
7:25–29	D Man cannot discover an explanation
8:1–9	C’ The vicissitudes of the wise
8:10–14	B’ Fear God despite the prosperity of the wicked

This third quarter begins with the command to consider or 'see' which appears to recur in the middle section ([7:25-29](#)) as an *inclusio* to suggest a divide between the seventeen vv. of [7:13-29](#) and the seventeen vv. of [8:1-17](#). The middle section of [7:25-29](#) is the apex or chief point of the third quarter and is bordered by questions beginning with 'who' ([7:24b](#); [8:1a](#)). The key term 'discover' or 'find', which begins and ends chs. [7-8](#) ([7:14](#); [8:17](#)), occurs seven times in vv. [26-29](#). The term 'explanation' or 'devices', representing the sum total of knowledge, frames this central paragraph in vv. [25](#) and [29](#) and also occurs in the dead centre of the paragraph in v. [27](#).

The correspondence of paragraphs A and A' is thus evident in the *inclusio* 'man cannot discover' which occurs in [7:14](#) and three times in [8:17](#), the last verse of the quarter. A second obvious connection between A and A' is the *inclusio* 'the work of God' ([7:13](#); [8:17](#)), which also functions as an *inclusio* for the second half of the book ([7:13](#); [11:5](#)). As noted already, this third quarter parallels the first quarter, beginning with an admonition 'to consider' ([2:1](#); [7:13](#)) and ending with the exhortation to enjoy life, at nearly the same line of each half ([2:24](#); [8:15](#)). After citing all the problems the wise must face in the world in chs. [7-8](#), the advice to enjoy life still holds true and answers the introductory question of [6:12a](#), 'Who knows what is good for man during his lifetime?'

Paragraphs B and B' of the third quarter weigh the merits of righteousness as opposed to wickedness, advocating the fear of God in spite of the apparent success of the wicked ([7:18](#); [8:12-13](#)). Both passages mention the fear of God, the wicked man, the lengthened days of the wicked, and the righteous and the wicked receiving the reward of the other.

Paragraph C and C' each begin by noting the 'strength' of wisdom p. 204 ([7:19](#); [8:1](#)) and implicitly uphold its practice regardless of circumstance. Other common terms include 'heart' ([7:21-22](#); [8:5](#)) and 'word' ([7:21](#); [8:4](#)). Both paragraphs deal with the exercise of rule and authority ([7:19](#); [8:4](#), [9](#)), insubordination ([7:21-22](#); [8:3](#)) and the limits of the wise ([7:23-24](#); [8:7-8](#)). Another parallel between each paragraph is the question about who can understand the past ([7:24](#)) or the future ([8:7](#)), which apparently reflects the continued fluctuation between a discussion of the past (e.g. [3:15](#)) and the future (e.g. [3:22](#)) in the first half, in answer to the questions in [6:12a](#) and [6:12b](#). Paragraph C is defined by the *inclusio* 'wisdom' ([7:19](#), [24](#)). Paragraph C' has two parallel parts, an illustration ([8:1-4](#)) and an explanation ([8:5-9](#)), evident from the repetition of words in the second part such as 'keep' (vv. [2](#), [5](#)), 'command' (vv. [2](#), [5](#)), 'pleases' or 'delights' (vv. [3](#), [6](#)), 'evil' or 'trouble' (vv. [3](#), [5](#), [9](#)), and 'authority' (vv. [4](#), [8-9](#)).

Between the third and fourth quarters of the book stands the centrepiece of the second half ([9:1-12](#)), which corresponds to the centrepiece of the first half ([3:1-22](#)) in both position and content. As noted above, both centrepieces use the *inclusio* 'sons of men' and each puts the exhortation to enjoy life on the fifty-sixth line of its respective half of the book, the exact middle of its section and the exact middle of its respective one hundred and eleven verses. Another *inclusio* for vv. [1-12](#) is 'man does not know' (vv. [1](#), [12](#)) and also the 'hand' (vv. [1](#), [10](#)). Verses [1-6](#) discuss the certainty of death and vv. [7-12](#) encourage the living of life to the fullest in light of death's approach. The first six verses are framed by the terms 'love' and 'hate' (vv. [1](#), [6](#)). The twelve verses are divided further into four paragraphs of three verses each with each paragraph separated by the refrain 'under the sun' (vv. [3](#), [6](#), [9](#)).

The final quarter ([9:13-12:14](#)) contains a chiasmus in its first half ([9:13-10:20](#)):

9:13	A Introduction
9:14-16	B Wisdom is better than much folly
9:17-10:1	C Wisdom is vulnerable to a little folly
10:2-3	D The contrast of wise and foolish men
10:4-9	C' Wisdom is vulnerable to a little folly
10:10-15	B' Wisdom is better than much folly
10:16-20	A' Conclusion

The first indication of this chiasmus derives from the chiastic arrangement of key terms, such as 'city' ([9:14](#); [10:15](#)), 'king' ([9:14](#); [10:16](#), [20](#)), 'strength' ([9:16](#); [10:10](#), [17](#)), 'words' and 'wisdom' ([9:15-18](#); [10:10-14](#)), 'quietness/abandon/allay' (Heb. *nuah*. [9:17](#); [10:4](#)), 'ruler' ^{p.205} ([9:17](#); [10:4](#)), 'fool/folly' ([9:17](#); [10:6](#)), 'sinner/offence' (Heb. *hata'*. [9:18](#); [10:4](#)), 'weapons/axe' ([9:18](#); [10:10](#)), with the centre verses being [10:2-3](#) or paragraph D.

Paragraph D is the structural and thematic centre of [9:13-10:20](#). It contrasts the hearts (i.e. minds) of the wise and the foolish (cp. [7:4](#)). A shift of emphasis occurs here: before v. [2](#) it is wisdom coping with folly; from v. [3](#) it is folly succeeding for lack of wisdom.

Paragraph C portrays wisdom as both superior ([9:17-18a](#)) and vulnerable to folly ([9:18b-10:1](#)), which is chiastically parallel to wisdom's power ([10:4](#)) and weakness ([10:5-9](#)) in paragraph C'. Paragraph C stresses the small amount of folly needed to undermine great wisdom. Paragraph C' dwells on examples of folly diminishing the wise, resulting in large-scale social upheaval ([10:5-7](#)). The four aphorisms of [10:8-9](#) correspond to the one in [10:1](#).

Paragraphs B and B' counterbalance paragraphs C and C' by stressing that wisdom is better than much folly and strength ([9:16](#); [10:10](#)), in spite of the fact that the words of the wise are customarily ignored ([9:16](#); [10:12](#)). Common terms, cited above, are 'city', 'strength', 'words', 'wisdom' and 'king'. Beyond the borders of the chiasmus itself there are terms framing the chiasmus: bird ([9:12](#); [10:20](#)), bread ([9:7](#), [11](#); [10:19](#); [11:1](#)), hand(s) ([9:10](#); [10:19](#); [11:6](#)), evil ([9:12](#); [11:2](#)), and, perhaps, oil ([9:8](#); [10:1](#)). The chiastic relationship of the opening and closing sections ([9:13-15](#); [10:16-20](#)) dealing with a king is more apparent when both passages are compared in terms of [4:13-16](#). The latter passage, also about a king, supplies the concept of a poor person (Heb. *misken*. [4:13](#)) for [9:15-16](#) and the idea of a youthful king for [10:16](#).

The passages about a king or ruler appear to be strategically interrelated as to their function throughout the book, located just before and after the middle of the second chiasmus ([4:13-16](#); [5:8-9](#)), the third chiasmus ([7:19](#); [8:2-5](#)), and the fourth chiasmus ([9:14](#); [10:4-5](#), [16-17](#)). A reference to kings also occurs just before the middle of the first chiasmus ([2:8](#)). This uniformity of references further supports the literary structure under consideration.

The extended treatment of a king's role at the end of the chiasmus in [10:16-20](#) has a structural and semantic similarity with [10:4-9](#) (perhaps related to the connection of vv. [3](#) and [15](#)). Common terms are 'prince' (vv. [7](#), [16](#), [17](#)), 'land' (vv. [7](#), [16](#), [17](#)) and 'strength' (vv. [10](#), [17](#)). Further, just as the positive recommendation of v. [4](#) is contrasted with several problems (vv. [5-9](#)), so the problem of v. [16](#) is contrasted with several implied recommendations. The formula would appear to be one plus four or five (i.e.v. [4](#) + vv. [5-9](#); v. [16](#) + vv. [17-20](#)). Thus, p. 206 [10:16-20](#) appears to serve in a supplementary role to buttress and reinforce the previous argument, like an appendix. It resembles [6:1-9](#) in role and function at the end of the first half of the book. Its importance should not be minimized, being the conclusion of a chiasmus as well as the midpoint of the last quarter of the book.

Looking back on the third and fourth quarters as a whole, it is important to note further structural indicators regarding their relationship and parameters. First of all, besides their chiastic structures and length, [7:13-8:17](#) parallels [9:13-11:6](#), in much the same way as the first half of the book parallels the second half by the use of the same sequence of key words or concepts: wisdom ([7:19](#); [9:13](#)), city ([7:19](#); [9:14](#)), ruler ([7:19](#); [9:17](#)), sin ([7:20](#); [9:18](#); [10:1](#)), a contrast in the centre paragraph (man vs. woman, [7:25-29](#); right vs. left, [10:2-3](#)), (wise) heart ([7:26](#); [10:2-3](#)), composure before a ruler ([8:2-4](#); [10:4](#)), evil and injury ([8:6](#), [8-9](#); [10:5](#), [8-9](#)), the future and the unexpected ([8:7-8](#); [10:8-9](#), [14](#)), time ([8:9](#) [Heb.]; [10:17](#)), and again, a city ([8:10](#); [10:15](#)).

Secondly, regarding their parameters, these two chiasmi are enclosed together by the key words of the second half of the book: 'the work of God' ([7:13](#); [8:17](#); [11:5](#)) and 'good' ([6:12](#); [7:13](#), [18](#); [8:17](#); [11:6](#)). Other important frame words refer to cursing ([7:19-22](#); [10:20](#)), a city ([7:19](#); [10:15](#)), and scornful words ([7:21](#); [10:14](#)).

The last three paragraphs of the book appear to expand successively upon each other as concluding remarks. As noted above, there are some instances of *inclusio* in [10:16-20](#) from ch. [7](#), and other examples of *inclusio* from [11:1-3](#) that appear in ch. [9](#), but generally speaking, [10:16-20](#) concludes the fourth quarter, [11:1-6](#) encompasses the second half, and [11:7-12:8](#) covers the whole book. Admittedly, [11:1-6](#) does pose some problems for such a simple arrangement, being both a part of the fourth quarter and at the same time hearkening back to the prologue with the mention of water (v. [1](#)), earth (v. [2](#)), wind (vv. [3-4](#)), and the sun in the adjoining verse (v. [7](#)). But these exceptions appear to simply reflect the comprehensive and transitional character of [11:1-6](#) which serves to conclude the fourth quarter while anticipating the final conclusion of [11:7-12:8](#). The final conclusion of [11:7-12:8](#) serves to recall the natural elements and cycles of ch. [1](#) as well as or better than [11:1-6](#) which, tied together by the *inclusio* 'do not know' (vv. [2](#), [5-6](#)), appears to serve two purposes. More specifically, [11:1-4](#) appears to frame chs. [9-11](#) and [11:5-6](#) encloses chs. [7-11](#). Compare the urgent admonition to work hard amidst misfortune and uncertainty in [11:1-4](#) to [9:10-12](#) and the emphases in [11:5-6](#) to [6:12](#) and [7:13-14](#), [18](#) about not knowing the work of God or what is good. p. 207

Keeping in mind the symmetry of the entire work, the third and final conclusion of [11:7-12:7](#) expands its scope to the whole book and appears to act as a counterbalance to the introduction of the book ([1:1-11](#)). It is here that the issue Of the natural cycle is closed and the motto 'all is vanity' is reaffirmed ([1:2](#); [12:8](#)). This final twelve-verse conclusion also appears to balance or reflect the introduction of the second half ([7:1-12](#)) and possibly the twelve verses preceding the fourth quarter ([9:1-12](#)). Considering the similarities between [9:1-12](#) and [3:1-22](#), comparisons can also be made between [11:7-12:8](#) and [3:1-22](#).

This analysis has attempted to show the highly structured parallels between the halves and quarters of the book in order to add further confirmation to the strict

delimitation of paragraphs following the scheme of A. A. Wright. Such structure provides facility in interpretation, accenting the stress on the futility of man's labour in the first six chapters and the inscrutability of God's work in the last six. In the first six chapters the author repeatedly emphasizes that there is no lasting value, advantage, or profit to man's efforts ([1:3](#); [2:11](#), [22](#); [3:9](#), [16](#); [6:8](#), [11](#)). The last six chapters reveals the only possible advantage for man in a world where God's purposes are unclear: the advantage of having wisdom ([7:11-12](#); [10:10-11](#)).¹⁰

Further assistance to understanding the message of Ecclesiastes has been found in the strategy of chiasmic quarter-sections. First of all, each chiasmus highlights the chief topic or subject under discussion at the apex or centre of the chiasmus ([2:10-11](#); [5:1-7](#); [7:25-29](#), and [10:2-3](#)). Each chiasmus also helps to frame a central passage of each half ([3:1-22](#); [9:1-12](#)). Secondly, this structural breakdown emphasizes the climactic and conclusive authority of the series of exhortations which admonish man to enjoy his lot in life to the best of his ability by placing them strategically as a conclusion at the end of each chiasmic section and by highlighting them in the centres of chs. [3](#) and [9:1-12](#). These seven exhortations represent the chief message of the book and give a positive response to the programmatic question ([1:3](#); [2:22](#); [3:9](#); [5:11](#), [16](#); [6:8](#), [11](#)) which questions the value or advantage of man's life and p. 208 work in the face of grief ([2:24-26](#)), despair ([3:12](#), [22](#)), oppression ([5:18-20](#)), injustice ([8:15](#)), and the uncertainty ([9:7-9](#)) and brevity of life ([11:7-10](#)). As noted before, it is amazing that these exhortations match up at the same locations in each half; near the forty-fourth lines ([2:24-26](#); [8:15-17](#)), at the exact centre of each half in the fifty-sixth lines ([3:12](#); [9:7](#)), and at the twelfth line from the end of each half ([5:18-20](#); [11:7-10](#)), not counting the epilogue of [12:9-14](#). It should be noted again that the first and third exhortations of each half occur at or near the thirty-fourth line in their respective chiasmus. Finally, it should also be inferred that what is true of each chiasmus or quarter section is applicable to the structure of the whole book. The centre of each half represents the central message of each half and is not fully applied until the end of a half or the end of the book.

The genius of Ecclesiastes is its unusual, careful utilization of both space and time, that is, the development of both a highly developed symmetry and a closely reasoned, logical, sequence of thought. It is a rare artistic achievement, even in great literature, to have the visual symmetry of a painting and the logical, aural development of a symphony. The reader could miss the structure of the work altogether as the flow of thought is absorbingly complex, to say the least, but the structure suggests and provokes a higher and more sophisticated dimension of interpretation once it is discerned and appreciated. The author would have the reader transcend his customary recitation to attain the higher level of meditation enjoyed by the wise. Subtly and delightfully, the author skilfully leads the reader to a treasure of wisdom which exceeds the sum of its component parts. The highly integrated nature of the work is the expression of a determined effort to search out the nature of the world; and this perception leaves little place for the common view that the book is a fragmented, disorganized conglomeration of miscellaneous and unrelated topics and sayings.

¹⁰ Advantage or profit is not to be confused with man's portion or reward ([2:10](#), [21](#); [3:22](#); [5:17](#), [18](#); [9:6](#), [9](#); [11:2](#)), which refers to man's enjoyment and participation in the good things that God provides. Man's focus should be on enjoyment itself, which should include his work, and not just upon work and its results by themselves. Thus the book teaches that man should try to find a permanent profit from his work, but he should be content with the passing joys that come and go ([6:9](#)). In other words, a man's portion cannot be kept as profit for the future.

Stephen G. Brown delivered this paper to the Evangelical Theological Society's 41st Annual Meeting, in San Diego, California, in November 1989. It is reprinted by permission. p. 209

New Frontiers in African Theology

F. Burton Nelson

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One of the embarrassing realities of contemporary American life is the increasing paucity of geographical awareness about the world. According to a Gallup survey in 1988, only 57% of adults in the United States could locate England on a map. A poll in 1987 among high school students in Dallas disclosed that 25% could not identify Mexico as the contiguous border country on the south!¹ In still another survey, an international Gallup inquiry on geographical knowledge, Americans 18 to 24 years old scored lowest among the developed countries surveyed, well below young Mexicans whose overall level of education is considerably below that of the U.S.A.²

So acute has this problem become that a panel of governors warned that 'the economic well-being of the United States was in jeopardy because so many Americans are ignorant of the languages and cultures of other nations.'³ They recommended a school curriculum which would convey an international perspective and emphasize both geography and foreign languages. 'Global education' momentum is consequently rising in a number of states. Perhaps this momentum will be enhanced by the stated intention of George Bush to be known as 'the Education President'. Hope springs eternal among all concerned citizens.

Geographical considerations relate also to contemporary theology. The globalization of theology has become a profound fact of life which we theologians overlook to our impoverishment and detriment. This point was made fifteen years ago with precision and perception by African John S. Mbiti, and he has continued to underscore it from strategic ecumenical posts both in Europe and in Africa. His probing question concerns the implications for the future of Christian theology, considering that 'within our own lifetime the axis of Christendom will shift from the Northern to the Southern regions of the world ... the p. 210 new centres of ecclesiastical gravity'.⁴ He reports that many theologians of the younger churches are scandalized and affronted that Christian scholars in older Christendom know so little about churches in the Third World. He even suggests that with

¹ 'Global Issues Education', *The Christian Science Monitor*, March 20, 1989.

² *New York Times*, Feb. 27 and March 12, 1989.

³ *New York Times*, Feb. 27, 1989.

⁴ John S. Mbiti, 'Theological Impotence and the Universality of the Church' in *Mission Trends No. 3: Third World Theologies*, edited by Gerald H. Anderson and Thomas F. Stransky (Paulist Press, 1976), p. 6. The essay was originally published in *Lutheran World* (xxi/3, 1974). Dr. Mbiti, a Kenyan, has taught in Uganda, has served as Director of the World Council of Churches Ecumenical Institute near Geneva, and is currently a pastor in Switzerland and a professor of missiology at the University of Berne.

the axis of Christianity tilting southward, there may be justification for considering moving the World Council of Churches headquarters from Geneva to Kinshasa and the Vatican to Kampala, together with the election of an African Pope.

Professor Mbiti reminds us that in the year 2000 there will be more Christians in Africa than in all of North America, more in Latin America than in Europe. Centres of the Church's universality may no longer be Geneva, Rome, Athens, Paris, Berlin, London, and New York, but Kinshasa, Buenos Aires, Addis Ababa, and Manila. Mbiti is quite serious when he asserts that on the one hand, in a geographical sense, the church has become universal due to the great strides in Christian missions over the past two centuries. On the other hand, theological outreach has not matched this expansion; consequently, one-half of Christendom today lies 'outside the fenced cloisters of traditional theology'. Further, 'this theology is largely ignorant of, and often embarrassingly impotent in the face of, human questions in the churches of Africa, Latin America, parts of Asia, and the South Pacific. Thus the church has become kerygmatically universal, but is still theologically provincial, in spite of the great giants of theology.'⁵

The annual statistical data compiled by David Barrett in the *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* graphically supports the impression of shifts in the Christian population. This simple table 'tells it all':⁶

Africa	8,756,400	115,924,200	164,571,000	221,767,300	323,914,900
East Asia	1,763,000	10,050,200	16,149,600	80,101,500	128,000,000
Europe	273,788,400	397,108,700	403,177,600	408,087,100	411,448,700
Latin America	60,025,100	262,027,800	340,978,600	472,902,300	555,486,000 p. 211
Northern America	59,569,700	169,246,900	178,892,500	188,280,000	201,265,200
Oceania	4,311,400	14,669,400	16,160,600	17,866,000	21,361,500
South Asia	16,347,200	76,770,200	106,733,200	138,945,900	185,476,700

These impressive shifts over the last three decades of the twentieth century, especially in the continental areas of Africa, East Asia, South Asia, and Latin America, invite Christians to reckon with a new globalization of theology. To fail to do so is to deny the contours of theological discourse in our time.

This commentary constitutes a 'map' of sorts, delineating theological developments in Africa in recent years. The first section relates to South Africa, the second to the rest of

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁶ David Barrett, 'Annual Statistical Table on Global Mission: 1989', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, January, 1989.

the continent. By its very nature, this paper cannot be comprehensive. It can, however, offer descriptive glimpses of the theological ferment now prevalent throughout Africa. The third section cites a number of challenges and implications for Western Christians.

I. THEOLOGICAL FERMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CHURCH STRUGGLE IN SOUTH AFRICA.

More than eighty per cent of the people of South Africa hold membership in one of the numerous church bodies of the country—Catholic, Baptist, Nazarene, Anglican, Lutheran, Dutch Reformed, Congregational, Presbyterian, Methodist, Assemblies of God, Independent Churches, and others. The theological traditions of the centuries are represented in these varied ecclesiastical groups, each with its own history on South African soil.⁷ It is not necessary to rehearse here the background of the society in which these churches live—the pervasive and vicious social structure of apartheid. What *should* be rehearsed in this context is the undergirding of the system by the theology and convictions of those whites who control the country's economic, political and social power. A few reminders are sufficient—

—that South Africa is a professedly 'Christian nation', the 1961 Constitution stating that God has given the Afrikaners 'their own land';

—that the majority of Afrikaners believe that apartheid is God's will and that it has been his will for the races of humankind to be separate forever; [p. 212](#)

—that Dr. D. F. Malon, a Dutch Reformed minister and the first Nationalist Prime Minister in 1948, expressed the sentiments of many Afrikaners when he said:

Our history is the greatest masterpiece of the centuries. We hold this nationhood as our due for it was given us by the architect of the universe. The first one hundred years have witnessed a miracle behind which must lie a will and a determination which make one feel that Afrikanerdom is not the work of men but the creation of God;

—that white people, who represent just 16.9% of the population in South Africa, occupy and control 87% of the land mass;

—that Africans, who represent 74.7% of the population, are confined to 13% of the land;

—that the vast majority of the people in the land are not permitted to vote;

—that the draconian measures taken by the government to control and subdue the black population are reminiscent of the Third Reich and the twelve year reign of Adolf Hitler in Nazi Germany.

It is no wonder that such iron rule suppression has spawned a church struggle that bears considerable resemblance to the church struggle in Nazi Germany five decades ago. New frontiers in South African theology have consequently emerged, many of which constitute challenges and insights for churches in North America.

⁷ Two useful historical summaries of South Africa's church scene are: Ernie Regehr, *Perceptions of Apartheid: The Churches and Political Change in South Africa* (Hearld Press, 1979); Marjorie Hope and James Young, *The South African Churches in a Revolutionary Situation* (Orbis Books, 1981).

1. A re-examination of the theological traditions represented in the churches, or a 'retrieving' of tradition⁸

The Dutch Reformed Church has for over three centuries held ecclesiastical and political power in South Africa. This power was solidified in 1948 with the victory of the Nationalist Party in the elections, which made apartheid official policy throughout the nation. The Church has sometimes been described as 'the Parliament at prayer', although it is not the established church of the nation. Afrikaner Calvinism, with its adoption of such Hebrew concepts as the chosen people, covenant, and messianic purpose, has sought to legitimize apartheid. The theological nuances of those espousing the separation of the races in South Africa are often missing in the media reports from that beleaguered country. p. 213

Among those leading a 'retrieval' of the Reformed tradition is Allan Boesak, whose name is identified worldwide with the anti-apartheid movement. An ordained minister of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church, he is Student Chaplain at the University of the Western Cape, Peninsula Technical College, and Bellville Training College for Teachers. He is currently president of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. Dr. Boesak's book *Black and Reformed: Apartheid, Liberation, and the Calvinist Tradition*⁹ is a dynamic critique of that perversion of Reformed Christianity which has enabled Afrikaners to offer theological justification for apartheid. The principle of the supremacy of Scripture has been twisted so as to support racially divided churches, as well as a racist, nationalist ideology. The Reformed principle of the Lordship of Christ over all of life has been denied so as to warn the churches and Christian leaders to 'keep out of politics'. Boesak recalls that John Calvin possessed a concern for social justice and that none of its is reflected in the policies of the Afrikaners who claim to be his spiritual descendants. They have never attended to Calvin's perspective on human solidarity: 'The name neighbour extends indiscriminately to every man, because the whole human race is united by a sacred bond of fellowship ... To make any person our neighbour, it is enough that he be a man'.¹⁰ Even Abraham Kuyper, who is often cited by Afrikaners to support their rigid apartheid, separatist policies, must be rescued from revisionists. These words, spoken by Kuyper in 1891 to the Christian Social Congress, do not sound like Afrikaner theology:

When rich and poor stand opposed to each other, Jesus never takes his place with the wealthier, but always stands with the poorer. He is born in a stable; and while foxes have holes and birds have nests, the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head ... Both the Christ, and also just as much his disciples after him as the prophets before him, invariably took sides *against* those who were powerful and living in luxury, and *for* the suffering and oppressed.

Allan Boesak, then, is a clear and articulate voice in South Africa, and throughout the world, aiming to retrieve the Reformed theological tradition in its pristine power, liberating it from the hands of the distortionists. His language is unequivocal and challenging: p. 214

Beginning with our own South African situation, we should accept our special responsibility to salvage this tradition from the grip of the mighty and the powerful who

⁸ 'Retrieving of traditions': A useful phrase by John W. de Gruchy of the University of Cape Town, South Africa. See his *Theology and Ministry in Context and Crisis: A South African Perspective* (Eerdmans, 1987).

⁹ Allan Boesak, *Black and Reformed: Apartheid, Liberation, and the Calvinist Tradition* (Orbis Books, 1986).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

have so shamelessly perverted it for their own ends, and let it speak once again for God's oppressed and suffering peoples. It is important to declare apartheid to be irreconcilable with the gospel of Jesus Christ, a sin that has to be combatted on every level of our lives, a denial of the Reformed tradition, a heresy that is to the everlasting shame of the church of Jesus Christ in the world.¹²

A similar 'retrieval' movement is evident also within the Lutheran Church in South Africa. Manas Buthelezi, bishop of the central diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in South Africa and President of the South African Council of Churches, has been identified with the poor and marginalized for many years. He sees the Evangelical Lutheran Church as 'the main custodian of an historical confessional heritage. It is uniquely in Lutheranism that the acknowledged standard-bearers of a confessional tradition are the poor themselves, at least on the level of all the structures of leadership.'¹³

More comprehensive statements about the 'retrieval' frontier within African Lutheranism are found in a new collection of essays, *Theology and the Black Experience: The Lutheran Heritage Interpreted by African and African-American Theologians*.¹⁴ These writings emerged from an historic conference of Black Lutherans at the University of Zimbabwe, co-hosted by the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago.

Two exemplary contributions are offered by Simon S. Maimela, 'Justification by Faith and Its Continuing Relevance for South Africa' and 'The Twofold—Kingdom—An African Perspective'. Throughout the symposium there is an incisive critique of those European and American Gospel versions of Lutheranism that have muffled the prophetic edge of the liberating Gospel.

2. Black Theology

A second frontier in the South African theological scene has been the evolution of a distinctive Black Theology, accompanied by a strong liberation motif. An early collection of essays by the Black Theology p. 215 project of the University Christian Movement appeared in 1972, but were immediately banned by the South African Government. The original editor, Sabelo Ntwasa, was placed under house arrest while the material was at the printers. Subsequently, the collection was published in England under the title of *The Challenge of Black Theology in South Africa*, edited by Basil Moore.¹⁵

The impact that Black Theology has had in South Africa has been much greater than in the rest of the continent and in recent years has had a powerful impact on the formation of *The Kairos Document*. From my own perusal of the literature, reports, and personal contacts, I would heartily agree with Matthew Schoffeleers of the Netherlands who writes that 'it is no exaggeration to say that in less than twenty years, Black Theology has drastically altered the theological map of South Africa'.¹⁶

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 95.

¹³ For a recent statement by Bishop Buthelezi on the church struggle in South Africa, see the interview with him published in *One World*, November, 1987, pp. 4–5. The bishop has also been a contributor to the Black Theology debate in South Africa.

¹⁴ Eds. Albert Pero and Ambrose Mays, Augsburg Publishing House, 1988.

¹⁵ *The Challenge of Black Theology in South Africa*, edited by Basil Moore, was also published in the United States by John Knox Press, 1974.

¹⁶ Matthew Schoffeleers, 'Black and African Theology in Southern Africa: A Controversy Re-examined', *Journal of Religion in Africa*, vol. xviii, No. 2., June 1988, 99–124.

One of the shapers of the Black Theology movement has been Allan Boesak. His *Farewell to Innocence: A Socio-Ethical Study on Black Theology and Power*¹⁷ is parallel to the rise of Black Theology in the United States in its early stages, especially as represented by James Cone; it also parallels the Latin American theology of liberation. Boesak, the first Black from the South African Reformed tradition to earn a doctorate in theology, perceives Black Theology as the theological reflection on the historical situation in which they live and on their struggle to be free. The gospel itself, he insists, needs to be liberated because it has been held in captivity by those who would reshape it for their own purposes and preferences. Familiar notes with current liberation theologies are prevalent: God is on the side of the oppressed; God in Christ is the Divine Liberator; liberation has socioeconomic consequences; the Bible must be read from 'the underside of history'.

A strong theological influence on Allan Boesak has been Dietrich Bonhoeffer. An integrity of discipleship, costly grace, the ethics of responsibility, the Church for others, the suffering God and suffering people, resistance to oppression and evil—all these Bonhoefferian p. 216 themes can be found throughout the sermons, addresses, lectures, and writings of Boesak.¹⁸

3. The Kairos Document

A third frontier in South African theology is a version of *status confessionis*, culminating in the publication of *The Kairos Document: Challenge to the Churches*,¹⁹ and describing the three predominant theological systems within the churches.

For twenty-five years there has been a running conversation about the parallels between the Nazi Third Reich and the order of society entrenched in South Africa.²⁰ An integral segment of the discussion has been the church struggle in Germany, with particular relation to the Barmen Confession and the establishment of the Confessing Church, as well as the underground resistance movement to the tyranny of Hitler.

The Kairos Document, signed by 156 church leaders in 1985, both lay and clerical, serves as a window into the state of theology and the churches in South Africa. Signatories included a broad spectrum of Christians—Catholic, Anglican, Congregational, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Dutch Reformed Mission Church, A.M.E., Belydendekring, Assemblies of God, Moravian, N.G. Kerk, Baptist, Independent, Evangelical. The opening paragraph conveys the sobriety of the statement:

The time has come. The moment of truth has arrived. South Africa has been plunged into a crisis that is shaking the foundations and there is every indication that the crisis has only just begun and that it will deepen and become even more threatening in the months to come. It is the *KAIROS* or moment of truth not only for apartheid but also for the church.²²

¹⁷ Allan Boesak, *Farewell to Innocence: A Socio-Ethical Study on Black Theology and Power* (Orbis Books, 1977).

¹⁸ It is noteworthy that Allan Boesak gave the keynote address in June, 1988, at the quadrennial gathering of Bonhoeffer scholars in Amsterdam. The address will shortly appear in the published collection of papers by Eerdmans.

¹⁹ *Challenge to the Church: A Theological Comment on the Political Crisis in South Africa* (Eerdmans, 1986).

²⁰ Three helpful volumes on the relation of the Nazi State to the modern South African state are: Brian Bunting, *The Rise of the South African Reich* (Penguin Books, 1964); John W. de Gruchy, *The Church Struggle in South Africa* (Eerdmans, 1979); Sipo E. Mzimela, *Apartheid: South African Nazism* (Vantage Press, 1983).

²² *Ibid.*, p. 15.

We as a group of theologians have been trying to understand the theological significance of this moment in our history. It is serious, very serious ...²¹ p. 217

The Kairos Document has been read in a number of South African languages and circulated widely among the churches, especially the nineteen affiliate bodies of the South African Council of Churches. Three theologies are described in the Document, each of them represented throughout the country.

State Theology—the theology of the South African apartheid state which is ‘the theological justification of the status quo with its racism, capitalism, and totalitarianism. It blesses injustice, canonizes the will of the powerful and reduces the poor to passivity, obedience, and passivity’.²³ It totally misuses biblical texts such as [Romans 13:1–7](#), makes a travesty of law and order, freely labels anyone who rejects its theology as ‘communist’, and claims God as the God of the state.

Church Theology—a theology which in a limited way criticizes apartheid, but which adopts the theme of reconciliation as the key to resolving the problems of the social order. Unfortunately, what is envisaged is not a reconciliation based on true justice or repentance. It is short on sociopolitical analysis and long on privatist and individualist spirituality.

Prophetic Theology—a theology that is described as biblical, spiritual, and pastoral, as well as prophetic. It is strong on social analysis, identifies with the motif of Oppression in the Bible, is unafraid to cite the state as tyrannical, calls for a change of governance, encourages hope in the midst of conflict and struggle, and challenges to action.

One can discern the theological legacies of both Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Karl Barth in the contours of the prophetic theology section. In the growing movement toward a South African Confessing Church, an awareness of a *status confessionis*, a call to obedience and faithfulness in the midst of a critical church struggle, the shadow of Barmen is clear and perceptible.

This challenge has been notably phrased by John de Gruchy:

The Church in South Africa is engaged in an intense struggle, a struggle within itself, and a struggle against an unchristian ideology and political system. It is a struggle for its own soul, a struggle against racism, exploiting militarism; a struggle against compromising the Lordship of Christ over the Church; a struggle for the true unity of the Church which transcends human barriers; a struggle for social justice and peace.²⁴ p. 218

II. THEOLOGICAL FERMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF CONTINENTAL AFRICA

As one moves northward from South Africa to the rest of the vast continent, it is apparent that there is no monolithic category of ‘African Theology’. In fact, the past twenty years has seen a spirited debate about the meaning and application of the phrase itself. A reasonable and simple description by John Mbiti of Kenya commends itself: African

²¹ *The Kairos Document: Challenge to the Church: A Theological Comment on the Political Crisis in South Africa* (Eerdmans, 1986).

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

²⁴ John W. de Gruchy, ‘Spirituality of the Struggle’, *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin*, Vol. V, No. 1, 1984, p. 56.

theology means 'theological reflection and expression by African Christians'.²⁵ Professor Mbiti suggests that there are three main areas of African theology today: written theology, oral theology, and symbolic theology. It is the written theology which has grown by leaps and bounds over the past two decades, rendering obsolete the observation which Mbiti made in 1967: 'The Church in Africa is a Church without a theology, without theologians and without theological concerns.'²⁶

As one surveys the mountain of books, journal articles and reports that have been accumulating over the past quarter century, in general it can be observed that Black Theology, as developed in South Africa, is not nearly so prominent elsewhere. The liberation theological motif, while present, does not play such a visible role. What is prominent and predominant is a movement variously described as indigenization, Africanization, inculturation, acculturation, and adaptation. The overriding concern is to establish that the church can be profoundly African and Christian at the same time.

To illustrate this integrating theme, I have selected four contemporary theologians—an Anglican from Kenya, a Methodist from Nigeria, a Catholic from Uganda and Tanzania, and a Presbyterian from Ghana—so that by focusing on their contributions, we can glimpse something of the theological ferment now in process.

John S. Mbiti

Professor Mbiti, born in Kenya, educated in Uganda, the United States and England, has been characterized as 'easily the most outstanding among Protestant theologians in the field of African Theology'.²⁷ His **p. 219** writings have been prolific,²⁸ although he has not written a systematic theology. Mbiti belongs to a company of African theologians who regard the traditional religions as a preparation for the gospel, and see Christianity as a fulfillment of African religions. He has drawn significant parallels between the world of the Old Testament and the African milieu.

Mbiti is clear that the Scriptures monitor the relationships of Christian theology to the traditional religions and to African philosophy. This sentinel role will insure protection against syncretistic tendencies and a distortion of the *kerygma*.

As long as African theology keeps close to the Scriptures, it will remain relevant to the life of the church in Africa and it will have lasting links with the theology of the church universal. African theologians must give even more attention to the Bible than is sometimes the case. As long as we keep the Bible close to our minds and hearts, our

²⁵ John Mbiti, 'The Biblical Basis for Present Trends in African Theology', *Occasional Bulletin of Missionary Research*, July 1980, p. 119.

²⁶ Cited in David J. Bosch, 'Missionary Theology in Africa', *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, No. 49, Dec., 1984, p. 19.

²⁷ Justin S. Upkong, 'The Emergence of African Theologies', *Theological Studies*, 45 (1984). John Mbiti's writings include: *Poems of Nature and Faith* (East African Publishing House, 1969); *African Religious and Philosophy* (Anchor, 1970); *Concepts of God in Africa* (Praeger, 1970); *New Testament Eschatology in an African Background* (Oxford, 1971); *The Prayer of African Religion* (Orbis, 1975); *African and Asian Contributions to Contemporary Theology* (WCC, 1977); *Contemporary Theology* (WCC, 1977); 'Christianity and African Culture', *Evangelical Review of Theology*, (October, 1979).

²⁸ 'The Encounter of Christian Faith and African Religions', *Christian Century* (August 27, 1980); 'The Biblical Basis for Present Trends in African Theology', *Occasional Bulletin* (July 1980); *Bible and Theology in African Christianity* (Oxford, 1986).

theology will be viable, relevant, and of lasting service to the church and glory to the Lord to whom be honour, dominion, and power unto the age of ages. Amen.²⁹

Professor Mbiti is not entirely sympathetic to the development of Black Theology in either South Africa or the United States. African Black Theology, with its foundational theme of liberation, appears to him to lack an adequate biblical basis. He critiques American Black Theology for its exaggeration of the theme of liberation, its divisive tendency to use the term 'black' with reference to God and Christ, and its tendency to emphasize the theme of oppression to the exclusion of joy in the Christian faith.

Mercy Amba Oduyoye

Professor Oduyoye is a native of Ghana, educated in both Ghana and p. 220 England, and has taught theology at the University of Ibadan in Nigeria. Since 1987 she has been Deputy General Secretary of the World Council of Churches; she is a member of the WCC Commission on Faith and Order and has been the first woman and the first African to serve as president of the World Student Christian Federation. Her writings are impressive.³⁰

Professor Oduyoye has been an active participant in both the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) and the Ecumenical Association of African Theologians (EAAT). As an African feminist, she conceives her mission to be 'to call attention to missiology and to African women's potential for contributing to the theological enterprise'.³¹ She frequently calls her male colleagues to task for not comprehending that 'sexism is part of the intricate web of oppression in which most of us live'.

Of major importance is Professor Oduyoye's insistence that African traditional beliefs and practices must be seriously and respectfully considered by the Christian theologians. One such belief concerns the African recognition of the divine spirit in nature. Another is the African belief that past, present, and future generations form one community. This includes the role of ancestors in the life of Africans. Still another is the sense of wholeness of the person, affirming that there is no separation between a soul and a body, nor between the sacred and the secular. Liturgical practices, including those of the African independent churches, may enrich Christian life—drumming, dancing, extemporaneous prayer, cultic roles, music.

Utilizing African religious beliefs in Christian theology is not an attempt to assist Christianity to capture and domesticate the African spirit; rather it is our attempt to

²⁹ John Mbiti, 'The Biblical Basis for Present Trends in African Theology', *Occasional Bulletin* (July, 1980), p. 122.

³⁰ 'Feminism: A Pre-Condition for a Christian Anthropology', *African Theological Journal*, No. 3, 1982; 'The Eucharist As Witness', *International Review of Mission*, April 1983; 'Reflections from a Third World Woman's Perspective', *Irruption of the Third World: Challenge to Theology*, Eds. Sergio Torres and Virginia Fabella (Orbis, 1983); *Hearing and Knowing: Theological Reflections on Christianity in Africa*, (Orbis, 1986); 'Birth' in *Biblical and Theological Reflections by Women from the Third World*, edited by John S. Pobee and Barbel Wartenberg-Potter (WCC, 1986); *With Passion and Compassion*, edited with Virginia Fabella (Orbis, 1988).

³¹ Deane William Ferm, *Profiles in Liberation: 36 Portraits of Third World Theologians* (Twenty-Third Publications, 1988), p. 55.

ensure that the African spirit revolutionizes Christianity to the benefit of all who adhere to it.³² p. 221

Aylward Shorter

Professor Shorter, born in London, educated at Oxford and Rome, has taught in Uganda, Tanzania, and East Africa. His writings evidence a deep concern for 'Inculturation Theology', a continuing interaction between Christian faith and culture.³³ In this intensive endeavour, he argues for a serious exchange between Christianity and African Traditional Religions rather than for each system to be self-isolated and incapsulated. Such dialogue, he insists, is part of God's own expectation and plan. The whole church is called upon to listen to the voice of African theologies—wholeness of life, symbolism, community. The bizarre title of his volume, *Jesus and the Witchdoctor*, should not mislead us about the sobriety of his approach to healing and wholeness. Shorter espouses a traditional Catholic view of ministry, of ecclesiology, and of the sacraments, yet pleads for an openness and a wide-ranging pluralism in expressions of faith.

Kofi Appiah-Kubi

A Presbyterian lay theologian, Kofi Appiah-Kubi, born in Ghana, educated in Ghana, England, and the United States, is a passionate advocate of a 'theology of the people'. Not as prolific a writer as other African theologians, he has nevertheless contributed richly to the growing body of theological literature.³⁴

Appiah-Kubi is convinced that African Christian theology must take to the streets. It must not be content with the theologies of Barth, Rahner, 'or any other Karl', but rather explore 'what God would have us to do in our living concrete condition'. The orienting principle in our theological task should be 'the poorest of the poor in our p. 222 communities'. In the midst of poverty and hunger, disease, ignorance, oppression, discrimination, torture, rejection, dehumanization, our theology must reach toward liberation and fulfillment for all. Indeed, 'it should be a theology of the people, by the people, and for the people. The task is too precious, urgent, and important to be left only in the hands of church functionaries or theologians, thus the involvement of men and women of all walks and stations of life is called for. It should be office theology, farm theology, market theology, street theology, household theology, etc.'³⁵

Appiah-Kubi adheres to two characteristics of African native religions—the importance of healing and the reverence for ancestors—and applauds their incorporation into the faith and practice of some of the independent churches, or what he prefers to call

³² Mercy Amba Oduyoye, 'The Value of African Religious Beliefs and Practices for Christian Theology', in *Third World Liberation Theologies: A Reader*, edited by Deane William Ferm (Orbis Books, 1986), p. 247.

³³ Professor Aylward Shorter's bibliography is as extensive as any other African Theologian: *Chiefship in Western Tanzania* (Clarendon, 1972); *African Culture and the Christian Church* (Chapman, 1973); *African Christian Theology: Adaptation or Incarnation?* (Orbis, 1977); 'African Traditional Religion: Its Relevance in the Contemporary World', *Cross Currents*, Vol. 28, No. 4; *Priest in the Village* (Chapman, 1979); *African Christian Spirituality* (Orbis, 1980); *Revelation and Its Interpretation* (Chapman, 1983); *Jesus and the Witchdoctor* (Chapman, 1985); *Toward A Theology of Inculturation* (Orbis, 1988).

³⁴ Kofi Appiah-Kubi: 'The Church's Healing Ministry in Africa', *Contact*, No. 29, World Council of Churches, 1975; *Psychology, Religion, and Healing* (Ghana University Press, 1979); Editor, with Sergio Torres, of *African Theology En Route*, Papers from the Pan-African Conference of Third World Theologians, 1977, Accra, Ghana (Orbis, 1979). See especially his 'Indigenous African Christian Churches: Signs of Authenticity'; *Man Cures, God Heals* (Osman and Co., 1981).

³⁵ 'Preface', *African Theology En Route*, p. ix.

'Indigenous African Christian Churches'. The indigenization of worship—the naming ceremony, symbols in weddings, participation of women, drums, hand-clapping, dancing, etc.—may also contribute to the richness of corporate Christian life.

III. CHALLENGES AND INSIGHTS FOR WESTERN CHRISTIANS

The frontiers of theology in Africa have been irretrievably expanded over the past twenty years, alongside those in Central and Latin America, and in Asia. Globalization of theology has become a veritable reality, keeping pace with the shifting of the geographical centres of the Christian Church. It would be a grievous travesty to dismiss these theological developments as late twentieth century expressions of faddism. They do constitute challenges and selective insights for Western theological eyes.

Here are several possibilities to ponder, and to reflect upon as we move towards the twenty-first century.

1. The first challenge is to hear what our brother and sister theologians are saying, both to their own contextual situations, and to the wider Church and world. In truth, these are among the cutting edges, or the growing edges of contemporary theology. The written theologies, especially of continental Africa, are in early stages and have a pilgrimage into the future that is yet to be disclosed.

2. We may also sense the challenge of theology taking sides, as is so compelling in the midst of the agony and the pain of South-Africa. We p. 223 can scarcely be unmoved when hearing these eloquent words from John de Gruchy of Cape Town:

It is virtually impossible for the academic Christian theologian in contemporary South Africa to remain true to his or her vocation without being involved in some significant measure in the struggles of the church and the wider society ... Christian theology loses its integrity and identity as both Christian and theology the moment it is divorced from contextual reality and praxis and becomes an idealistic construct floating in academic abstraction or confined to an ecclesiastical ghetto.³⁶

The signal emerging from South Africa, and from elsewhere in continental Africa, is a plea for a theology that is involved in the struggle for justice and freedom.

3. An auxiliary challenge is to respond in solidarity with the oppressed in South Africa; as well as in other areas of the continent where poverty and hunger, despair and suffering reign. The accompanying *Kairos Covenant* is an option to consider.

THE KAIROS COVENANT

An Initial Response of the U.S. Christians in Solidarity with the Oppressed in South Africa.

This is a time of crisis and judgment—a *Kairos*—for U.S. Christians. God Speaks to us today. In the prophetic cry of our sisters and brothers in South Africa we hear God's Word.

It is a call for confession and repentance for our participation in the sin of apartheid; it is a call to conversion, and we give thanks for it; it is a call to understand and act in solidarity with all who are bound by the chains of apartheid; it is a call to speak out and take action against the fears, the rationalizations, the paralysis, the policies, the structures—whether

³⁶ John W. de Gruchy, 'Doing Christian Theology in the Context of South Africa, or God-Talk Under Devil's Peak', inaugural Lecture, University of Cape Town, South Africa, September 17, 1986.

in church or society, whether in the U.S., South Africa, or elsewhere in the world—against all that contributes to continuing oppression.

The grace of God compels us to respond. The *Kairos* of these times judges our nation as well. U.S. administration support of the government of South Africa is mirrored by a domestic policy, grounded in racism, that imposes economic apartheid. Its victims are disproportionately men, women, and children of colour. The majority of our people remain insensitive to the p. 224 poverty and oppression of their sisters and brothers throughout the world and unaware of our complicity in the systems that inflict and prolong their suffering.

Called to a new radical commitment by the *Kairos* of our times and in active solidarity with our oppressed sisters and brothers in South Africa, we pledge in the name of Jesus Christ crucified and resurrected:

to tell the truth about the evil of apartheid in South Africa and work to abolish it; to offer increased support to the people of South Africa in their own struggle; to support the peoples of southern Africa who are victims of U.S. and South African political, military, and economic destabilization; to speak the truth of justice in our churches; to fight racism, sexism, and economic injustice in our own society; to challenge our social and political structures to send clear messages to the South African government: we will not as a nation tolerate apartheid, and we will encourage all other nations to stand together against it; to renounce a self-centred U.S. lifestyle that exists at the expense of blacks in South Africa and other oppressed people in our country and throughout the world.

The hour is late. The judgment of God is at hand. God asks us to love more deeply, work more diligently, risk more courageously. We give thanks to God for this opportunity to help prepare the way for the gift of a reign of justice in which the present signs of death will be swept away and God's new Life will fill us all.

4. The continuing quest to relate faith to culture, the probing questions of indigenization and inculturation, largely in continental Africa, but to some degree in South Africa, have profound relevance for the ongoing mission of Christ's Church. How do we hear the new sound of respect for African traditional religions? Does the motif of ancestry arrest our interest? Is John Mbiti right when he speaks of 'the God already known'?

5. If there is a church struggle being waged in South Africa, and in other parts of the African continent, how would we depict our own Western struggle? In the light of the giant issues we face—racism, sexism, nuclearism, militarism, homelessness, AIDS, violence, affluence, boredom, political corruption, educational impotence, health care costs, sexual promiscuity—is ours not also a church struggle with breathtaking consequences?

I have no doubt about the answer.

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The Gospel

Hugh Wetmore

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In today's world, I hear many confusing references to the 'gospel'. I hear the term 'gospel' used almost as a synonym for the whole of God's written revelation in Scripture. I hear the 'gospel' defined in complicated philosophical terms that ordinary people, let alone the poor, cannot understand. I hear the gospel treated as plasticine, with a content that depends not on God whose gospel it is, but on the felt needs of people, so that the gospel is defined as being that which constitutes 'Good News' for different people. Similarly, others describe the gospel as dependent on the context for its content. I hear some decry any attempt to express the content of the gospel in words, alleging that these are inescapably contextualized formulations of the gospel, even if the very words of Scripture are used. Others devalue the verbal proclamation of the gospel message, emphasizing visual and experiential communication. For yet others, the gospel is presented as a spiritual psychosomatic cure-all for man's ills, and a guarantee of a 'hassle-free' life ever after. For many people, the 'gospel' is a set of religious requirements which must be done. For others it is so 'free' that it has become 'cheap'. I hear others use the gospel as a magic formula which, if one gives the right answers, guarantees eternal life.

It is against this background of widespread confusion that I present this personal Bible study concerning 'the gospel'. I welcome the reader's evaluation.

Each generation has the joyful responsibility of 'defending and confirming the gospel' ([Phil. 1:7](#)) because there are always 'those who are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ', introducing confusion and influencing people to 'turn to a different gospel' ([Gal. 1:6, 7](#)). While Christians may hold different views on many issues and interpretations of Scripture, and should be tolerant of these differences ([Rom. 14:5](#), [Phil. 3:15, 16](#)), we may not differ concerning the 'gospel'. If anyone preaches a gospel other than the one Paul preached, 'let him be eternally condemned!' This is a very serious matter. We must ensure our gospel is the gospel Paul preached ([Gal. 1:8, 9](#)).

But what about 'the gospel of the kingdom' which Jesus preached? Some have alleged that Jesus' gospel and Paul's gospel were not the [p.226](#) same, and that Paul hi-jacked Jesus' gospel—and the Church. Paul denies this. In fact he did once wonder whether the gospel he had received directly 'by revelation from Jesus Christ' was the same gospel that the other apostles had received from Jesus in the flesh—so he went to Jerusalem to check out his gospel with the other apostles. He was relieved to find that 'these men added nothing to my message', that they recognized he had been 'entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles just as Peter had been to the Jews', and that these apostolic 'pillars' in the Church 'gave me the right hand of fellowship, recognizing the grace given to me' ([Gal. 2:6-9](#)). So we can confidently affirm that the gospels of Jesus, of the eleven apostles and of Paul, are one and the same in essence.

But what about the references to the gospel in the Old Testament (e.g. [Isaiah 52:7](#))? Paul affirms that the gospel he preaches is the same 'gospel of God [that he] promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding his Son ...' ([Rom. 1:1, 2](#)). He then wrote his *magnum opus*, this letter to the Romans, expounding this gospel in detail. The gospel promised in the Old Testament Scriptures, and the gospel Paul preached, are one and the same in essence.

I believe that this is one of the reasons the Holy Spirit allocated so much space in Scripture to the preaching and teaching of the apostle Paul regarding the gospel. As God drew his written revelation to a close, he wanted to entrust to his Church the clearest

possible statement of his gospel. So he gifted Paul to understand, proclaim and explain the gospel to more people, and to leave a greater written legacy, than any other apostle.

Paul was very conscious of having received the gospel as a sacred trust, to be passed on to others: 'The gospel I received, I passed on to you as of first importance' (1 Cor. 15:3), for 'God had entrusted to me his glorious gospel' ([1 Tim. 1:11](#)). The gospel in its essential content may not be changed or modified, even though different times and situations will make it necessary to change the way it is presented.

THE ESSENTIAL CONTENT OF THE GOSPEL

It is this 'essential content' of the gospel that we must now seek to identify. We turn to the authoritative Scriptures.

There are six passages of Scripture where the Holy Spirit specifically reveals the *content* of the gospel message. I regard these as very important in our search, because they are written with the express *purpose* of stating the content. We do not have to deduce from implications. [p. 227](#)

[Rom. 1:1-17](#) Paul introduces the theme of his letter: it is a treatise on the Gospel.

[Rom. 2:16](#) 'My gospel declares that ...'

[1 Cor. 15:1-4](#) 'I remind you of the gospel ...'

[Col. 1:21-23](#) 'This is my gospel ...'

[2 Tim. 1:8-11](#) 'This is the gospel ...'

[2 Tim. 2:8](#) 'This is my gospel ...'

Let these passages of Scripture decide what the essential themes of the Gospel are.

- a. Jesus Christ (8x)
- b. Jesus is descended from David (2x)—his humanity
- c. Jesus died (on the cross) (5x)
- d. Jesus rose from the dead (3x)
- e. We are sinners (2x)
- f. We must believe (4x)
- g. Then we will be saved (4x), justified and made holy in God's sight (3x), be reconciled to God (1x) and have eternal life (1x)
- h. The gospel is given in the Scriptures (3x)
- i. We must be continually reminded of the gospel (2x)

Jesus Christ gave his Great Commission, five expressions of which are given: [Mt. 28:18-20](#); [Mark 16:15, 16](#); [Luke 24:44-49](#); [John 20:21](#); [Acts 1:8](#). It is Luke who describes most clearly the *content* of their message (see chart): Jesus Christ, his death and resurrection, the fact of our sinfulness, repentance, forgiveness and the revelation of this message in Scripture. See the strong similarity of themes in Jesus' given content, and Paul's received-and-passed-on content of the gospel.

Three fairly complete presentations of the gospel are recorded in the Acts of the Apostles: [Acts 2:14-40](#); [Acts 13:16-48](#) and [Acts 17:22-31](#). Note how strongly the same gospel themes recur. For me this consistent emphasis on a few major themes gives me a confidence based on Scripture that these are the essential themes for any reasonably complete presentation of the gospel today. These constitute the essential content of the gospel message.

This study of the content of the gospel can be expanded by further pursuing a study of each of these essential gospel-themes. God wants to lead us ever deeper in his revelation on these themes in Scripture.

Another analysis of the content of the gospel reveals repeated use of two phrases in Scripture: 'The gospel of Jesus/Christ' (14x) and 'The gospel of the kingdom' (9x). These are highly significant.

The first emphasizes that the gospel is not about what we must do, [p. 228](#) neither is it a philosophical system, nor is it man-centred (dependent for its content as 'good news' on the condition of the recipient, or on his context). The gospel belongs to Jesus Christ. It has its source in him. It is all about him—who he is, and what he has done in grace. It can be rightly said that the gospel is a *person*—Jesus Christ. In fact, Paul says as much in [2 Tim. 2:8](#): 'Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel.' The word-study analysis given in the chart would be wooden and lifeless if it weren't for the fact that it shows that every reference to the gospel is also a reference to Jesus Christ! And he is the dynamic God-man, who died and is alive for evermore, the Saviour of the world.

The second frequently mentioned description of the gospel refers to the Kingdom of God. It is 'the gospel of the kingdom'. This Jesus Christ is King. He brings in his person the rule of God. (Paul referred to this same theme in his emphasis that 'Jesus Christ is Lord' ([1 Cor. 12:3](#); [Phil 2:11](#))). The synoptic Gospels introduce Jesus' public ministry in these words: 'Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news [gospel] of God. "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news [gospel]"'. ([Mark 1:14, 15](#).) He demonstrated his kingly power over untameable spiritual forces of evil: 'If I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you' ([Mt. 12:28](#)). His ultimate victory over the devil and all his demons, over sin and death, was demonstrated in the central events of the gospel: Jesus 'disarmed the powers and the authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross' ([Col. 2:15](#)). This was the victory of which Jesus himself spoke when he foretold his death on the cross: 'Now the prince of this world will be driven out, and when I am lifted up [on the cross] I will draw all men unto me' ([John 12:32, 33](#)). Paul enjoyed describing the death-resurrection victory of Jesus, and his total kingly rule: 'God exerted his mighty strength in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority ... and God placed all things under his feet ...' ([Eph. 1:19-22](#)). The Gospel of the Kingdom emphasizes that in the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ God has demonstrated his conquest of all evil, and his kingly rule over all creation. Sinners are saved when they 'believe in the Lord Jesus Christ' ([Acts 16:31](#); [1 Cor. 12:3](#)), 'denying themselves, taking up their cross and following Jesus' as Lord of their lives ([Luke 9:23](#)).

It is significant that Luke sums up Paul's evangelistic ministry using both these gospel-related terms: 'He preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ' ([Acts 28:31](#)). [p. 229](#)

THE GOSPEL—THE ROOT AND THE FRUIT

I believe it is important to distinguish between the root (the essence) of the gospel and the fruit (the results) of the gospel. Failure to do so can lead to a 'salvation by works' that negates the grace of God. God makes this distinction most clearly when he teaches that 'it is by grace you are saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do' ([Eph. 2:8-10](#)). 'He saved us, not by works of righteousness which we had done, but because of His mercy.... This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good' ([Titus](#)

[3:5, 8](#)). Those who say that the essential content of ‘the gospel’ includes ‘doing good’ confuse the root with the fruit, and ‘set aside the grace of God’ ([Gal. 2:21](#)).

Paul rejoiced that ‘all over the world the gospel is bearing fruit and growing’, and describes this fruit and growth more fully as ‘bearing fruit in every good work, and growing in the knowledge of God’ ([Col. 1:6, 10](#)). Good works are the fruit of the gospel, not the gospel itself.

A relevant example of this distinction is found in [Gal. 2](#). Some people today believe that ‘the gospel is helping the poor’. In this chapter Paul specifically ‘sets before (the apostles) the gospel that [he] preaches’ to ascertain whether it was the same gospel they were preaching. It is. They have compared the contents of the gospel messages they preached, and found them the same. The discussion is over. Then the apostles added a further exhortation: ‘They asked that we should continue to remember the poor’, and Paul replies, ‘Of course, we are eager to do this.’ The issue of ‘remembering the poor’ was not part of the essence of the gospel, but was a definite, required ‘fruit’ of the gospel.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE GOSPEL

Similarly, we must not confuse the essence of the gospel with the implications of the gospel. The sinner responds to the gospel, repents and trusts Jesus. He is saved. If he has not done so before, he now begins to realize the implications of the gospel—and he will spend the rest of his life learning more and more what the gospel implies, ‘working out his salvation’ as God works in him to will and to act according to his good purpose ([Phil. 2:12, 13](#)). This is the process, under the powerful influence of the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit, of [P. 230](#) becoming like Christ ([Rom. 8:29; Gal. 4:19](#)), of ‘being transformed by the renewing of your mind’ ([Rom. 12:2](#)).

‘The biblical gospel has inescapable social implications’ (*Manila Manifesto*, A.4.4.). For example, racial segregation is ‘not acting in line with the truth of the gospel’ ([Gal. 2:14](#)). Accepting the gospel of God’s Kingdom means accepting his standards of justice and righteousness ([Mt. 6:33](#)). We respond to the mercy of God, received in the forgiveness of our sins according to the gospel, by forgiving those who have sinned against us ([Mt. 18:15–35](#)). These responses are not intrinsic to the gospel itself, which majors on God’s gracious work in saving us. But these are intrinsic to the fruit of the gospel. They are necessary proof that the gospel is real in the life of the one who trusts Jesus Christ. This is what is meant by ‘being obedient to the faith’ ([Acts 6:7](#); see also [Rom. 16:25, 26](#)). It is God’s requirement that in all circumstances we ‘conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ’ ([Phil. 2:27](#)). The Bible often reminds us that we are known by our fruit ([Mr. 7:17; Mt. 12:33; Mt. 13:23; James 3:9–12](#)).

EVANGELISM

Evangelism is the act and process of communicating the gospel, the good news. The Lausanne Covenant, reaffirmed at Manila, describes evangelism as ‘spreading the good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead according to the Scriptures, and that as reigning Lord he now offers the forgiveness of sins and the liberating gift of the Spirit to all who repent and believe.’

In Scripture, the most common word associated with the gospel is ‘proclaim’. As a herald announces good news, so we announce the gospel. Whatever else it is, it is inescapably verbal. If we remove the verbal element from evangelism in the Scripture, we hardly have any record of evangelism at all. The gospel is a ‘message’, and it must be given as such. ‘Evangelism itself is the proclamation of the historical, biblical Christ as Saviour

and Lord, with a view to persuading people to come to him personally and so be reconciled to God' (Lausanne Covenant 4). The ministry of Jesus clearly distinguishes between the verbal proclamation of the kingdom of God, and the acts of loving mercy and power that accompanied it (e.g. [Mt. 9:35](#)). Just as we have distinguished the root of the gospel from the fruit of the gospel, and then insisted that they may never be separated, so we must distinguish between the proclamation of the gospel from acts of mercy and power, and then insist that they may never be separated. I believe that to blur [p.231](#) these distinctions will blunt the edge of our evangelism, and to separate these elements will nullify our evangelism.

As I try to encapsulate the wider picture of evangelism, I identify these distinct but necessary elements:

Incarnation. Identifying with the people to whom we bring the gospel. Winning their confidence, learning their world-view, earning the right to speak. Jesus found this essential in his evangelistic assignment; how much more must we.

Personal integrity. We must live the life that we preach. The gospel must be seen to be bearing fruit in our lives ([Rom. 2:17-24](#)). Those who fail in this area, fail in the total task.

Deeds of mercy and power. Love can break down barriers, melt hard hearts. Love is especially important among those in the Church who are spreading the good news ([John 13:34, 35](#)). Jesus helped people because he loved them. We must beware of using 'love' to manipulate people into the kingdom of God; the test is—do we stop loving them *when they do not respond*? Signs of God's power over demons and sickness are also valuable companions to evangelism. Jesus demonstrated the rule of God in this way. But again we must not try to use the power of God to manipulate people into the Kingdom. Jesus found that miracles were not all that effective in persuading people to come to him. They enjoyed the benefits of his power, but often turned away from commitment to him personally ([John 6:26](#), and many other comments in this Gospel, make this point).

Sacrifice and suffering. Evangelism in Jesus' way is costly. Love is self-denying sacrifice. 'We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us. Surely you remember, brothers, our toil and hardship; we worked day and night in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you' ([1 Thess. 2:7-9](#); see also [Acts 20:17-35](#)).

Proclamation. The verbal presentation of the essential elements of the gospel message, in terms and concepts appropriate to the people being reached.

Persuasion. ([2 Cor. 5:11](#)). Our love and concern for the salvation of others will not allow us to proclaim the gospel with a 'take it or leave it' attitude. But neither will we err on the opposite extreme, or exerting undue pressure on people, and so either plucking unripe fruit, or antagonizing them in a way that pre-empts later conversion. [p.232](#)

Leading a person to repentance and faith in Christ. This is the immediate (short-term) goal of evangelism. The net that is cast out must be drawn in ([Acts 2:38-41](#)). It is important to see this as the sinner's *response* to the gospel, not as a way of achieving salvation.

Discipling. This is a long-term process, involving the sacrifice of time, and much patience. This is the real, long-term goal in evangelism. Jesus sent us to make disciples, not converts ([Mt. 28:18](#)). Baptism should occur early in the discipling process. The main elements in discipling are (a) modelling the Christian life: 'Follow my example, as I follow the example

of Christ' ([1 Cor. 11:1](#)); (b) teaching to observe 'all that Jesus commanded us'—a pretty full syllabus, touching the whole of life. It is my concern that evangelicals have usually taught only basic devotional habits (pray, read the Bible, go to church, witness) and have failed to disciple in other more practical areas of life—the use of money, value-systems, marriage and family relationships, sociopolitical issues, work, missions, community responsibilities, education, health, etc. Jesus disciplined his followers in all these areas.

Reproduction. We should expect those we disciple to reach the point where they begin to win others to Christ, beginning with 'incarnational' rapport-building, and leading on to discipling and reproduction. In fact, the sooner this skill is developed, under the anointing of the Spirit of God, the wider the network of friends outside the Church will be influenced for Jesus. For it is a fact that young Christians still have many friends 'outside', but older Christians tend to have more friends 'inside' the Church.

SOCIAL ACTION

I find myself in ready agreement with the CRESR *Report on the Relationship Between Evangelism and Social Responsibility*. *Inter alia* it spells out this relationship in three valuable ways: as a bridge into the lives of people who need the gospel; as a companion to evangelism; and as a result of evangelism—the young Christian's heart is filled with love that must work to remove social evils that oppress people. I agree with the Lausanne Covenant (5) that social action and political liberation are not *per se* evangelism, yet both are part of our Christian duty. In this regard I find it useful to see the 'mission' of Christ and his Church in wider terms than 'evangelism', which lies at the heart of our mission, but which is more specific than our total calling in Christ's service.

My overarching rubric for the place of social action in the life of the [p. 233](#) Christian is found in the 'fruit of the gospel', that purpose which God has in saving us: 'That we should be conformed to the image of his Son' ([Rom. 8:29](#)). The gospel 'calls' us into this life-long process of becoming like Jesus, till ultimately we see him as he is and become glorified, like him ([1 John 3:1-3](#)). In this process we will respond as he did to the social evils of the world around us. This will be costly, as it was for him.

A parallel rubric is that of 'knowing God'. As we grow in the knowledge of God, so we become more 'godly' ('godlike'). His attributes of love, justice, righteousness are infused into our lives, and we begin to behave more as God does—loving the unloved and marginalized, angry at injustice, active in promoting righteousness—in our own lives and in society.

CONTEXTUALIZATION

Peter Kuzmic, at Lausanne II in Manila, rightly warned against the danger of 'that kind of relevancy that amputates the gospel. The *context* changes, but the *content* of the gospel never changes.' I believe this is both biblical and necessary to emphasize as we face the challenges of today's theological trends.

The three major gospel sermons in the Acts of the Apostles illustrate beautifully how the content of the gospel is the same in each situation, but the way it is presented varies with each situation. That is why I can say that 'the gospel can never be contextualized', but 'evangelism must always be contextualized'. Let us examine these three sermons:

[Acts 2:14-40](#) The gospel is preached to orthodox Jews in Jerusalem, shortly after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost. The

bridge into the message is contextual to the hour! The message is presented in terms of their Jewish background.

[Acts 13:16–48](#) The gospel is preached to Jews of the Dispersion at Pisidian Antioch. Proselytes are also present. Paul rehearses at length the history of the Jewish nation, a story that wins their attention. He refers often to Old Testament Scriptures.

[Acts 17:22–31](#) (interrupted before he is able to finish his message). This time the gospel is presented to heathen Greek philosophers in Athens. Paul's introduction is a local idol he had observed, and from this starting point he spoke of God the greater Creator. It is a philosophical discussion comparing idols with the true God. He cites a Greek writer, not a Hebrew prophet.

Yet in each sermon the basic elements of the gospel message are [p. 234](#) apparent. The essential content of the gospel is there, but it is presented differently each time, in a way that is understandable to the audience. *Contextualization must not alter the content of the gospel message, but it will decide the 'entry point' into the audience's worldview, and the way it is explained.*

A great danger in attempting to contextualize the gospel is that it can be subject to 'man-pleasing'. In our noble desire to make the gospel *intelligible* to people, we easily fall into the danger of making the gospel *acceptable* to people. We tell worried people that the gospel will solve their worries. We tell ambitious people the gospel will give success. We tell oppressed people the gospel will give them liberation. We find ourselves asking, 'What do they want?' Then we make the gospel suit their needs.

Paul faced this temptation—and avoided it. By God's grace we can avoid it too. After Paul made his unpopularly harsh anathema on all who preach a different gospel, he posed the question that revealed the temptation he had just overcome: 'Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be the servant of Christ...' ([Gal. 1:10](#)). 'We dared to tell you the gospel in spite of strong opposition... We speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts ... We were not looking for praise from men' ([1 Thess. 2:1–6](#); see also [2 Cor. 4:7–12](#)).

CONCLUSION

There is an essential *content* to the gospel, which is explicitly stated in six passages of Scripture. These common elements of the gospel message are in harmony with the Great Commission, the teaching of Jesus, and the message of the Old Testament Scriptures concerning Jesus. The gospel centres in the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ, who brought the kingdom of God into this evil, broken world. Sinners respond to the gospel in repentance and faith.

This gospel bears fruit in the lives of those who receive it. This fruit must be distinguished from the objective message of the gospel, but must never be separated from it. If there is no sign of fruit, the person has not received the true gospel, and is not saved. The gospel also has many implications in personal living, and in society. Again, these implications must be distinguished from the essential gospel itself, but must not be separated from it.

Evangelism is the act and process of spreading the gospel. It involves [p. 235](#) the following elements: Incarnation, Personal Integrity, Deeds of Mercy and Power, Sacrifice and Suffering, Proclamation, Persuasion, Leading a sinner to faith in Christ, Discipling and Reproduction.

Evangelism and social action are distinct, and must not be confused. But they must not be separated either, for both are part of our total mission in God's purpose for this world.

Hugh Wetmore is General Secretary of the Evangelical Fellowship of South Africa. p. 236

A Commentary on the 'Manila Manifesto'

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The Australian Evangelical Alliance Council meeting in Melbourne in August 1989 commended the Manifesto of the Lausanne Congress II in Manila to member bodies for study and action. Here is a commentary and evaluation from the perspective of the AEA Statement of Faith prepared by the AEA Theological Commission and edited by the Convenor, Revd. Dr. David Parker. Some of the authors were present at Manila while others are heavily involved in EA activities and others are sympathetic observers.

INTRODUCTION: A MANIFESTO OF CONVICTIONS

by Revd. Dr. David Parker, MA, BD, PhD,
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The original Lausanne Congress held in 1974 was certainly of great importance, and not unexpectedly, high hopes were held for Lausanne II as it met at Manila in July 1989. On the world scene, many people connected with the World Evangelical Fellowship/Evangelical Alliance (WEF/EA) are involved in the Lausanne Movement (LCWE), although relationships between the two bodies are still not satisfactory. Apparently there will be two world bodies for evangelicals, each with its own character—WEE as a fellowship of national Alliances providing a channel for evangelical unity on the basis of commitment to its doctrinal statement, and LCWE as a self-perpetuating movement promoting world evangelization. There has been some cooperation between WEF and LCWE (especially in joint conferences), but LCWE has declined any closer organizational relationship.

LCWE's emphasis upon 'world evangelization' is clearly displayed in the Manifesto, which is not presented as a general doctrinal statement, but as a 'public declaration of convictions, intentions and motives'. It therefore differs from the 'covenant' of Lausanne I by which signatories committed themselves to cooperation in world evangelization and so created the 'Lausanne movement'. Since 1974, this Movement has grown rapidly, with ever widening scope and organizational complexity.

The Manifesto is divided into two parts—21 ‘Affirmations’ and a 12-section [p. 237](#) ‘Explication’. Most of the issues in the first part are taken up in the Explication, but not in the same groupings, which is somewhat confusing. The second part is arranged around one of the congress themes, ‘Calling the Whole Church to take the Whole Gospel to the Whole World’, a statement found originally in the Covenant (para. 6).

It is stated that the Manifesto is to be taken ‘alongside’ the Covenant, a document of 15 sections, widely accepted as signalling a highly significant development in evangelical thinking especially on Scripture, evangelism, social concern and culture (# 2, 4, 5, 10).

The Lausanne Covenant statement on Scripture clearly asserted its divine inspiration, and affirmed it as ‘the only written word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice’. The Manifesto, however, states that ‘in the Scriptures ... God has given us an authoritative disclosure of his character and will, his redemptive acts and their meaning, and his mandate for mission.’ Admittedly, this is supplemented in other Affirmations and in the Explication by references to the ‘biblical gospel’.

But it is not clear why the statement is worded in this way or how it is to be tied to the ‘biblical gospel’ as this is later elaborated. For example, is Scripture a disclosure of God’s will alongside other similar disclosures? Or is this statement to be taken in broader context? Given that in some way all Christians acknowledge the Scriptures, it is here affirmed that they constitute ‘divine revelation’ and hence they must be the authoritative guide for faith and practice, especially in regard to evangelization. Certainly, the sections of the Explication dealing with the ‘whole gospel’ do not give any ground for thinking that the Manifesto is less than ‘biblical’. (For example, there is a clear exposition of the universality of sin and its consequences, the deity and saving work of Christ, and the necessity of the gospel for the salvation of humanity.)

In accordance with the congress theme, the Manifesto focuses more attention on the church and its mission to the world than the Covenant did. It includes sections on the functions of the local church, the roles of pastors and lay people, the need for integrity in Christian living and relationships within the world church. Similarly, the final section largely comprises an analysis of the world from the perspective of strategy for world evangelization, with many references to current situations such as *glasnost*, missionary visas and industrialization. This is welcome evidence of a serious commitment to the Lausanne Movement’s goal of fostering world evangelization, but there is a noticeable trend away from the humility and sensitivity of the Covenant. [p. 238](#)

It is perhaps inevitable that the manifesto of a congress trying to unite such a wide range of opinion as this one should tend to emphasize matters of parochial and controversial interest to its constituencies. For example, in the Explication, there are sections relating to ‘Wimberism’, the nature of ministry in the church and the relation of the gospel to socio-political concerns. However, these statements, in which there is a certain degree of clarification over and above the Covenant, are not matched in their impact by the equivalent Affirmations (2, 8, 9) which are generally unremarkable.

Consequently, it is not easy to see how, in practical terms, the Manifesto can effectively be used ‘alongside’ the Covenant. The Covenant was detailed and yet compact enough to be studied as a whole; on the other hand, the Manifesto with its two-part structure creates a division in which the usually predictable and generalized contents of the Affirmations are not always truly reflective of the wide-ranging contents of the Explication, some of which are more suitable for an exposition than for the Manifesto itself.

Perhaps part of the explanation can be found in the process behind the document. A draft was apparently drawn up prior to the congress by using statements from the addresses which were to be given; this draft was subject to revision by the organizers during the congress before being presented to the participants for acceptance during the

final hours of the gathering. Thus, the Explication does not read like a ‘public declaration of convictions’ but instead like a summary of what was said in the plenary sessions, giving background data, biblical texts, surveys of world conditions, demographic statistics, missiological theory and descriptions of the world church as well as confessions of past failure and hopes for the future. Part A on ‘The Whole Gospel’ is different again, being more theological in content. The Affirmations do read much more like a ‘manifesto’, but as we have seen, it would be misleading and inconclusive to take this part by itself.

We can now turn to specific issues that are raised in the Manifesto, which will be the subject of discussion in the remaining parts of this evaluation.

EVANGELIZATION AND CHRISTIAN LIFE AND WITNESS

by Revd. Dr. David Wilson, BTh, MA, M Div, O Min
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The Manila Manifesto has many emphases running through it, but one of the most dominant is the need for the gospel to be lived and spoken [p. 239](#) by individual Christians in their everyday situations. It affirms that the biblical gospel is God’s enduring message to our world and that we are to defend, proclaim and embody that message. This gospel is to be a visible demonstration of God’s love to the deprived in the world, as well as to the world’s ‘rich’.

Further, our demonstration of the gospel in life and word is to be a prophetic witness to other individuals, as well as to society as a whole. To be such a penetrating force, we are to be reliant upon the empowering and enabling ministry of the Holy Spirit and of prayer, for we are up against opposition for which we need spiritual resource to combat.

To ensure that the task is done, lay Christians must be involved along with ordained Christians. The mobilization of the whole church is strategic to the fulfilment of our mission. Both lay and ordained people of God need to be trained for the task of living and speaking the gospel in the world. The Manifesto urges faithfulness, urgency and sacrifice to ensure the mission’s success.

Further, it is emphasized that evangelistic witness and compassionate service (the whole gospel) need to go hand in hand and that integrity, involving a matching of life and words in holiness and love, needs to be maintained at all costs.

What the Manifesto affirms in this area is indeed significant for the evangelical Church throughout the world today. For too long evangelism has been perceived by ‘grass roots’ Christians to be the domain of either specialist evangelists and their ‘high tech’ rallies, or the latest pre-packaged programme to reach the community for Christ. The Manifesto puts an emphasis on the necessity for individual Christians to live a life of holiness and love in everyday situations and thus to seek to witness to the gospel and bring people into the kingdom.

Scripture seems to lay the same emphasis. Examples are given in the book of Acts of evangelism being a natural part of everyday lifestyle situations; teaching in the Epistles supports this notion. St. Peter tells his readers that they are to sanctify Christ as Lord in their hearts and to be prepared to make a defence for the hope that is within them, doing this with respect and gentleness ([1 Peter 3:15](#)).

Sanctifying Christ as Lord in our hearts is a call to live under the lordship of Christ, and thus is a call to a ‘life of holiness and love’. Living such a life is going to draw attention from those around us in everyday situations.

In the words of the Manifesto, it is in 'friendships, in the home and at work' (and we could add, at school, in the neighbourhood, and in any [p. 240](#) other life situations Christians find themselves) that witness is to take place. It is in these relationships that we are to live a life with 'Christ sanctified in our hearts as Lord'.

When attention is given to such a lifestyle, the questions start coming. It is then that we are to be respectful and gentle, yet assertive in verbalizing the reason we live the way we do. This thought is picked up in the Manifesto in the final paragraph under the heading of 'The Uniqueness of Christ'.

In the past we have sometimes been guilty of adopting towards adherents of other faiths attitudes of ignorance, arrogance, disrespect and even hostility. We repent of this. We nevertheless are determined to bear a positive and uncompromising witness to the uniqueness of our Lord, in his life, death and resurrection ...

Throughout recent church history we have been guilty of actually programming people away from this primary responsibility of life-situation evangelism. Sometimes the programmes have been evangelistic in thrust, and have often been attempts to create relationships in which evangelism could take place. Door-knocking with religious surveys, and 'coffee house' evangelism, are two examples that come to mind. At other times (and perhaps more often) the programmes have been maintenance-type programmes to keep the local church intact. An abundance of committee meetings, working bees and financial drives come to mind. When such events programme Christians away from primary responsibilities in the family and community, we are doing the Kingdom of God a disservice.

The dual emphasis in the Manifesto on life-situation evangelism and 'whole church' evangelism (#8, 'The Local Church') is relevant, because it is important for the local church as a group of believers to penetrate the community with the whole gospel. However, we need to be careful not to programme people away from the best opportunities they have for witness. Further, we need to recognize that the best way the whole church can penetrate the community with the gospel is through her individual members and their lives of holiness and love. It is the role of the 'church gathered' to teach and give support to the individual members for their ministry throughout the week.

We are rather good, as Christians, at summarizing problems, suggesting solutions, repenting of past mistakes and exhorting one another to practise the truth. All of these are good and necessary. However, we need to go further. We need to help in applying those truths in our pluralistic, multi-cultural world, that the truth might be practised. [p. 241](#)

Of particular importance is the training of leaders for today's church. The New Testament philosophy of leadership is complex, but one important aspect of it is that leaders are to be in the process of training (equipping) the people of God for their ministry of service. It is reported that a church in New South Wales has a liturgy something like this:

Leaders: Who are you?

People: We are the ministers.

Leaders: Who are we?

People: You are the equippers of the ministers.

This liturgy has caught well the concept of Paul's instructions in Ephesians chapter 4, and is an attempt to help the people of God with their immense identity problem.

One of the things for which the Church has to be trained is life-situation evangelism. To do that, the people of God need to understand God's Word so well that they can 'gossip'

it in their relationships. They also need an understanding of the world in which they live, and a further understanding of how to communicate the truth in that world in ways that allow its relevancy to be seen. Above all, the people of God need to know how to develop further their relationship with God, how to grow in intimacy with him, that they may be internally motivated to live for him no matter what the cost.

We are called to accept the challenge of such training, and the further challenge of living a holy and loving life ourselves, that the Kingdom of God might increase, all to the praise of his glory.

CHRIST, THEOLOGY AND EVANGELIZATION

by Revd. Raymond J. Laird, BA(Hons), LTh, BD, MA
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‘Proclaim Christ until he comes’ was one of the major themes of Lausanne II. It is appropriate then that the Manifesto also emphasizes Jesus Christ as the focus and content of the evangelistic proclamation.

For example, Jesus is declared to be the basis of unity in the task of evangelization. The Manifesto states, ‘What unites us is our common convictions about Jesus Christ’ (para. 3). It calls upon evangelicals to affirm boldly in an increasingly pluralistic world the ‘uniqueness, indispensability and centrality of Christ’. From this is evident that the Lausanne Movement retains its commitment to the gospel ‘as it is in Jesus’ (to use a phrase of the Apostle Paul). [p. 242](#)

One whole paragraph (3) is devoted to the person and work of Christ. Here the Manifesto presents him as absolutely central to the purposes of God. He is Saviour, Lord and Judge. He is the world’s Saviour in that he himself is the only way of salvation. He is Lord over all of life, both private and public, local and global. Death has yielded to his mastery; principalities and powers are subject to him; he is the coming Judge, but even now the winnowing fork is in his hand, judging both modern culture and a worldly Church.

The uniqueness of Jesus Christ (the title of para. 3) is a constant refrain. He is the only way to God, a point of great importance for world evangelization. The Manifesto emphasizes that there is no warrant for saying that salvation can be found outside of Christ; there must be an explicit acceptance of his saving work through faith.

The substitutionary view of the cross of Christ which the Manifesto takes is to be welcomed. The Christ is presented as a crucified Christ who bore our sins and died our death. His work is given full value by the proclamation of his bodily resurrection and his personal return in glory.

The uniqueness of Christ is extended to his person. He is set forth as the eternal Son of God, who experienced a true incarnation. Full weight is given to both his deity and his humanity. He is unique as a man of history and the God of eternity.

The Manifesto does not fail to note the servant character, humility and compassion of Jesus. In the Conference itself there was a great deal of emphasis upon this in relation to ministry to the poor and oppressed of this world. Thus the document presents a balanced picture. Admittedly, there are some things it does not say, but given the circumstances under which it was written, together with the particular interests of the movement which produced it, it can be concluded that it presents the central truths of biblical faith clearly and emphatically.

The Manifesto is clearly trinitarian in its view of God, although this is more implicit than explicit—the presupposition with which it was framed. Nevertheless, there is a clear

statement in which the Son, with the Father and the Spirit, is declared to be the sole object of worship, faith and obedience (para. 3). Throughout the document, the full deity of each person of the Trinity is acknowledged.

The God presented in the Manifesto is Creator, Redeemer and Evangelist. The world is his work, as are the men and women who have been placed upon it as stewards. As Redeemer, God does not rest with the tragic reality of a fallen creation. God comes to us in Christ. Thus the gospel carried by the witnesses is described as God's p. 243 message, and the salvation it proclaims is understood as God's salvation. So evangelism has its source in the love and grace of the Creator.

The most striking statement about God in the Manifesto is that which speaks of him as evangelist: 'The Scriptures declare that God himself is the chief evangelist' (para. 5). Evangelism has not only its source in God, but also its dynamic. God the Spirit accomplishes the task of evangelism from beginning to end. As para. 5 continues, God 'anoints the messenger, confirms the Word, prepares the hearer, convicts the sinful, enlightens the blind, gives life to the dead, enables us to repent and believe, unites us to the Body of Christ, assures us that we are God's children, lead us into Christ-like character and service, and sends us out in turn to be Christ's witnesses'.

It is salutary to be reminded that, in the last analysis, evangelism is the activity of God. Some might quibble that in this way no room is left for human responsibility, but that would be to interpret the passage against the whole spirit of the Manifesto and of the Lausanne Movement itself. The document itself is a call to 'get on urgently with our responsibility', which is to call people everywhere to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

Further examination of the Manifesto reveals that it is evangelical in all the major doctrines which it happens to touch. Its attitudes to Scripture and to sin, for example, are areas where there is a worthy presentation of the evangelical position. It would be an enriching and rewarding venture to study other theological issues which are raised in the Manifesto.

Perhaps the greatest contribution of the Manifesto to the evangelical Church is in its application of theological truth to the realities of the world in which we live. In Australia we sorely need this kind of corrective.

Let us take as examples three current issues: the earth's resources, the ministry of women and the problem of evangelism in a multi-faith society.

Since God is Creator, we are our brothers' keepers and stewards of the earth's resources. As evangelicals, we are called upon to ensure that the essential dignity of humans is everywhere acknowledged, that resources are not wantonly depleted and that they are equally distributed (para. 1). For Australian evangelicals, this is a pointed challenge to a rich church in an affluent and resource rich country.

The Manifesto also reminds us that because he is Creator, women along with men are equal bearers of his image and must be granted partnership in world evangelization (para. 6). The Manifesto also p. 244 declares that God is both the Redeemer who accepts women equally with men in Christ and the Evangelist who pours out his Spirit upon women as well as men, equipping them for various ministries. The Manifesto does not address all the issues involved in this, but its basic position comes as a further challenge to the Australian church which has tended to deny full partnership to women.

Evangelicals must also be as uncompromising as the Manifesto in their presentation of the uniqueness of Jesus as the only way of salvation and the only path to God. On the other hand, God is the Redeemer who 'in his love came after us in Jesus Christ to rescue and re-make us' (para. 2). Thus, the Manifesto declares, there is no room for ignorance, arrogance, disrespect or hostility in presenting Christ to adherents of other faiths. They too must be sought out with understanding, love and compassion.

In these ways the Manifesto is a useful guide which encourages us as evangelicals to work with a true biblical theology and to apply it practically and unreservedly to the challenges of our times.

EVANGELIZATION IN THE MIDST OF HUMAN NEED

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‘Lausanne 1974’—‘Lausanne II in Manila 1989’—the titles point to continuity, the dates raise the question of process and change. A significant result of Lausanne 1974 has been the influence of its Covenant in bringing together evangelism and social responsibility. Two articles in the original Covenant are devoted to these issues (#4, #5) and another (#9) states, ‘All of us are shocked by the poverty of millions and disturbed by the injustices which cause it.’

A key affirmation for many people was that ‘evangelism and sociopolitical involvement are both part of our Christian duty’ (#5). Another statement raised on-going debate: ‘In the church’s mission of sacrificial service evangelism is primary’ (#6).¹ Although social involvement was affirmed, its relationship to evangelism was ill-defined.
p. 245

At the ‘Thailand 1980’ Consultation on World Evangelization held at Pattaya, this issue was raised again. Peter Wagner stated that COWE ‘held the line’ by affirming the primacy of evangelism and by keeping it separate from social service. This was so, despite strong voices raised against such a position. From that perspective, Orlando Costas could say, ‘In a day when everything is swinging to the right, for evangelicals even to hold the line on social action must be seen as progress.’ Waldron Scott, then General Secretary of the WEF, was more critical when he concluded that ‘it seems unlikely that the Lausanne Committee will be a major force in the 1980s for promoting a style of evangelism based on a holistic theology and a clear-sighted vision of the definitive contextual realities of this decade’.²

Subsequent events have shown Scott’s predictions were unfulfilled, although it is significant that there has been closer cooperation between LCWE and WEF. Thus, 1982 saw these two bodies jointly sponsor the international Consultation on the Relationship between Evangelism and Social Responsibility (CRESR). The 64-page report of this gathering makes a valuable study, particularly its identification of social activity as either

¹ See Athol Gill in C. Rene Padilla, (ed.) *The New Face of Evangelicalism: an international symposium on the Lausanne Covenant* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1976) pp. 99–100.

² ‘COWE: a personal assessment’, *Global Church Growth Bulletin* 17 (1980) pp. 56–59; report by Athol Gill, ‘Pattaya 1980’, *On Being* 7, 2 (August 1980); ‘The significance of Pattaya’, *Missiology* 9 (1981) pp. 57–76.

a consequence of, a bridge to or a partner of evangelism. The issue of 'primacy' was handled by reference to eternal need, but with an important qualification: 'seldom if ever should we have to choose between satisfying physical hunger and spiritual hunger ... the choice, we believe, is largely conceptual. In practice, as in the public ministry of Jesus, the two are inseparable, at least in open societies.'

A year later was Wheaton '83, 'I will build my church', an international conference sponsored by WEF and supported by LCWE. According to the researches of Hadyn Siggins, the key word in the report of this conference is 'mission'. It affirmed, 'God calls us to proclaim Christ to the lost *and* to reach out to people in the name of Christ with compassion and concern for justice and equity ([Rom. 10:14, 15](#); [Ps. 82:2-4](#); [Mic. 6:8](#)).'

At Manila, the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility was not an issue! It appears that, from the standpoint of international evangelical leadership, CRESR and Wheaton '83 have provided a consensus on this matter—a holistic approach is now assumed. As Alan Nichols reports (making reference to the address of [p. 246](#) WEF Chairman Tokunboh Adeyemo at Manila), 'It does not alter fundamentals in the traditional view of the gospel, but it certainly indicates some shift in the emphasis.'³

What then of the contents of the Manila Manifesto concerning human need and the world context of evangelization?

Included in the 'Twenty One Affirmations' are references such as: 'The biblical gospel is God's enduring message to our world, and we determine to defend, proclaim and embody it' (3); 'we must demonstrate God's love visibly by caring for those who are deprived of justice, dignity, food and shelter' (8); the 'prophetic witness' denounces 'all injustice and oppression, both personal and structural' (9); 'we who proclaim the gospel must exemplify it in a life of holiness and love' (15); 'every Christian congregation must turn itself outward to its local community in evangelistic witness and compassionate service' (17).

The 12 Sections that follow provide a summary of the kinds of concerns that were expressed during Lausanne II. In general, they summarize points presented at the plenary sessions of the Congress, although opportunity was given for input from individuals and groups, and from the many tracks and workshops which were also part of the Congress. The final document differed in many ways from the initial draft. There was no opportunity for much discussion of it, but the statements do reflect concerns separately voiced by a significant number of people. In many ways, they are agenda items for ongoing action.

Section 1, 'Our Human Predicament' focuses rightly on human rebellion resulting in alienation from the Creator and the rest of his creation, resulting in 'pain, disorientation and loneliness ... [and] anti-social behaviour, in violent exploitation of others, and in a depletion of the earth's resources'. The inclusion of references to exploitation and environmental harm in such international statements is new!

In reference to 'the majority of the world's population who are destitute, suffering or oppressed', Section 2, 'Good News for Today', rightly states that we have not adequately grappled with St. Luke's emphasis that 'the gospel is good news for the poor.' Hence Section 4, 'The Gospel and Social Responsibility', calls for an 'integration of [p. 247](#) words and deeds'. Furthermore, speaking in language which is much stronger than any used previously, Section 10 describes the impact of 'modernity' (to use the phrase of Os Guinness), secularism and the worldwide move into cities by stating that 'the proclamation of God's kingdom necessarily demands the prophetic denunciation of all

³ Alan Nicholls, (ed.) *The Whole Gospel for the Whole World: Story of Lausanne II Congress on World Evangelization*, Manila 1989 (Charlotte NC, LCWE and Ventura CA, Regal Books, 1989) pp. 72-73.

that is incompatible with it' and then listing such evils as inhuman living conditions, institutional violence, the drug traffic and the burden of debt on the Two-Thirds World.

The agenda is long! But the fact that these matters are expressed in the context of evangelization is significant. There is clear recognition of the danger of getting immersed in social issues and forgetting the gospel—but just as clear is the danger of preaching a gospel without confronting them!

Theologically there is now acceptance of the inseparability of word and deed and of proclamation and compassion. There is one God who desires that all come to repentance and faith and share his doing of justice, being his co-workers fulfilling his purposes for his creation.

The question remains as whether these issues are live ones for churches in Australia? Perhaps for many, the first issue is the impact of modernity—how our culture has affected our faith and practice. Beyond that the Manila Manifesto has provided an array of issues, the solutions of which will require ongoing study and action. We will learn from our brothers and sisters in the Two-Thirds World. The last fifteen years *have* seen changes in international evangelical perspectives. The next fifteen years must now see increasing action.

THE NATURE AND METHODS OF EVANGELIZATION

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According to the 1974 Lausanne Covenant (#1), it is the purpose of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, to call out from the world a people for himself and to send this people into the world to be his servants and witnesses. The gospel has to be seen always in terms of the uniqueness and universality of Christ as testified in Scripture (#3). The Covenant is intentionally and firmly based on biblical foundations, and the 1989 Manila Manifesto which affirms continuing commitment to the Covenant, proceeds on that same basis (Manifesto #2, 3). Therefore [p. 248](#) evangelism, the proclamation of the gospel, ceases to be valid if it compromises the uniqueness and universality of Christ.

This is the background of evangelism as it is set forth in the Lausanne Covenant. Again, the points made highlight biblical teaching; 'to evangelize is to spread the good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead ... as the reigning Lord he now offers the forgiveness of sins and the liberating gift of the Spirit ...' (#4). Similarly, the Manifesto highlights the human predicament, and the gospel which alone can remedy it. Sin has alienated people from both their creator and from the rest of his creation. Self-salvation of every kind is impossible. Left to themselves human beings are lost forever (#1).

The Covenant also shows that recognition of Christian social responsibility is essential to evangelism (#5). The salvation we claim and proclaim should be one that transforms the totality of personal and social responsibilities, for faith without works is dead. In #4, the Manifesto spells out specific areas of social concern and the need to proclaim the

lordship of Jesus Christ over all of life, private and public, local and global. The importance of social responsibility within the framework of evangelism is thus consolidated.

Evangelism, then, is the proclamation of the uniqueness and universality of Christ for the salvation of sinners so that he will be seen to be Lord over all of life. There is a place for apologetics and dialogue, but the gospel itself must be proclaimed (#2).

Overall, Lausanne I and II covered the widest possible range of methods of evangelism. However, here we will concentrate on the more basic considerations concerning methods which are emphasized in the two Lausanne documents.

The first of these is the importance of the personal element. The Manifesto declares that 'God himself is the chief evangelist' (#5). Indeed, 'God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself' ([2 Cor. 5:19](#)). And in turn, Jesus said, 'You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you will be witness to me' ([Acts 1:8](#)). The Covenant reminds us that 'the Holy Spirit is a missionary spirit' and accordingly, 'evangelism should arise spontaneously from a Spiritfilled church.' (#14).

God's basic method then is to communicate personally—through Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit and a Spirit-filled church. Whatever forms of communication are employed, they are to facilitate the personal, so that God's grace will work in the lives of people through faith in him. As Carmelo Terranova said, 'We are the message ... the key to evangelism is to plant holy people everywhere, who weep as Christ wept, live as Christ lived and love as Christ loved.' [p. 249](#)

The second basic consideration is that all believers have a part in evangelism. The Covenant (#6) affirms that 'Christ sends his redeemed people into the world as the Father sent him'. Therefore 'we need to break out of our ecclesiastical ghettos and permeate non-Christian society'. The final Manila Affirmation (number 21) declares that 'God is calling the whole church to take the whole gospel to the whole world', and it concludes with a determination to proclaim the gospel 'faithfully, urgently and sacrificially until he comes'.

This is a task that cannot be left to clergy and other professionals, for as the Manifesto states, 'the domination of the laity by the clergy has been a great evil in the history of the church'. Hence, the centuries-old insistence on 'the priesthood of all believers' must now be accompanied by an insistence on 'the ministry of all believers'. Lay people should see their role in the local church, and also through their wider friendships and the use of their homes and workplaces for the furtherance of the gospel (#6).

The third general area for consideration is the need for God's people to be adequately prepared and equipped for evangelism. Both documents stress the need for training, but the Manifesto points out the particular challenge of the modern world with an increasing proportion of the world population living in cities, and also the need to identify with unreached people groups through those willing to be cross-cultural messengers (#10). It notes that at present only 6% of missionaries are engaged in seeking to reach the unreached!

The fourth element in the methodology of evangelism is the vital importance of personal integrity, an issue stressed by many at Manila. This is the familiar point that while people look for better methods, God looks for better people. Thus the Covenant states that 'a church which preaches the cross must itself be marked by the cross' (#6); the Manifesto observes: 'nothing commends the gospel more eloquently than a transformed life, and nothing brings it into disrepute so much as personal inconsistency' (#7).

In particular, the Manifesto shows how important integrity is when living and witnessing as Christians under hostile governments (#12). Christians, it says, are 'loyal citizens', though unwilling to do anything which God forbids; they renounce unworthy

methods of evangelism; and they earnestly desire freedom of religion for all people, not just freedom for Christianity.

Fifthly, it follows that evangelism has to be caring. The Covenant states that a Christian style of leadership is not a matter of domination, but of service (#11). Manila Affirmation 16 shows that compassionate service must accompany evangelistic witness, while #2 expresses repentance for the occasions when Christians 'have been indifferent to p. 250 the plight of the poor, and where we have shown preference for the rich'. It concludes with the determination to follow the example of Jesus.

Finally, the local church is seen to have a vital role in the spread of the gospel. Indeed, #8 of the Manifesto states that it has the primary responsibility for this task. To do so, it is necessary to turn 'outward to its local community in evangelistic witness and compassionate service' (Affirmation 16). It will also be necessary to develop appropriate strategies for mission. However, the reality is that many congregations are inward-looking, organized for maintenance rather than mission, or preoccupied with church-based activities at the expense of witness. None of this is new to those engaged in local church ministry, but we need the challenge and encouragement that comes to us through the Lausanne movement.

In conclusion, world evangelization requires 'the whole church to take the whole gospel to the whole world' (to re-state the Manila theme). This involves praying, planning and working together, proclaiming Christ until he comes, 'with all necessary urgency, unity and sacrifice'. And these closing words of the Manifesto, in effect, summarize the nature and methods of evangelization.

COOPERATION IN EVANGELISM

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The Lausanne Congress of 1974 and Lausanne II in Manila 1989 succeeded in bringing together key evangelical leaders from around the world for inspiration, support, challenge and encouragement in the crucial task of world evangelization.

Unity and cooperation related directly to one of the key themes at Manila, 'the whole church proclaiming the whole gospel to the whole world'. It was gratifying to note the breadth of the representation—over 4,000 participants and observers from nearly 200 countries. Lausanne '74 had 2,500 from 150 countries. In 1966, the Berlin Congress on Evangelism had 1200 delegates from about 100 countries.

The Lausanne Covenant (#9) stressed the urgency of the evangelistic task: 'More than 2,700 million people which is more than two thirds of mankind, have yet to be evangelized.' Article 6 stresses that 'World evangelization requires the whole church to take the whole gospel to p. 251 the whole world' (which gave the wording for the theme at Manila). Several articles called for Christian unity as a condition for accomplishing the Great Commission to go into all the world and preach the gospel, 'because oneness strengthens our witness, just as our disunity undermines our Gospel of reconciliation' (#7).

The Manila Manifesto continued this stress on unity and cooperation: 'We affirm the urgent need for churches, mission agencies and other Christian organizations to cooperate in evangelism and social action, repudiating competition and avoiding duplication' (Affirmation 17).

In some ways, both Lausanne I and II echo the deep concerns of the ecumenical movement as expressed in the World Council of Churches. However, many evangelicals feel that the World Council has lost touch with biblical authority, the essentials of the gospel and the divine imperatives for evangelism. Yet, those who have turned away from the World Council have all too readily retreated into their own narrow environment and neglected the biblical concern for unity ([1 Cor. 1:10, 13](#)) and the relationship between unity and evangelism ([John 17:21](#)). A study of the Manila Manifesto and other Lausanne materials such as the official report, papers and tapes of the congress should help to redress that situation.

The question to be faced then is how the biblical demand for unity, involving a call for cooperation is to be reconciled with the need to stand for our distinctive convictions, as reflected, for example, in the Evangelical Alliance statement of faith? One pointer is the need to distinguish the essentials of the faith from those things on which we may hold intense convictions but which are still not essential to the gospel itself. The call of Lausanne I and II for cooperation must continue to challenge the churches. The burden is to 'make disciples of all nations'. We need to ask if we are discipling or proselytizing?

It was both interesting and challenging to note the depth of the representation at Manila—almost half the participants were under 45 years of age, with women comprising almost a quarter.

How do these figures match up with church life in Australia? Many congregations, including those of evangelical churches, reveal a preponderance of the over 60's and many have a high proportion of women, which does not correlate well with the overall population distribution. We are not at liberty to change the message simply in order to attract listeners; as an African brother said in relation to the gospel and social concern, 'We must never allow our strategy in evangelism to triumph over our theology.' However, we should be asking ourselves whether it is the gospel or our particular presentation [p. 252](#) of it which is failing to attract the full spectrum of Australians, including young people and men.

In his opening address, Leighton Ford said, 'There [Lausanne '74] few women came as participants. Now we are thankful for the many gifted women among us, and we wish there were more, who have come, not so much in the cause of feminism, as for the cause of evangelism, ready to take their full God-given part in Christ's global cause.' The Manifesto calls on members of the Body of Christ to transcend 'the barriers of race, gender and class'. It affirms 'that the gifts of the Spirit are distributed to all God's people, women and men, and that their partnership in evangelism must be welcomed' (Affirmations 13, 14).

Yet it is apparent that the tensions we see on this issue in several of our Australian churches were also present at Manila. On the whole, the Congress favoured stronger participation by women, and the women declared they were ready to serve. But the Congress steered clear of a definite pronouncement on women's ministry. Did it fail to be prophetic, or is this an area where differing convictions must be allowed? Whatever the answer to this question, it is obvious that Lausanne II in Manila was at the same time a major statement of evangelical unity and a sign of future developments.

CONCLUSION: 'WHO DO WE THINK WE ARE TALKING TO?'

by Revd. Dr. David Parker, MA, BD, PhD

This concludes our commentary on some major themes of the Manila Manifesto. There has been a certain amount of overlap, and, of course, more could be said about these and other topics. In fact, one of the striking features of the Manifesto is the wide range of issues and emphases which it covers, especially in final section on 'the whole world'. This wide diversity results in a certain loss of precision and impact. In commenting on the Congress itself, David Wells noted that there had been less serious engagement with 'the real world' than there had been at previous international evangelical conferences.⁴

Undoubtedly, the Manifesto builds upon the foundation of the 1974 Covenant, but there is still some uncertainty as how it is to be construed by such a wide ranging group of participants. In the official [p. 253](#) report of the Congress, Alan Nicholls concludes that one of the major outcomes of Manila is that 'the label "evangelical" ... no longer applies to a narrow band of Protestant Christians but a much broader spectrum of charismatics, conservatives, radical and historic church members' and that 'Lausanne has become ... an international movement of significance to every part of the Christian church in the world'.⁵ In particular, he notes, it has lost its 'parachurch' image, and is now geared towards mainstream churches; he adds that 'renewal of the main churches is a key to evangelism'. This change of orientation will have profound implications for evangelicalism.

This more inclusivist nature of the Lausanne movement contrasts strongly with the statement of another widely-representative conference held in the USA just two months prior to Manila, which not only defined the faith in a series of 'Evangelical Affirmations' but also responded to pressing social issues as well.⁶ Admittedly, the Manila Manifesto is more an action document than a doctrinal one, but the question of doctrine cannot be avoided ultimately. David Wells observed that so great had been the impact of other interests at Manila that theological reflection had been all but squeezed out.⁷

This leads to consideration of one of the series of searching questions raised by Colin Chapman during the Congress itself: 'Who do we think we are talking to?'—each other, other evangelicals, the World Council, non-evangelicals, Catholics, Orthodox?⁸ The response to this question will largely determine our assessment of the Manifesto. Whatever answer we give, it cannot be said that the Lausanne II in Manila has failed to offer food for thought, and at least the Manifesto can be a jumping off point for further reflection and action, as our writers have indicated. So what happens from here on is left to the readers, and also—due to the particular structure of Lausanne Movement—to the Congress 'participants' as they network with their own constituencies. [p. 254](#)

⁴ David Wells, in Alan Nicholls (ed.), *The Whole Gospel for the Whole World* (LCWE 1989) p. 138.

⁵ Alan Nicholls (ed.), *The Whole Gospel for the Whole World* (LCWE 1989) p. 143f.

⁶ *Christianity Today*, June 16, 1989 pp. 60, 63.

⁷ David Wells, in Alan Nicholls (ed.), *The Whole Gospel for the Whole World* (LCWE 1989) p. 137.

⁸ Colin Chapman, in Alan Nicholls (ed.), *The Whole Gospel for the Whole World* (LCWE 1989) p. 136.

Continuing Education for Missionaries

Monroe Brewer

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In travelling to nearly 80 countries of the world and in working with hundreds of missionaries over the years in my capacity as a missions pastor, much of my time in the field is given over to listening. I am especially curious about what missionaries say during times of reflection.

One of my favourite questions to ask them is: 'If you could do it all over again and could change anything you have done, what would you do differently?' Invariably, almost without exception, comes back the response, 'I wish I had come to the mission field with better training', or 'I wish I had taken in more of the Bible before I went to the field'.

Unfortunately, many make such statements wistfully, knowing that they had not received the most thorough preparation beforehand, and yet also believing that nothing could be done about their predicament now. But much, even now, can be done about their predicament, and this is the central message of this article.

Every year more and more doors are opening to provide career missionaries with the opportunities they need to further their educational aspirations, especially on the graduate level. In fact, the anthropological and theological training available now to missionary candidates and short-termers is more extensive, innovative, and effective than almost anything available to career missionaries a generation ago. The training programmes are there, and the felt needs of the missionaries are there. But matching up the right missionary with the right programme—that's another story.

Many schools, professors, mission agencies, and churches, however, are very anxious that this matching up of the right missionary with the right programme become a reality for more and more veteran missionaries. Even now some institutions and agencies are showing signs of beginning to cooperate in providing cross-cultural workers with the ongoing academic and professional training that they need to be highly efficient tools in God's work of world evangelization.

A COMMITMENT TO LIFELONG LEARNING

Some nagging questions persist, though, in the minds of many. Where **P. 255** will I ever get the extra time needed to pursue diligently my new studies? How can I possibly pay for those expensive semester units when I'm already several hundred dollars undersupported each month in my personal support account? What will my field director think? What will my peers on the field think are my real motives for 'going back to school'? Don't my children even need me more now than when they were little? Won't I feel foolish or awkward trying to compete with many younger students? What if I can't even pass the first course? What if I'm not even accepted into the programme? Maybe it's not even worth the effort to begin with ...

WHAT IS CONTINUOUS EDUCATION?

In order to answer this question, an important distinction must be made between 'continuing education' and 'continuous education'. The Council on the Continuing Education Unit in Washington, D.C., defines 'continuing education' as 'formal education

programmes/activities for professional development and tracking, or for credentialing, for which academic credit is not awarded, or of personal interest to the learner, for which academic credit is not awarded'.¹ In other words, in industry and in the professional sector, 'continuing education' refers to formal in-service training and personal enrichment courses, neither of which are for academic credit. States Michael Neil:

In continuing education the learner lays aside his or her daily work and attends sessions where the material discussed has no necessary connection with the learner's immediate problems. Rather, the programme of study is determined ahead of time by what someone else thinks is important ... If and when the opportunity for application arises in the future, the task of adapting this knowledge to the learner's situation becomes the learner's new problem.²

Several strengths of 'continuing education' are immediately apparent. Traditionally, instruction has been viewed as 'subject-centred', whereas the current movement of most continuing education and training programmes is toward a 'problem-centred' orientation, which p. 256 reflects the notion that adults seek additional learning in order to solve a problem.³ Continuing education takes a much more comprehensive view of adults and how adults learn, for such components as learning needs, learning outcomes, learning experiences, and assessment of learning outcomes are all part of the field of continuing education.⁴ Thus, in continuing education 'learning experiences are designed to facilitate the role of the learner and are organized in such a manner as to provide for appropriate continuity, sequencing, and integration of the programme activity to achieve the specified learning outcomes'.⁵

On the other hand, in *continuous* education, the basis for the educational programme is the work itself. The need determines the path to be taken, for 'the learning process begins by defining the problem uppermost on the user's mind and follows a well-defined path of defining and redefining the specific method of solution and evaluating the utility of the result'.⁶

Michael Nell again comments on continuous education:

... continuous education is much more individualized than conventional continuing education. Because it focuses on problems *per se*, it cannot be programmatic. It cannot be preplanned—cooked ahead, so to speak. The learner does not follow a course of study prescribed ahead of time by someone else. In this approach the phrase 'programme of study' does not even occur. Instead, learners study what they need to know to solve their own problems. The paths they follow are not prescribed by someone else; they are not expected to fit their shadows in someone else's outline.⁷

¹ The Council on the Continuing Education Unit, *Principles of Good Practice in Continuing Education*. Report on the C.C.E.U. Project to Develop Standards and Criteria for Good Practice in Continuing Education. Silver Spring, MD: Council on the Continuing Education Unit. 1984. p.7.

² Michael Neil, 'Education of Adults at a Distance: For Whom and Why', in *Education of Adults at a Distance*. Edited by Michael Neil. London: Kogan Page, in association with The Open University Press, 1981, p. 82.

³ Council on the Continuing Education Unit. *Op. Cit.*, p. 2.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 3, 4.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁶ Neil, *loc. cit.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

The problem at this juncture of the discussion is a definitional one. What one writer defines as continuing education, another defines as continuous education. What one defines as formal, graduate school education, another defines as continuing education. One example will suffice. Duane Elmer proposes the following definition: 'Continuing education is designing a life-long process whereby image bearers of God are restored to wholeness'.⁸ This definition implies several things: that continuing education refers to designed, planned, or structured learning experiences, that the one who bears the image of God is the focus of continuing education; and that personal growth is the motive p. 257 for continuing education.⁹ He also states earlier in his article on continuing education for missionaries that formal schooling may be a small part of continuing education but that it primarily has to do with personal growth and enrichment in the midst of life.¹⁰ Thus, Elmer's definition of continuing education fits closely with Neil's definition of continuous education.

My personal opinion is that continuous education, especially as it relates to missionary life and ministry, is a better, more all-inclusive term than continuing education. Continuing education can suggest three very diverse definitions, referring to mid-career academic training or in-service schooling on the graduate level; non-accredited courses of study for professional or personal development; and learning as a way of life, be it formal or nonformal studies, credit or no credit. To avoid such confusion, continuous education naturally encompasses all three ideas into its definitional domain and serves as the broadest possible umbrella under which the various patterns of adult learning can find shade to take root, grow, and flourish.

FOUR KEY PHILOSOPHICAL FACTORS

Strategic factor

There are at least twelve reasons why continuous education for the missionary is important. The first reason is what I call the Strategic Factor. The trends of nonformal education, in-service training, continuing education, and lifelong learning are now setting the world's educational agenda. This is the direction all education is going in the foreseeable future.

I am familiar with more than 300 organizations based in the USA that have as their primary purpose the furthering of educational ideals of nonformal and continuing education. Those that top the list would include such organizations as the National Society for Internships and Experiential Education in Raleigh, N.C.; the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning in Columbia, MD; the Council for Noncollegiate Continuing Education in Richmond, VA; the International Society for Intercultural Education, Training, and Research in Washington, D.C.; the Association of Experiential Education in Boulder, CO; and the National Association of Private, Nontraditional Schools and Colleges in Grand Junction, CO. p. 258

The historical factor

⁸ Duane Elmer, 'Continuing Education ... For Missionaries', in *Emissary*, Vol. IX. No. 2. Wheaton, Ill.: Evangelical Missions Information Service, March 1978, p. 5.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

Much permanent, irreparable damage has occurred on mission fields of the world over the last several hundred years because, to a great extent, much of the Protestant mission thrust was steeped in the Greek model of education which so permeates all of Western civilization. A second reason for missionaries committing themselves to the process of continuous education is that lifelong learning, more exactly patterned after Hebraistic thought, is one way for missionaries, in their spheres of influence, to begin to correct the missiological errors introduced through Hellenistic educational structures into the Two-Thirds World since the time of the Reformation.

Some, like William Ralph Inge,¹¹ saw the pervading Greek influence on Western education as a very positive contribution. Others, like Edwin Hatch¹² and Harvie Conn,¹³ have demonstrated convincingly that such influence was anything but an unmixed blessing on the developing world. That Christianity, with its Hebraistic foundation in the First Century, changed drastically by the Fourth Century into something decidedly different—Hellenistic in form and content—is not a fact open to debate.¹⁴ States Hatch: 'It is impossible for anyone, whether he be a student of history or no, to fail to notice a difference of both form and content between the Sermon on the Mount and the Nicene Creed.' Hatch cites how Greek education passed from Greece into Africa and the West,¹⁵ first having a special hold on the Roman and then upon the Celtic and Teutonic populations of Gaul; and from the Gallic schools it has come to our own country and our own time. The longstanding strength and durability of the Greek educational system can be seen in the fact that all of Western culture 'retains still its technical terms and many of its scholastic usages, either in their original Greek form or as translated into Latin and modified by Latin habits, in the schools of the West'.¹⁶ p. 259

Harvie Conn more specifically traces this historical shift in the church from Hebrew thinking to Greek thinking as it has related to formal education:

Under the formulations of the Alexandrian theologians in the second and third centuries of the church's history, this shift became more rigid yet. Clement of Alexandria ... combined in his view of ministry the concept of a priestly hierarchy and the pastor as gnostic which placed cognitive knowledge at the pinnacle of the ecclesiastical ladder. Origen ... solidified this by transforming the catechetical schools for new converts into advanced theological schools. Theological education had begun the long road of identification with schooling and schooling with the intellectual defence of the gospel.¹⁷

Conn states how schooling by its very nature came to evaluate students' progress by the satisfaction of a certain quatum of knowledge, becoming content-oriented rather than student-oriented. This, of course, led to schools' obsessive interest in abstract reality on

¹¹ William Ralph Inge, *The Platonic Tradition in English Religious Thought*. London: Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd., 1926.

¹² Edwin Hatch, *The Influence of Greek Ideas on Christianity*. New York: Harper and Brothers. 1957.

¹³ Harvie M. Conn, 'Theological Education and the Search For Excellence', in *Westminster Theological Journal*, vol. LXI. No. 2. Philadelphia: Westminster Theological Seminary, Spring 1979, pp. 311–363.

¹⁴ Karl Rengstorf sees a radical change in the conception of teaching in the church under the influence of the early Apologists and the Alexandrian school. See his article in Kittel's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 11, p. 159.

¹⁵ Hatch, *op. cit.*, p. 325.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

¹⁷ Conn, *op. cit.*, p. 325.

the part of the professor and student, with their academic debate withdrawn from the daily life of the culture and the church's response to that culture. Conn concludes:

Within this framework, the teacher-student relationship moved from that of brother to that of father-son, from fraternal to paternalistic. Measurements were taken in terms of cognitive input rather than ministerial gifts. This was the pattern the missionary of the nineteenth century was trained under, a model developed in the exigencies of western history but assumed by the missionary to be usable anywhere in the world.¹⁸

Jonathan Chao, addressing the failure of Western education in mission contexts in the Two-Thirds World to develop adequate and effective indigenous leadership, lays the blame for this problem at the feet of Western educational institutions with their Western model of ministry. Many outside the West see the 'inherent contradiction between the biblical pattern of the ministry through exercise of spiritual gifts and the western model based on professional clericalism'.¹⁹ Chao summarizes this dilemma for missionaries who were blind to the deadening effect that Western education, rooted in Hellenistic rationalism, elitism, intellectualism, and dualism, had on the maturing of the church worldwide: p. 260

The pattern of the Protestant ministry as practiced in most Third World churches is basically a replica of the Catholic and Reformation model of ministry developed within the context of western church history. It has been faithfully transplanted to the mission fields through the various mission agencies. Until very recently it was accepted as the standard model for emulation in the Third World, seldom being questioned by either national leaders or missionaries. The continuous dependence of the Third World churches on this western pattern has determined the shape of their ministry.²⁰

What does all this mean, specifically as it relates to the Historical Factor? Simply stated, the Western missionary, educated in Western schools, passed on a worldview and form of ministry to the mission fields of the world which he perceived to be 'biblical', but now upon closer analysis the legacy he passed on turns out to have been, in many cases, a Hellenistic philosophy of man and ministry far removed from the actual Asian or Hebraistic thinking of the Bible. According to Ramsay, Greek education 'was narrow in its conception, shallow and unreal in its character, and destitute of any vivifying and invigorating ideal ... As for the Roman imperial system, its one educational aim seems to have been to prevent the mass of the people from thinking too much ...'²¹ The consequence of all this has been the creation of a form of Christianity very different from that of the First Century Church.

For missionaries to commit themselves to a lifelong pursuit of education would not only subtly but relentlessly change their philosophy of education but would invariably modify their philosophy of ministry as well. What one learns in formal schooling is usually lived out in ministry later. History has shown that there is a direct link between schooling and ministry. People live out only what they know.

Such a change in one's philosophy of ministry would lead missionaries to begin to correct some of the missiological errors of the past. Instead of seeing knowledge and

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 328.

¹⁹ Jonathan Chao, 'Education and Leadership', in *The New Face of Evangelicalism*, edited by C. René Padilla. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1976, p. 195.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ William M. Ramsay, *The Education of Christ*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1902, p. 65.

scholasticism as the goal of education, they would more strongly stress application and obedience. Their ministries would be more inclined to be people-oriented rather than content-oriented, practical rather than abstract, for the masses, rather than for an elite few, based on spiritual gifts and not clericalism. Education would be perceived as continuous and for life, just like ministry, and not something that one obtains when one is young so p. 261 that he can then hopefully do ministry later. To keep learning, to keep ministering, to keep living is the essence of the Hebraistic way of life.

The cultural factor

A third reason why continuous education for the missionary is important focuses on the cultural factor. A commitment to lifelong learning for the missionary can help to correct the past errors which were perpetrated in the colonial approach to missions. We do not blame the heroic early missionaries who took the gospel bravely to the ends of the earth. But like people of every generation, their mission was conditioned by the times in which they lived.

In the dramatic era of European colonial expansion in the Two Thirds World, when Western missionaries followed in the footsteps of Western colonialists, it was inevitable that missionaries, possessing the colonial technology, educational system, and worldview, would approach non-Western cultures in a similar fashion as did colonialists, and that those colonized would frequently confuse missionary with colonist. Thus, much of what was transferred from the missionaries to the colonized peoples was not biblical Christianity *per se*, but Western culture and values. Many of the churches that grew up in those contexts have, at least until recently, been dependent and weak. And the primary way in which a Western style of Christianity was transferred to those being colonized was through the formalized, institutionalized educational system of the West. Our Western schools, as much as anything else, have contributed to the crisis of leadership development and slow maturity of the developing church.

Formal schools have had at least three main functions in a colonial society. First, schools have a role in formalizing societal relationships. Says Martin Carnoy: 'In its colonialistic characterization, schooling helps develop colonizer-colonized relationships between individuals and between groups in the society. It formalizes these relationships, giving them a logic that makes reasonable the unreasonable'.²² However, in a colonial setting, schooling brought about no true social transformation, 'since a person is simply changed from one role in a dependent system to a different role in the same system'.²³

Second, schools have a role in maintaining social order. Centuries p. 262 ago the feudal organization broke down in Europe and later in Latin America. An institution was needed to hold things together under new and disruptive conditions. Thus schooling served to preserve the moral fabric of society and to socialize children into it.²⁴

Third, as a general statement, schooling helps the few to control the many. In a colonial hierarchical society, schooling limits individual choice by defining well-specified and uncreative roles in the social and economic hierarchy.

Schooling defines people's potential for them on the basis of the hierarchy's needs, not their own. Schooling for a hierarchical structure is therefore a colonizing device which

²² Martin Carnoy, *Education as Cultural Imperialism*. New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1974, p. 19.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 21-22.

sometimes changes the *kind* of choices people have, but still serves to limit control over their own lives.²⁵

The educational system brought to the Third World by the colonizing powers had a very narrow social base, because the colonialists feared the threats that would arise from a system of mass education. And according to Vassar, even today in 'most Third World countries, aid from the West continues to perpetuate the existing educational set up, also promoting the brain drain'.²⁶ But even if the educated national leaders do stay in their own home countries they have learned well from the system and know how to stay on top. Asserts Clive Nettleton: 'It is a problem for Third World countries that intellectuals ... become artificial when they have been educated. They are often worse than those who have educated them'.²⁷

Thus, time has shown us that some of the mission work during the colonial period, and especially that which was attached to the educational enterprise, was less evangelization and more cultural imperialism. Paulo Freire is correct when he says that an invader seeks to penetrate another culture and impose his system of values on its members, to the degree that he reduces the people in the situation he invades to mere objects of his action.²⁸ Freire argues: 'Cultural p. 263 invasion through dialogue cannot exist. There is no such thing as dialogical manipulation or conquest. These terms are mutually exclusive'.²⁹ Instead, indigenous Christian leaders, training under Western missionary educators, were in many cases inculcated with the illusion of acting when in reality they were merely acting within the action permitted by those who controlled the system. Many of their societies were never truly transformed, because in reality they never were permitted to make their own choices and decisions.

How can continuous education for the missionary begin to rectify some of the unintentional errors of the past which were tied to the colonial approach to missions? There are at least three ways in which continuous education can help, and they revolve around the three concepts of learner, servant, and catalyst. As missionaries commit themselves to a life-long learning path, they will see that change of mindset alter the ways in which they are perceived and received by others.

First, by communicating non-verbally to others that there are still many new and important things that require learning and mastery, the missionary will demonstrate to all a role of learner. 'Learner' projects quite a different image to the people than colonial administrator or missionary teacher does. Donald Larson recognized how important this role of learner was for the missionary when he wrote that to the non-Christian, the roles of teacher and seller may not be viable. The non-Christian may expect the outsider to learn the insider's viewpoint before he can teach effectively about the outside. A principle of

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 346.

²⁶ Gunduz Vassaf, editor, 'Aid and Development in Crisis: What Role For Education?'. A Report on the World University Service International Workshop held in Nantes, France, July 1984. Geneva: World University Service, December 1984, p. 13.

²⁷ Clive Nettleton, editor, 'Education, Human Rights, and Development'. A Report on the World University Workshop held in Hatere, Zimbabwe on August 25–29, 1982. Geneva: World University Service, 1984, p. 30.

²⁸ Paulo Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness*, New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1973, p. 113.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

order is important here: learner before teacher, buyer before seller.³⁰ Dr. Charles Kraft has commented: 'Indeed, if we do no more than engage in the process of language learning we will have communicated more of the essentials of the Gospel than if we devote ourselves to any other task I can think of'.³¹ Kraft has expanded on this concept in a number of his writings.³²

The late Tom Brewster and his wife Betty Sue based much of their innovative ministry together on the truth that 'the learner posture might continue to be the most effective communication base not only for p. 264 short-termers but also for those who invest their entire lives ministering as guests in another country'.³³ The notion of the missionary as learner is especially crucial to the Brewsters' argument for their mission strategy in their well-known *Language Acquisition Made Practical* and in the booklet *Bonding and the Missionary Task*.³⁴

The learner role symbolizes many important things to local residents that are essential in the communication of the gospel. States Donald Larson, 'The learner's dependence and vulnerability convey in some small way the messages of identification and reconciliation that are explicit in the Gospel'.³⁵ Also, since the early followers of Jesus were called 'disciples'—the root meaning of which is 'learner', and since in the Great Commission our Lord told these original Christian learners to go and make disciples or learners in all the nations ([Matthew 28:18-20](#)), the learner posture dramatizes the cost of discipleship and the kind of ministry that Jesus' gospel requires.

Second, continuous education for the missionary will further help to build an attitude of humility into the Christian worker and in so doing demonstrate to others his or her role as a servant. As missionaries continue to learn, to gather more new ideas and information that can be of help to their people, they show a servant's role, one quite different from many during the colonial era who ministered out of a position of strength, control, authority, and superiority.

Recently Ajith Fernando of Sri Lanka warned EFMA and IFMA members: 'The message of the cross brings salvation to the people, but the incarnation of that message in the messenger prepares the messenger to give the message. If we have not incarnated the message in ourselves, our message will not be heard'.³⁶ Living out an incarnational message, showing oneself to be a servant of the Servant, is basic to an effective missionary strategy. In one of the most important missions articles ever written, Charles Kraft said:

³⁰ Donald N. Larson, 'The Viable Missionary: Learner, Trader, Story Teller', in *Missiology: An International Review*. Edited by Arthur F. Glasser. Vol. VI, No. 2. April 1978, p. 158.

³¹ E. Thomas and Elizabeth S. Brewster, 'Language Learning *Is* Communication—*Is* Ministry!' Published originally by the Brewsters. 1981, p. 1.

³² For example, see Charles H. Kraft in 'Communicating the Gospel God's Way' in the *Ashland Theological Bulletin*, Spring 1979.

³³ Brewster and Brewster, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

³⁴ E. Thomas and Elizabeth S. Brewster, *Language Acquisition Made Practical*, Lingua House: Colorado Springs, CO. 1976; and *Bonding and the Missionary Task*. Lingua House: Colorado Springs, CO. 1980. Also see the Brewsters' article entitled 'How to Learn a Language and Culture', in *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, Vol. 14. No. 2, April 1978.

³⁵ Larson, *op. cit.*, p. 162.

³⁶ Ajith Fernando, 'Servanthood: Jesus' Model For Missions' in *OMS Outreach*. OMS International: Greenwood, IN, 1988, p. 27.

... God had a choice of roles in his approach to men. He could have remained as God in heaven, or even come to earth as God, and retained [p. 265](#) the respect and prestige that is his right as God. He would have continued to have admirers but not friends. The risks would have been far fewer, but the real impact very low because the predictability would have been so high. But God chose not to go that route, choosing rather to become a human being within the frame of reference of human beings, so that, in spite of the tremendous risk involved, he might earn the respect of and, therefore, the right to be listened to by human beings. Likewise we as missionaries may choose to remain as gods above or as gods in the midst of people we work among. Or we may seek to follow God's example and establish a beachhead within the frame of reference of the people to whom God has called us—a beachhead of 'human beingness' according to their definition.³⁷

As God has demonstrated in Christ, and as Paul declared in [2 Corinthians 12:9–10](#), there is tremendous power in weakness. A commitment to lifelong learning reminds missionaries continually of their weaknesses, inadequacies, and information deficiencies. But it is exactly at these times of weakness that God chooses to reveal himself and his love to us. Rosemary Haughton comments: '... it is characteristic of the work of divine love in our world that God breaks through at the weak spots. The barrier is the barrier of sin ... It is the nature of divine love to desire to break through that barrier. But it is also the nature of divine love ... that it cannot coerce. Incredibly, it waits in endless patience for the moment at which there is a weak spot in the human defences where it can break through'.³⁸

Third, continuous education for the missionary will make it easier for the cross-cultural worker to assume his or her role as a catalyst or change agent. In the colonial approach to missions, missionaries often tried to make their converts into what they thought or hoped those converts should be. Often that meant that the society was not truly transformed, because the people themselves were not always choosing Christ but modern technology, Western culture, or the values being imposed upon them. William Smalley notes that true 'transformation occurs differently in different societies, depending on the meaning which people attach to their behaviour and the needs which they feel in their lives. Missionaries generally approve of and strive for culture change which makes people more like themselves in form ... [p. 266](#) An indigenous church is precisely one in which the changes which take place under the guidance of the Holy Spirit meet the needs and fulfil the meanings of that society and not of any outside group'.³⁹

According to Dale Kietzman and William Smalley, this missionary role as catalyst is absolutely crucial in the overall missionary effort, with continuous education as an important link in that development process:

The missionary's basic responsibility is to provide the material upon which the native Christian and church can grow 'in grace and knowledge' to the point where they can make reliable and Spirit-directed decisions with regard to their own conduct within the existing culture. This involves a complete freedom of access to the Word of God, with such encouragement, instruction and guidance in its use as may be necessary to obtain a

³⁷ Charles H. Kraft, 'God's Model For Cross-Cultural Communication—The Incarnation', in *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, Summer 1973, p. 212.

³⁸ Rosemary Haughton, 'Divine Love Breaking Through Into Human Experience', a paper presented at the OWME commission meeting of the World Council of Churches in Bucharest, Romania, in May 1981.

³⁹ William S. Smalley, 'Cultural Implications of an Indigenous Church', in *Readings in Missionary Anthropology II*, edited by William A. Smalley. Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1978. Also see Smalley's article 'The Missionary and Culture Change', in *Practical Anthropology*. Vol. 4. No. 5. 1957, pp. 231–237.

healthy and growing Christian community. The missionary's role in culture change, then, is that of a catalyst and of a source of new ideas, new information.⁴⁰

As missionaries play out the roles of learner-servant-catalyst, rather than the earlier, less effective colonial roles of teacher-authority-controller, an acceptable level of identification between the missionary and the host people will be reached. David Hesselgrave⁴¹ and William Reyburn⁴² have written extensively on missionary identification. As such, identification is not the goal but communication. But if the former occurs, the latter is sure to follow.

The theoretical factor

A fourth reason why continuous education for the missionary is important focuses on the theoretical factor. A commitment to continuous education for the missionary—an educational pathway of p. 267 lifelong learning—better fits the various theories on how adults best learn.

Several distinctions must be stressed in order to appreciate fully the importance of the theoretical factor. The first distinction is between schooling and education. Albert Einstein said, 'Education is that which remains after you have forgotten what you learned in school'.⁴³ Duane Elmer amplifies that thought. 'Our society has equated schooling and education. They are not synonymous. Schooling is only one means toward education and many are arguing that it may not be the most effective means.'⁴⁴

Others, suggesting that a more precise distinction is between learning and education (which puts education and schooling in the same category in contrast to learning), state: '... learning is one of the fundamental ways and formal means to enhance learning'.⁴⁵ This distinction is even termed by some as maintenance learning vs. innovative learning.⁴⁶ I personally favour Ted Ward's Interaction-Growth Model which places 'learning' as the outside circle, with 'education' being the inner circle and 'schooling' being one of many rings within education.⁴⁷

One of the main reasons many educators, employees, parents and students have become frustrated with the results of schools is that the skills required to be a good student are not necessarily the same skills that one needs to be successful in life. The main skills required and reinforced in school include listening, writing, asking questions,

⁴⁰ Dale W. Kietzman and William A. Smalley, 'The Missionary's Role in Culture Change', in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, edited by Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne. Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1981, p. 506.

⁴¹ David J. Hesselgrave, 'Identification: Key to Effective Communication', in *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*. Summer 1973.

⁴² William D. Reyburn, 'Identification in the Missionary Task', in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*. Edited by Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne. Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1981, pp. 465–475.

⁴³ Duane Elmer, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ James W. Botkin, Mahdi Elmandjra, and Mircea Malitza, *No Limits To teaming: Bridging the Human Gap*. New York: Pergamon Press. 1979, p. 8.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 9–10.

⁴⁷ Ted Ward, 'Schooling As a Defective Approach to Education'. East Lansing, Michigan: School of Education, Michigan State University, no date, p. 5.

remembering, and reporting. But additional skills for effective life and ministry would include: decision making, observation and hypothesizing, application of knowledge, discernment, critical thinking, inquiry and self-discovery, communication, self-understanding, inter-personal relationships, and the ability to cope with stress and teach oneself. Thus, Duane Elmer summarizes all of this by concluding:

So let's destroy the myth right now that continuing education is basically getting more formal schooling. It may include formal schooling but that should not be the major thrust. To develop the skills necessary for more [p. 268](#) effective living, and therefore, more effective service as missionaries we must look beyond schooling.⁴⁸

A second distinction that must be stressed in order to fully appreciate the importance of the theoretical factor is the distinction between pedagogy and andragogy. The literal rendering of 'pedagogy' is 'the leading of children'.

Most definitions of pedagogy have omitted the reference to children, thus it has become 'the art and science of teaching' (Webster). Most educational systems are still child and youth oriented, treating students as children. One educator suggests that the reason continuing education has been slow to develop has been that most teachers can teach adults only as though they were children.⁴⁹

In a pedagogical orientation, the information to be learned is determined by someone other than the learner, with learning primarily a passive experience. Paulo Freire calls this the 'banking system', in which the main transaction in education is the act of transferring information from the teacher's head and depositing it in the students' heads, so that the students are thus depositories and the teacher is the depositor.⁵⁰ At the heart of the problem for Ivan Illich is the exaggerated importance attached to credits and certification, the educational monopoly claimed by schools, the tendency to 'confuse teaching with learning, grade advancement with education, a diploma with competence, and fluency with the ability to say something new'.⁵¹ The system educates, but do students learn?

On the other hand, andragogy is the term recently coined to refer to the art and science of helping adults to learn. The recent research on andragogy is forcing educators to re-evaluate their long-held traditions on schooling and education. As Duane Elmer affirms: 'The adult is more than a grown up child; therefore, the principles and technology of educating children are not equally effective for the education of adults'.⁵²

Adult education seeks to respond to the needs, interests, and concerns of the learner. Terms like 'facilitator', 'coordinator', or 'resource person' more accurately describe the role of one who would [p. 269](#) teach adults. Learning is primarily an active experience, self-defined, self-motivated, and self-directed. Malcolm Knowles' theory of andragogy sees teachers not forcing their will or view on adult learners. Rather, suppressing the compulsion to teach (as they would teach children), they should place responsibility for learning in the hands of the adult learners themselves. Knowles states that teachers should ensure that the learning environment is rich enough for the group to extract

⁴⁸ Elmer, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Lyra Srinivasan, *Perspectives on Non formal Adult Learning: Functional Education for Individual, Community, and National Development*. Boston: World Education, Inc., 1977, p. 5.

⁵¹ Ivan Illich, *Deschooling Society*. New York: Harper and Row. 1971, p. 1.

⁵² Elmer, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

significant learning. 'Good teaching is good management of the interaction between two key variables: the learner and his environment'.⁵³

HOW ADULTS LEARN AND HOW TO TEACH THEM

According to Srinivasan the ideas of two earlier-mentioned educators, Ivan Illich and Paulo Freire, have been among the most influential in these new and growing fields of andragogy and nonformal education. But others who have made significant innovations to these fields of learning would include Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow of the humanistic school of psychology, B. F. Skinner, the behavioural psychologist, and the educators Jerome Bruner and Malcolm Knowles.⁵⁴

The most commonly held position presently regarding adult learning theory is eclectic in nature, seeing various adults learning in a multiplicity of ways and means. Mary Jane Even summarizes this position:

In regard to learning theory and resultant instructional practice, it is assumed that adults learn through an interaction process, must be motivated from within, must have a share in deciding what is to be learned, and must set their own goals. All learning has cognitive, affective, and psycho-motor dimensions, which simultaneously interact on the learning experience. Perceptions are based on former experience and the interaction with new learning and, thus, are holistic in form. Each individual views new learning from his or her own perspective and need. Adult learning theory has its roots in phenomenology, cognitive, or gestalt views of learning and is consistent with the interactive or holistic philosophy. This theory could be applied to all human learning, not just adult learning.⁵⁵

p. 270

In his summary chapter in *Helping Adults Learn How To Learn*, Smith acknowledges that fostering critical thinking, orienting adult learners to institutional programmes, and developing skills of collaborative learning may be discreet and very separate activities. Learning to learn is certainly not equivalent to learning to study or to succeeding in institutional contexts, and it may well be that the development of critically analytic capacities results in adults coming to regard sceptically the very educational institutions they were previously so eager to enter.⁵⁶ In other words, lifelong learning can become more important to adults than merely formal education, though Neil would admit that besides wanting to update or upgrade their professional or vocational knowledge and skills and wanting to study for the pleasure and satisfaction of learning, many adults continue their education to obtain specific qualifications (e.g. a degree or diploma).⁵⁷ Therefore, each adult, expressing his 'individuality and defining and taking what is needed

⁵³ Srinivasan, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁵⁵ Mary Jane Even, 'Why Adults Learn in Different Ways', in the *Journal of Lifelong Learning*. Vol. 10. No. 8. Washington, D.C.: American Association for Adult and Continuing Education, June 1987, pp. 23-24.

⁵⁶ Robert M. Smith, editor, *Helping Adults Learn How to Learn*. New Directions for Continuing Education. No. 19. San Francisco: Jossey-Boss Publishers, 1983, p. 101.

⁵⁷ Michael Neil, 'Education of Adults at a Distance: For Whom and Why', in *Education of Adults at a Distance*, edited by Michael Neil. London: Kogan Page, in association with The Open University Press, 1981, p. 48.

for one's professional development',⁵⁸ should actively pursue a pathway of lifelong learning.

In summary, how does the theoretical factor discussed above argue for the importance of continuous education for the missionary? Continuous education as a concept is in harmony with the various theories of how adults learn best. Adults learn best when they are problem-solving, asking questions, setting their own goals, actively involved, personally motivated and directed, interacting with others and their environment, deciding what needs to be learned, analysing and reflecting. And continuous education is the learning format that best fits the theories and realities about how adults learn.

As missionaries commit themselves to a life of continuous learning, many of the following benefits will be evident to them: intellectual stimulation, broadening of perspective, solutions to problems in ministry, immediate applicability of information, a growing network of like-minded professionals, academic credit, the attainment of realistic goals, and the thrill and satisfaction of directing one's own learning path. p. 271

EIGHT KEY PRACTICAL FACTORS

We have already investigated four key philosophical factors which directly impact the argument for missionaries cultivating a lifelong learning approach. The next eight factors are practical in nature. The discussions of these next factors take into account the biographies of various missionaries, all of which are associated with the missions programme of my church. Instead of footnoted evidence from the vast body of literature on the subject of continuing and continuous education, I will let the true stories of these missionaries speak for themselves.

The contextual factor

The contextual factor emphasizes a fifth reason why continuous education for the missionary is so important. A lifelong approach to education most easily and naturally seeks to make one's ministry more relevant to the local scene. The contextual factor is illustrated by three men: Renato, a former missionary in Argentina, who is presently a pastor of missions in his home country of Brazil; Paulo, a missionary candidate and former pastor in Brazil, who has also lived and worked in Europe and the United States; and Bob, a missionary to North Africa.

The elders of Renato's church recently voted to send him, his wife, and three children to the USA for one year as an investment for their church's future. Renato and his wife are diligently learning English six hours a day in non-accredited university courses in Los Angeles. Their three children are attending grammar school. None of the five spoke English when they came to America but they all learned remarkably fast. His elders were especially concerned that Renato learn English, so that he could take advantage of the wealth of audio-visual and printed materials in English to assist him in his preaching and teaching ministry. While in the USA he interned in a large non-denominational church very similar to his in Brazil. This helped him to internalize ministry principles better, to see his own church's strengths and weaknesses more clearly, and to interact with others as he plans his future ministry in Brazil. His time in America also gave him opportunity to visit other churches and meet church and missions leaders around the country.

Paulo is a missionary candidate preparing to work in Eastern Europe. After seven years as a pastor in Brazil, he spent a year in Europe working with the Billy Graham

⁵⁸ Jean Erdman, 'Reflecting on Teaching and Adult Education', in the *Journal of Lifelong Learning*, Vol. 10, No. 8. Washington, D.C.: American Association for Adult and Continuing Education. June 1987, p. 21.

Association. He then brought his wife [p. 272](#) and three children to the USA where he completed his seminary training at a church-based school. Though he had been a successful pastor in Brazil, he knew he would need more theological training to successfully serve church leaders in Iron Curtain countries and he wanted his schooling in a local church setting. Studying in English was a first for him and his grammar school-aged children. These cross-cultural experiences in the midst of their studies have prepared this family for the next step in their ministry career.

Bob and his wife participated in a 12-unit graduate-level study abroad programme in North Africa several years ago after graduating from seminary. Upon successfully completing that programme, they returned to California where Bob interned for a year in a small community church. Recently Bob began a Master's programme in public health at a local university. He and his family are returning to that North African country this fall. He returns officially as a graduate student doing research on his degree, but unofficially as the member of a mission agency. Bob is using his schooling as a means to build friendships and a working network, to further their cultural adaptation, and to assess needs and future ministry possibilities. He already has an open invitation from his host country's Washington, D.C. consulate. Like Renato and Paulo, Bob is continuing to blend ministry and schooling together in the immediate context. He knows that the more relevant his schooling is to the local scene, the more dynamic will be his ministry in the present and in the future.

The organizational factor

The sixth reason why continuous education for the missionary is so important revolves around the Organizational Factor. Simply stated, missionary agencies are eager to have more flexible, better trained field staff and home office personnel. They know that better educated missions leaders mean more efficient, effective ministries within their organizational long-range plans.

No missionary organization in the world understands this factor better or has applied this principle more fully than Wycliffe Bible Translators. Missionary candidates with Wycliffe must survive the rigours of at least two years of formal and nonformal training—three semesters on the graduate level in linguistics, one month of QUEST, an orientation course, and five months in 'jungle camp'. As many as possible of their Bible translators are encouraged to earn graduate degrees (which is done in conjunction with their field work). At least [p. 273](#) 217 current members with Wycliffe hold doctoral degrees and 1155 have Master's degrees.

Richard, a Bible translator in Latin America and Africa, earned a second Master's degree through his work with Wycliffe over the years. One extended furlough was all that he needed to finish the programme. Randy, also a Wycliffe member, is leaving soon with his family for a translation project in Africa. He has already begun work on his D.Miss. degree, so that during his first term he will work on several courses by extension, choose his dissertation topic on the language he will be learning, and hopefully make much progress on his doctorate during his first furlough. Darrell and Debbie, also with Wycliffe, leave soon for West Africa. They have already earned their Master's degrees in linguistics and intercultural studies before they leave for the field on their first term. More than 20 units of Debbie's degree was earned through field study courses in North Africa, India, and Papua New Guinea.

Tim is a new missionary with Sudan interior Mission in West Africa. Before going on a short-term assignment with SIM, he started an Ed.D. programme. While working in the Caribbean as a short-term missionary and as a conference teacher in Asia, Tim was able to earn many graduate units towards his degree, gaining practical experience and

academic training at the same time. Now SIM is granting him a one-semester study leave to return to California to finish the coursework for his doctorate. His studies and invigorating ministry have already been a real encouragement to SIM's work in Africa.

The institutional factor

A seventh reason, the institutional factor, also stresses the importance of continuous education for the missionary. Many schools, Bible institutes, colleges, seminaries, and graduate schools are anxious to offer innovative programmes to candidates and veteran missionaries. The 'market' is a substantial one—at least 40,000 short-term and career Protestant missionaries from North America working overseas presently, with thousands more in various stages of preparation. And many of the major evangelical institutions across the continent are now offering special majors, degrees, extension programmes, field studies, and 'study abroad' projects to capture new student interest and at the same time provide them with good opportunities to apply practically their missions training.

One of the most innovative of all the institutional programmes being offered currently involves a 'study abroad' programme in North Africa. [p. 274](#) The project is jointly sponsored by: a graduate school (Biola's School of Intercultural Studies), a university (William Carey International University), a Bible college (The Master's College), a mission agency (Wycliffe Bible Translators), and a local church (Grace Community Church). Students can earn up to 15 units of undergraduate or graduate credit through a husband-wife team that are adjunct professors of all three institutions, and members of the mission agency and the local church. Students live in the homes of non-Christian host families, learn some Arabic, conduct original research, enjoy wonderful personal ministries, and are tutored in such courses as intercultural adjustment, introduction to linguistics, and applied anthropology. Each student's missionary aptitudes are assessed, with a written evaluation provided at course end, and each is personally disciplined through the course by veteran missionaries with 25 years field experience. Already at least 7 'graduates' of the course are returning for longer service in that Muslim country. More than twenty are participating in the 1988 programme. After six years of excellent results, this programme is a winner. But it would not be possible without the support, assistance, and encouragement of the educational institutions.

The missiological factor

The world of missions continues to need more research, more books and articles, more reflection upon and stimulation of missiological themes and issues. This introduces an eighth reason why continuous education for missionaries is important. A commitment to lifelong learning provides one the ongoing opportunities to collect, analyse, disseminate, and interact upon important information crucial to the task of world evangelization.

Larry was one of our missionaries in Latin America for 13 years and is now a missions executive. While working in Brazil, he became increasingly aware of the growing number of non-Western mission agencies in Latin America and elsewhere. He began corresponding with many of them and collecting data on their ministries. He was helped by earlier writers on this subject,⁵⁹ and he was anxious to update the missions world on matters they had initially reported on in the early 1970s. Ultimately the fruit of his

⁵⁹ For example, Marlin Nelson, *The How and Why of Third World Missions*. Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1976.

research resulted in the [p. 275](#) publishing in 1983 of his D.Miss. dissertation,⁶⁰ adding an important contribution to the field of missiology. He had been allowed by his mission agency and supporting churches to use one of his furloughs to complete his doctoral studies, and the whole world of missions was helped in the process.

Another veteran missionary in France, Howard has taken Master's degree coursework on furloughs and by arrangement in Europe. However, apart from his formal studies, due to his burden for church growth throughout France Howard began collecting data on the status and locations of every denominational local church in his country. This project was recently published by World Vision's MARC European office.⁶¹ His effort has contributed a much-needed tool for French church planters in the overall strategy to evangelize that needy country.

The human factor

A ninth reason why continuous education for the missionary is important centres on the human factor. People need to keep learning, thinking, and growing to avoid stagnation and to reach their human potential. A commitment to lifelong learning stretches them, helps them see new facets in their make-up, new abilities, new possibilities.

Connie, a 25-year veteran missionary now in North Africa, recently earned her Master's degree. She had taken her coursework on furloughs and by arrangement on the field, and her thesis was a statement of much that she had learned in ministry on the field. Many candidates and missionaries each year have benefited from her studies as she continues to grow as a teacher, linguist, and coach.

Misko is a church-planting pastor in Eastern Europe, and is considered a key evangelical leader in his country. However, after more than 20 years of successful ministry in Europe, he felt the need to upgrade his ministry skills and Bible knowledge. The president of his European mission agency encouraged him to attend seminary in the USA. While working on his Master of Divinity degree, his first opportunity to study in English, he is working in an American church, stimulating the congregation and taking ministry teams from the [p. 276](#) church to Europe for summer ministries. It is also proving to be a great experience for his children, too, as they are schooled for the first time in an English-speaking environment.

Some of our missionary wives, like Becky in Papua New Guinea or Kathy in Belgium, either has a Master's degree or have already taken at least three semesters of graduate school. But Bible knowledge is what they really need or lack. Schools like Moody Bible Institute provide an invaluable service to people like these who can take Bible correspondence courses at their own pace and in areas of their own interest or specialization.

The geographical factor

A tenth reason why continuous education for the missionary is important focuses on the geographical factor. A commitment to lifelong learning best fits the lifestyle of today's missionary. With one furlough near one's home church and the next near the children's college, with yearly board meetings back at the home office, and a few regional and international gatherings sprinkled in, missionaries today are travelling more over shorter

⁶⁰ See Lawrence E. Keyes, *The Last Age of Missions: A Study of Third World Mission Societies*. Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1983.

⁶¹ See Howard Foreman, *A New Look at Protestant Churches in France*, MARC Monograph Number 9. Bromley, Kent, England: Cosmos House, MARC Europe, 1957.

periods of time. Even the length of furloughs is changing. In our own church experience, more of our missionaries come home on furlough every two or three years for 3 to 6 months (usually during the summer when kids are out of school) than the traditional one year furlough every 4 or 5 years. Such regular travel makes continuous education just that much easier to incorporate into one's lifestyle. All that is required is a little planning regularly to coordinate opportunities with learning experiences.

Al, a missions pastor at our church, was a missionary for 14 years in Central America. Throughout his missionary career, his college and graduate school education spanned three different decades and included 6 schools and seminaries in 3 countries. Bob, a missionary in Hong Kong and Indonesia, was able to plan his Ph.D. studies in California around his home church and his frequent board meetings in the USA. Daryl, a missionary for 20 years in Latin America, completed the coursework for his D.Miss. degree in California where his school, home churches, and mission agency are located. Even the content of his dissertation dealt with cities in Latin America where his agency works or is planning new ministries.

The geographical factor has been an important one in my own life. Over the last seven years in my doctoral studies, nearly half of all my units were directly tied to overseas trips, consultations, congresses, and other events I had to be at anyway. I was able to utilize every [p. 277](#) ministry opportunity to advance my schooling goals, and at the same time my doctoral programme immeasurably enriched my life and ministry. For me, schooling and ministry have become the two rails of the same track, keeping me balanced, on target, and moving ahead.

The modelling factor

The modelling factor presents yet another argument why continuous education for the missionary is important. A missionary committed to lifelong learning makes a very strong statement to one's constituents, and especially to those in one's ministry that learning, ministry, and life are synonymous.

Harold holds dual citizenship in the USA and his South American homeland. He is academic dean at one of the major seminaries in Venezuela. Having completed his doctoral programme recently while working at the seminary, he served as a positive example to the students that even a missionary of 40 years experience still has things to learn. Years ago at another Bible institute in the same country, Harold's mother, at age 79, learned Greek on her own and began teaching Greek courses to her students.

Paul works with church leaders in Eastern Europe. At the same time he is completing his Ph.D. work there. Men in Iron Curtain countries know what a commitment he has made to train them, and when they see him also continuing to study and learn himself, it encourages them all the more to learn the Bible and give their lives for the sake of Jesus Christ.

On the other side of the continent, Cecil trains students in a formal Bible school in Belgium. He is a tremendous example to his students, for he also oversees the T.E.E. programme of his school, coordinates the summer missionaries of his mission working in the country, and has helped plant 2 churches. He is completing his doctoral work at a Belgian school and models to everyone that learning is for a lifetime and that education takes place both inside and outside the classroom.

Henry oversees the first city-wide theological education by extension programme in Spanish in the USA. With hundreds of students now in the programme throughout Greater Los Angeles at many different church sites, the potential for other cities like New York and Miami is enormous. But as Henry meets regularly with these lay leaders and pastors who have no formal Bible training, Henry continues himself to learn and grow. He is finishing

up his Ed.D. programme under Ted Ward and models for his students the impact that a commitment to lifelong learning can have on others. p. 278

The doxological factor

The twelfth and final reason why continuous education for the missionary is important focuses on the doxological factor. Though last, this really is the single most important factor of all. Because all of life continues to change, the only way that anyone can excellently serve the Lord and others is by continuing to learn and grow. A commitment to excellence in life and ministry befits a God of excellence. A life lived fully to the glory of God reflects to others a life of inquiry, creativity, discipline, humility, and perspective. The final goal of all education and learning is the glory of God.

Duane Elmer comments on this final factor:

It is possible to provide educational experiences for missionaries so that they can better serve the organization but without their becoming better people. Such outcomes only serve to undermine the image of God in man and tarnish His glory. The Christian organization must recognize that only as it promotes this life-long process of restoring wholeness to God's image bearers will it meet its ultimate objective of glorifying God.⁶²

I reflect again on what has been said previously on schooling and education. Some of the greatest experiences of my life have been in formal school settings. Schools will continue to have a central place and role in all we do in the future. But we are forced to think beyond schooling if we have grasped the need for lifelong human growth and development. Learning is a lifelong commitment. Most of my truly life-changing and significant learning experiences, though, have not been in the classroom. 'Schooling will continue to be one means of learning, but the educator of adults sees it as only one part of a larger comprehensive plan.'⁶³

CONCLUSION

By taking into account all these factors that so heavily bear upon this crucial issue of lifelong learning, our lives and ministries will be transformed as God works in us. By planning for growth on all levels—personal, cultural, organizational—missionaries will help correct errors of the past, will learn better, will more creatively interact with life situations, will be more flexible, relevant, and stimulating in their ministries, will have lives more fully integrated and balanced, will tend to have fewer and less serious problems and not stagnate in their p. 279 missionary ruts, and will be a blessing to everyone else and God too. Each missionary has the personal and corporate responsibility to work with God in restoring his image in his people all over the world.

We proclaim Him, counselling and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ; to this end I labour, struggling with all the energy he so powerfully works in me. ([Colossians 1:28](#), 29, NIV)

Rev. Brewer is ministering at Grace Community Church, USA. p. 280

⁶² Elmer, *op. cit.*, 6.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

Book Reviews

CREATED IN GOD'S IMAGE

by Anthony A. Hoekema

(Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1986, pp. 265, \$19.95)

Reviewed by Mark W. Karlberg in The Westminster Theological Journal, Fall 1987. Reprinted with permission.

From the pen of the well-known and highly respected Reformed theologian, Anthony A. Hoekema, now Professor Emeritus at Calvin Seminary, comes a second major study in the field of systematics (dogmatics). Like his previous volume on eschatology, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), this present work on theological anthropology is written for the informed lay reader as well as the beginning seminarian. For this reason alone, Hoekema has performed an important service for the Reformed churches in the ongoing edification of God's people. At a number of points the author introduces material which reflects current biblical-theological scholarship. Some of his proposed modifications of traditional formulations are constructive, others not so.

Hoekema begins in ch. 1–2 with a brief discussion of the importance of the doctrine of man in the contemporary scene, setting the Christian view over against a variety of non-Christian anthropologies, both ancient and modern. What is man? According to our author, he is best described as a 'created person'. 'In sum, the human being is both a creature and a person; he or she is a *created person*. This, now, is the central mystery of man: how can man be both a creature and a person at the same time? To be creature, as we have seen, means absolute dependence on God; to be a person means relative independence' (p. 6). Though critical of certain speculative dichotomies found in traditional formulations of the doctrine of man, Hoekema succumbs to the same error by defining man as both creature *and* person, resulting in a problematic treatment of human dependency and independency (pp. 6–7). All that need be said is that Adam was created a living person, a creature of God. What distinguishes man the creature from all other creatures is that he is at the same time a person.

Close to one half of the book deals with the formative role of the image concept, an emphasis indicated by the title of the book. The author treats this topic under three divisions: biblical, historical, and theological (chs. 3–5). The discussion of man's self-image in ch. 6 appears somewhat out of place in a dogmatic presentation such as [p. 281](#) this. Chs. 7–10 deal with the doctrine of sin: its origin, spread, nature and restraint.

Before analyzing Hoekema's views on man as image-bearer we will consider other matters in his study. It is refreshing to note the emphasis placed upon the historicity of Adam (pp. 112–17). Earlier, Hoekema objected to Barth's interpretation: 'it is hard to know what Barth means here by 'the Fall', but it is clear that he would not allow for any fellowship between God and man in a state of integrity' (p. 51). With regard to original sin the author correctly argues that all who are in Adam (the total number of humankind) are guilty of breaking God's law. 'Guilt is the state of deserving condemnation or of being liable to punishment because the law has been violated' (p. 148). However, Hoekema's understanding of humanity's relationship to the one sin of Adam does not do full justice to the teaching of Scripture. In striving to find a middle position between realism and direct imputation the author relinquishes ties to the consistent view of direct imputation (pp. 163–65). Hoekema speaks of the concept of imputation as 'an inference from the scriptural data' (p. 165). We would add that direct imputation is a *necessary* inference

from the biblical data. (Compare John Murray, *The Imputation of Adam's Sin* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959] 71–95, esp. pp. 86–88.)

As to the question of those who die in infancy, Hoekema's views are not those of Herman Bavinck. Hoekema contends: 'To be sure, all infants are under the condemnation of Adam's sin as soon as they are born. But the Bible clearly teaches that God will judge everyone according to his or her works. And those who die in infancy are incapable of doing any works, whether good or bad' (p. 165). This view appears to be something less than consistent Calvinism. Is not the basis of salvation the sovereign, electing purpose of God in Christ, rather than any consideration of human performance either in the case of adults or infants?

Hoekema's comments on the Ten Commandments and natural law evince an older view that has rightly received criticism today (p. 170). Over against the position of Hoekema, it has been argued, the Scriptures teach that the Decalogue is a code of morality rejecting the perfect ethical standards that a holy God requires of his creatures at all times and in all places, but applies such moral principles in a particular historical and covenantal context. As such, it is not an unqualified 'reduplication' of natural law which is eternal and unchanging. (For example, the *Mosaic* ordinance of Sabbath-observance is no longer binding upon the new covenant people of God.)

Lastly in this section on hamartiology Hoekema's discussion of [p.282](#) gradations of sin would be clearer and more profitable if such distinctions were understood to be meaningful only in the historical context, not the final judgement—thinking here particularly of the problematic Reformed doctrine of future rewards (gains and losses) for the faithful saints based upon their good works. More to the point, will there be degrees of punishment corresponding to degrees of reward in the final state? Do we have a biblical basis for suggesting that it is better for one to be a 'good heathen' rather than a perverse apostate as concerns the ultimate destiny of man? In the case of God's elect, what does it mean to speak of 'non-meritorious' reward *based on good works*? (cf. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, 262–64).

Ch. 11 discusses the 'whole man', man as a psychosomatic unity. In rejecting the speculative views of trichotomy and dichotomy the author properly stresses the idea of wholeness. Instead of distinguishing two or three parts in man's composition, Hoekema posits two *aspects* of man, the bodily and the spiritual. Hopefully, this material will stimulate students of the Bible to reassess earlier thinking. At the same time further help might have been offered by the author in developing his interpretation of man as a psychosomatic unity by applying this concept to the related issue regarding the nature and constitution of man in the dispute between creationism and traducianism.

The final chapter returns to the problem of human freedom, the topic with which the book opens. Neither here nor anywhere else in this study does the author treat the doctrine of double predestination. Perhaps this indicates a reserve which might otherwise have exposed deeper problems in Hoekema's decretive theology—a softening of the decrees concerning sin, and more specifically the decree of reprobation. A full-orbed doctrine of human freedom must be formulated in accordance with Scripture's teaching on the sovereignty of God, including election and reprobation.

The remainder of this review critiques Hoekema's interpretation of man as image-bearer of God. The most obvious omission is any reference to or interaction with the views of Meredith G. Kline in his *Images of the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), though it is listed in the bibliography. At a number of points in his argumentation Hoekema arrives at conclusions that do not rest upon convincing exegesis. A careful study and analysis of Kline's work might have led Hoekema to make a more convincing case for his own views.

As formative as the image concept is in this book one searches in vain for a concise definition of the image. Instead we find a long list of features and characteristics of man, the more important being man's exercise of dominion over God's creation, the male-female relation p. 283 (partnership and companionship), and man's structure and function. The essence of the image is defined as love for God and man. The image concept is broadened out so extensively that it fails to convey the biblical usage. (This has been one of the weaknesses of the traditional formulations which distinguish between broader and narrower aspects of the image.) Then too, Hoekema erroneously contends that man as created person relates to God covenantally only in the context of redemption. According to Hoekema, only as redeemed sinner is man both image-bearer *and* covenant servant. Such a view as the one espoused by the author posits a defective interpretation of man's original state in creation. By adopting Murray's construction of Adam's state in creation (the so-called Adamic Administration) as opposed to a covenantal understanding of the relationship between God and Adam at the inception of creation (the so-called 'organic' view of the covenant held by such exponents as Abraham Kuyper, Herman Bavinck, and Geerhardus Vos) Hoekema revives the nature-grace dualism of earlier times. (See further my article, 'The Original State of Adam: Tensions in Reformed Theology', *EQ* [forthcoming].) Unsuspectingly, Hoekema himself falls prey to speculative dichotomizing. We observed this earlier in connection with the author's dichotomy between man as creature (determinism) and man as person (indeterminism). Additionally, Hoekema's discussion perpetuates the traditional problematics over the issue whether the covenant of grace is conditional or unconditional.

More seriously, Hoekema's current thinking on the doctrine of the covenant leads him away from historic Reformed teaching by rejecting the doctrine of the covenant of creation (i.e. the 'Covenant of Works'). Departing from the position he held in his doctoral study, 'Hermann Bavinck's Doctrine of the Covenant' (Th.D dissertation, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1953), Hoekema no longer finds this view compatible with Scripture. Here again, one might expect to read weightier arguments *pro* and *con* than what Hoekema provides. He concedes: 'Bavinck considers the doctrine of the covenant of works so important that he states more than once that the covenant of works and the covenant of grace stand or fall together' (p. 118). How can a doctrine once regarded by the author himself to be *essential* to biblical faith be so quickly jettisoned? In the judgement of Hoekema is Bavinck now guilty of perverting biblical truth?

The dilemma that Hoekema creates for himself in denying the principle of works-inheritance (merit) requires him to find some other means of explaining the function of the promises and threats within the covenant of grace (pp. 10, 180). His view implies that the curses p. 284 associated with the Mosaic covenant are not peculiar to that ancient people, but rather are normative in the covenant of grace in all ages.

The element of creation-eschatology that Hoekema recognizes comes into its own only within a conventional interpretation of Adam's creation in the image of God. (Compare similar criticisms on this point and others raised by Howard Griffith in his review article appearing in this same issue of the *Journal*.) In his objection to a covenantal understanding of God's work in creation the author would, presumably, hold to some form of the doctrine of 'moral government' taught by such representatives as Robert Dabney and James Thornwell.

Hoekema proposes as another feature of man's sanctification the development of a distinctively Christian culture (pp. 94-95, 201-2). He suggests that 'the best contributions of each nation will enrich life on the new earth, and that whatever potentialities and gifts have been of value in this present life will somehow, in some way, be retained and enriched in the life to come. This implies that there will be continuity as well as

discontinuity between the present life and the life to come, and that therefore our cultural, scientific, educational, and political endeavours today help to prepare for a fuller and richer life on the new earth' (pp. 94–95). It is not so certain, however, that this vision reflects the teaching of Scripture. Does not the radical and supernatural in-breaking of the consummation necessitate the destruction of man's cultural achievements (despite the fact that these cultural and technological pursuits are legitimate and necessary activities in the present course of history—activities deriving from the obligation placed upon the human race at creation [the cultural mandate], and made possible after the Fall through God's operation of common grace)? How can we explain the fact that God has providentially entrusted the ungodly line with cultural development and advancement, whereas the godly line has been entrusted with the far more glorious ministry of reconciliation through the preaching of the gospel of salvation (cf. [Gen. 4:17–22](#); [2 Cor. 5:18–19](#))? Are we justified in thinking that the works of the unrighteous will follow after them in the eternal kingdom while they themselves burn in hell-fire? In comparison, are the few and feeble (cultural) offerings of the saints to be transformed in the heavenly kingdom—a kingdom not made by human hands? Rather than speculate upon the enduring value of culture (which, as I read Scripture, will pass away), ought we not to glory in God alone?

Although we have drawn attention to a number of differences with our author, some more serious than others, this book is a worthy addition to everyone's library. Not all of the objections and criticisms raised in this review will find ready acceptance among exponents of [p.285](#) Reformed theology today. The issues, however, will continue to arouse debate and encourage all of us to a more faithful reading of the Scriptures themselves, freed from historical and philosophical biases which so frequently beset theologians, even some of the best among us.

APOLOGIA: CONTEXTUALIZATION, GLOBALIZATION AND MISSION IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

by Max L. Stackhouse

(Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1988)

Reviewed by Dr. Graham Houghton. Printed with permission.

This book is the publication of the substance of a series of faculty discussion papers, debates and conversations that took place over the past few years at Andover Newton Theological School in the United States. In addition to the ANTS faculty, from time to time a number of visiting theologians and international guests joined the dialogue. These discussions have for the most part been written up by Max Stackhouse, a professor at ANTS.

The purpose of the whole exercise is admirable; to discuss what is referred to as the 'best current literature on the state of theology and the future of the theological education'. The ANTS faculty acknowledges the need to establish its priorities in a context increasingly aware of a commitment to the world church and to reach out beyond its own enclave.

Arising from their concern for involvement in the world there has emerged a working or 'fraternal' relationship between ANTS and other theological schools in various parts of the world including East Berlin, South India and Nicaragua. This type of thing is to be welcomed, provided the relationship remains uniquely fraternal and is not permitted to degenerate into one that is by nature paternal—which is so often the case when schools

in western nations relate to theological institutions in the Third World. In all these discussions the recurring themes were 'contextualization', 'globalization' and 'mission'.

The questions that lay at the back of the deliberations are worthy for a theological faculty anywhere to pick up. They were three: what does it mean to engage in theological education when it appears that every statement we make and every response to it is contextually determined? What does it mean to engage in theological education at a time when the world is becoming more and more a global village and when [p. 286](#) new voices are entering the dialogue? What is the mission of the church, especially that of seminaries, in a 'post-modern' world? *Apologia* deals firstly with the whole issue of the biblical text on one hand and our context on the other. Under this head Stackhouse has given paragraphs defining contextualization from the liberal, modern, neo-orthodox, ecumenical, realist and biblical points of view. In this latter section he says (I thought rather uncharitably), that fundamentalist authors (it is not clear that he has included evangelicals here) can be found who are deeply concerned with apologetics and mission 'of a sort'. The interesting thing is that, at least in the Third World, those seminary graduates who are being enabled to provide the greatest impact upon human society for transformation, the glory of God and the expansion of the Church come from those schools that have a high view of Scripture and an urgency to make the good news of the gospel of our Lord Jesus known to the needs of the whole man wherever he may be found.

Apologia is concerned that we understand the context in which theological education must be worked out and the Church that must carry out its mandate. It is not clear what, having come to grips with our context, we should do next. All is not lost, however; we would agree with the late ANTS Dean, Orlando Costas, who (in what became a manifesto) noted that too much of what passes for theological education is academic and professional rather than Spirit—filled and practical in application. Costas went on to say that theological institutions need to equip students to assist the church to address the challenge of a world in which the vast majority know nothing of the appeal of the Christian faith, and where billions live beyond the reach of local congregations of believers; that theological institutions should prepare dedicated men and women capable of leading the church in ministries among the 'sinned against', the poor and the oppressed, bringing them in word and deed a promise of liberation, justice and the rule of God's kingdom; and that theological education must prepare the called leadership of tomorrow to promote Christian unity and human solidarity. Recommendations worthy for any seminary faculty to ponder.

This book is important. ANTS has, in a sense, exposed itself to all those of us who are involved in and concerned for the present (not too healthy) status of theological education. We should be thankful then to ANTS for their courage in letting us all have a glimpse of their ongoing pilgrimage and struggle for identity and purpose.

Although the text tends to be rather abstruse at times *Apologia* could be a helpful point of departure for any theological faculty that takes seriously the mission of God in our world.