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Editorial

Bruce Locherbie warned his students ‘Christianity may underrate the mind and overrate the heart and therefore have no stomach for the fight.’

There is every indication that a new spirit of paganism is emerging throughout the world, drawing together pre-Christian cultic roots, occultic practices, contemporary religious pluralism and the worship of the Earth goddess. In the West it is called the spirit of New Age. Secular Humanism has no answer to human suffering, oppression and death. It is proving to be a halfway house to the new paganism.

We are in need of a vibrant Christian faith that integrates mind and heart; body and soul, theology and experience, a faith that will sustain the church as the fight intensifies.

The Lord is calling us to defend and proclaim the truth in love, a balance evangelicals find hard to sustain. When the early church was confronted with similar attacks, God raised up his apologists who were mighty in word and deed, and also his apostles of love who crossed physical and cultural barriers to take the gospel to the ends of the known world.

The issue of ERT brings together a wide range of theological and missiological concerns with a view of working towards an integrated faith that will penetrate the market place with the good news in Jesus Christ. The ecumenical movement confesses that it is still searching for a vital and coherent theology. Evangelicals may claim to have it, but they show little evidence of it in practice. As the issues of gospel and culture intensify so we will need greater clarity of mind and deeper commitment to mission. This is our theological and missiological task.

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Living Theology Toward a theology of Christian practice

R. Paul Stevens

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I believe in Christianity as I believe that the Sun has risen—not only because I can see it but because by it I see everything else.

C. S. Lewis

Living theologically—my title is an oxymoron, like black light, constructive criticism, or servant leadership—two ideas that normally do not belong together. What has theology to do with everyday life?

Theology is usually considered an abstract discipline. It is rational, reducible to propositions, and capable of being categorized (liberal, conservative, evangelical, Reformed, liberation). It is not usually thought of as practical. People in business, law, the professions and the trades often regard the study of theology as a process of becoming

progressively irrelevant. The hardest words of critique are offered by insiders. For example, Lesslie Newbigin says:

Christian men and women who are deeply involved in secular affairs view theology as the arcane pursuit of professional clergymen. This withdrawal of theology from the world of secular affairs is made all the more complete by the work of biblical scholars whose endlessly fascinating exercises have made it appear to the lay Christian that no one untrained in their methods can really understand anything the Bible says. We are in a situation analogous to one about which the Treater Reformers complained....¹

Theology! God-words. God-study. God-thought.

Then there is life! Everyday life. Getting up in the morning life. Paying the bills life. Watching a hockey game life. Trying to find a job life. Trying to say 'I love you' to your spouse life. Raising a family in a postmodern culture life. Computers, credit cards, freeways, gridlock, virtual reality, running a small business, movies, the economy, racial tension, p.197 sexual appetite, recession, radar imaging from satellites, fashion, television, ambition, workaholism, debt, prayer, Bible study, theological discourse—what do these have in common?

It should be obvious that I am pleading for a different definition of theology from what is commonly taught, one closer to the Bible.² Such is supplied by the Puritan William Perkins, who said, 'Theology is the science of living blessedly forever'.³ J. I. Packer, in the same tradition, says that theology is for achieving God's glory (honour and praise) and humankind's good (the godliness that is true humanness) through every life-activity.⁴ If these definitions come close to capturing the biblical approach to theological education then the only theology that is truly Christian is the one being applied. I would not want to be a professor of unapplied theology! One reason is that the movement of the Bible is always away from the indicative to the imperative, from doctrine to duty, from kerygma to didache, from theology to ethics, from revealed truth to extraordinary living. Francis of Assisi once said that humankind has as much knowledge as it has executed. That means that what you really know—in the fully biblical and Hebraic sense—is what you live. You have passed some examinations and written some academic papers. But these are trivial tests compared with life itself. For example, James Houston recently suggested at a pastor's conference that the curriculum vitae of a pastor is usually written on the face of his wife. There was a stunned silence among the predominantly male audience.

In this paper I will explore the life-theology connection by looking through three lenses, each providing a way of looking at the rich connection designed by God but largely fragmented in contemporary theological education.

¹ Lesslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), pp. 142–143.

² The working definition of theological education developed within the Coalition for the Ministry in Daily Life is as follows: "Theological education for all the people of God is the life-long, life-based (rooted in life and not abstracted), and life-oriented (directed towards the totality of life) process of forming and transforming persons, communities, organizations and institutions into Christian maturity for the purpose of serving God and God's purposes in the world' ('Consultation on Ministry in Daily Life: Task Group report', 14 November, 1992).

³ *The Golden Chain* (1592), in Ian Breward (ed.), *The Work of William Perkins* (Appleford: Courtney Press, 1970), p. 177.

⁴ From a lecture at Regent College, Vancouver, B.C., September 1992.

1. ORTHODOXY

Orthodoxy is made up of two words, one of which means ‘straight’ or ‘right’ (from which we get the English word *orthodontist*, the person who makes straight teeth) and the other the Greek word for ‘glory’ or ‘worship’—*doxa*. Doctrine that lines itself up (*ortho*) with Scripture is designed to be a blessing to everyday life and, at the same time, to bless God (*doxa*) in life itself. It aims, as Packer says, at true godliness that is true humanness.

Redeeming the Routine⁵

The whole of our life has the glorious prospect of living out the great p. 198 doctrines of the faith. The doctrine of the Trinity, for example, directs God-imaging creatures to live relationally. Those who proclaim that God is love are invited to be included in the love-life of God and so become lovers themselves ([In. 17:21](#)). To believe in God the creator is to accept trusteeship of the earth. The incarnation revolutionizes our attitude to things and promotes a radical Christian materialism. The atonement equips us to live mercifully. Ecclesiology evokes the experience of peoplehood, living as the *laos* of God rather than a bouquet of individual believers. Eschatology teaches us to view time as a gift of God rather than a resource to be managed.

All of this involves straight thought. Far from denigrating thought, the Bible invites us to love God with our minds ([Mt. 22:37](#)) by thinking comprehensively (taking the whole into consideration, including paradox, ambiguity and the aesthetic), thinking critically (not allowing our minds to be conformed to this age), thinking devotedly (by taking captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ—[2 Cor. 10:5](#)). The fruit of such thinking should be a blessing for everyday life. Thinking Christianly is part of the ‘science of living blessedly forever’.

The danger of applied theology

But orthodoxy involves more than merely speaking correctly *about* God. We could do that and still be damned, like the friends of Job—Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar—who spoke with impeccable correctness about God but in the end received God’s judgement: ‘I am angry with you [Eliphaz] and your two friends, because you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has’ ([Job 42:7](#)). Remarkably, God judged Job as orthodox and his friends (who could have had degrees from both Fuller and Regent) as heretics. Why? It is not only a fascinating question but a vital one.

A careful study of the book of Job reveals that the only authentic theologian in the book was Job himself. The reason is sublimely simple: while the friends talked *about* God, Job talked *to* God. P. T. Forsyth says that ‘the best theology is compressed prayer’.⁶ While Job’s friends delivered their lectures about God, Job talked to God, and in so speaking—with all his holy boldness—he spoke well of God. His theology was orthodox. We will return to this later.

The danger of mere intellectual orthodoxy is that we are tempted to think we can manage God. Our doctrines then become idols—static, fixed and inflexible. According to [Psalm 115:8](#), ‘those who make [such idols] will be like them’. They will become people who are static, inflexible and unsurprising. In contrast, the Lord ‘does whatever pleases him’ ([115:3](#)). And those who worship the Lord become free and spontaneous. God can never be contained by the human mind. If he could, then God would be too puny a God to

⁵ This is the title of the excellent book by my friend Robert Banks (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1993).

⁶ P. T. Forsyth, *The Soul of Prayer* (London: The Independent Press, 1916/ 1954), p. 11.

be worshipped. The point of theology is to understand God (to stand *under* God in reverent awe), not to over-stand God by attempting p. 199 to control him through theological discourse. Much that passes for theological education is the extension of the tree of knowledge of good and evil through history, offering the temptation to transcend our creatureliness. True worship is the opposite invitation. Orthodoxy welcomes mystery and confesses with Job, ‘these are but the outskirts of his ways’ ([Job 26:14](#) KJV). As Robert Capron said: ‘The work of theology in our day is not so much interpretation as contemplation ... God and the world need to be held up for oohs and ahhs before they can be safely analyzed. Theology begins with admiration, not problems.’⁷

Truthful living for God’s glory

Doctrine that does not lead to doxology is demonic ([Jas. 2:19](#)). That is why those who set out together on a theological education experience are on a dangerous journey. We must make sure we are heading in the right (orthodox) direction. The goal of biblical theological education is to increase our love for God and to make us more human. For this reason the academy must work in partnership with the church and the marketplace since there is in these real-life ministry and life situations a built-in reality check. More important, there is a built-in love check. We cannot learn to love the church as Christ does ([Eph. 5:25](#)) without being in both Christ and the church. The church cannot be loved *in absentia* the way some people get their degrees. The congregation is essential for our God-given goal of forming people who will worship God through preaching, examining a balance sheet, preparing a family meal, praying with a friend, pruning their rose bushes, and equipping the saints.⁸ According to Ephesians the purpose of congregation and life-based education is that the saints will live for the praise of God’s glory ([1:12](#), [14](#))—that is, to live doxologically.

So, looking at the theology and everyday life connection through the lens of orthodoxy, we see that the great doctrines of the faith beg for application. They bless everyday life. They point us simultaneously to the adoration of God and to the possibility of living a genuinely human existence. But we must now look through a second lens—orthopraxy—to discover what is involved in the connection of theology and daily life. Orthopraxy literally means right or straight practice.

2. ORTHOPRAXY

We are in desperate need today of a theology of good works, especially p. 200 evangelicals. We are saved by grace and not by works—that is the gospel. Further, faith without works is dead—and that is part of the gospel too. But how can people saved by grace work? What is right practice? When is a work Christian?

Humanizing theological living

⁷ Robert Farrar Capon, *An Offering of Uncles: The Priesthood of Adam and the Shape of the World* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), p. 163.

⁸ A strand of witness through the OT and NT points to education in the thick of life and in the context of daily ministry: the family as the primary educational unit; the reinforcement of public festivals; structured patterns of instruction through creeds and stories; the schools of the prophets; congregational instruction in the synagogue; the disciple community around Jesus engaged in action as well as withdrawal for reflection; Paul’s travelling seminary with his missionary coworkers (Timothy, Gaius, Tychicus and Trophimus); the Hall of Tyrannus as education in the marketplace ([Acts 19:9–10](#)); and the local household churches, undoubtedly the primary place for the education of the whole people of God.

Is it evangelism, preaching, pastoral care, counselling—all the subjects loosely called ‘applied theology’ or ‘ministry division’ courses? I can point only in passing to the fine piece of analysis done on right practice by Craig Dykstra.⁹ Dykstra notes the ubiquitous tension between the so-called academic fields of theology, Bible, history, ethics (disciplines in which practice is thought to have no intrinsic place)—and the applied theology division which is often relegated, in some people’s minds, to ‘how to’ techniques for clergy. It is now widely recognized in theological circles that we must break out of the dichotomy of practical skills and theoretical knowledge. Perhaps we will never resolve the tension. Indeed, we may better speak of useful and fruitful tension as we work on integration. As we do this we can put the question differently along these lines: what is theological about praxis and what is practical about theology?

In contrast to the dichotomizing of theology and practice in the theological academy today, the NT presupposes a community in which every person is a theologian of application, trying to make sense out of his or her life in order to live for the praise of God’s glory.¹⁰ On the most basic level orthopraxy is about practices that are in harmony with God’s kingdom in the church and world, that bring value and good into the world. It is obvious, however, that one cannot do the doctrine fully in a classroom or library, or learn the doctrine in the classroom and do it later. Instead of training for ministry and then going into it, we assume you should not ‘go into the ministry’ unless you are already ‘in it’. The best education is education *in* ministry and not just *for* it. It is transformative not preparatory.¹¹ Behind this is an important principle of spiritual theology: any attempt to know God apart from the [p. 201](#) activities of life is unreal.¹² My own experience is illustrative. After two years in theological college I was suffering from academic burn-out. My wife and I moved into the slums of Montreal and tried to serve God in an inner-city church while I continued my M. Div. part-time. This rejuvenated my theological education. I engaged every course with questions that came out of daily ministry and our immersion in the poverty of the city. This points to a truth we must explore, that there is more to orthopraxis than application. There is revelation and illumination.

Knowing through doing

⁹ Craig Dykstra, ‘Reconceiving Practice’, in Barbara Wheeler and Edward Farley (eds), *Shifting Boundaries* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox, 1991), pp. 35–36. Dykstra defines a Christian practice (as distinct from activities) as inherently cooperative (not a solo action), inherently good (generates values), and inherently revelatory (bears epistemological weight). Unfortunately he then lists as Christian practices those activities which could appear obviously to be done in the name of Jesus: interpreting Scripture, worship and prayer, confession and reconciliation, service, witness, social criticism, and the mutual bearing of suffering (pp. 45, 48).

¹⁰ While the Bible offers several models of and contexts for theological education, there are some consistent themes: (1) it is community-oriented rather than individualistic; (2) cooperative rather than competitive; (3) life-centred rather than school-based; (4) transformational rather than exclusively informational; (5) life-long rather than seasonal, packaged and concentrated; (6) available to all the people of God rather than to a clerical elite; and (7) concerned with equipping the people of God both for service in the church (the ecclesia) and for societal service to God (the *diaspora*).

¹¹ Extensive research and theological reflection on the congregation as the centre for spiritual and theological formation has recently taken place. Representative of this are the following: Craig Dykstra, ‘Reconceiving Practice’, in Barbara Wheeler and Edward Farley (eds), *Shifting Boundaries* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox, 1991); Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983); Joseph C. Hough and Barbara Wheeler (eds), *Beyond Clericalism: The Congregation as a Focus for Theological Education* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988).

¹² I attribute this thought to a formative paper delivered by Dr F. W. Waters in 1962, ‘Knowing God Through Thinking and Service’, a presentation that started my own journey of integration.

There is a growing critique of the traditional linear, cause-effect approach in theological education: first you get the theology and then you apply it. In contrast, we must aim at a circle of learning: theory expressed in practice, which leads to deeper theoretical/theological reflection, which lead to praxis again, and on it goes. We should speak of this as a spiral of learning as we keep re-entering each phase at a deeper level.¹³ Obviously by relegating praxis to the post-academy experience we are short-changing learning. Perhaps this is easier to grasp in Africa or Asia than in the West. The orthodoxy-orthopraxy tension in the West reflects the intrinsic dualism of western civilization, and the lingering effects of the Enlightenment.

In contrast, the Bible invites us to holistic living that embraces propositional truth, as well as truth learned through image, imagination and action, all a seamless robe. For example, the apostle Paul hammered out his doctrine of justification by faith in the context of the Gentile mission. He was a missionary theologian. Ray S. Anderson notes, 'Paul's theology and mission were directed more by the Pentecost event which unleashed the Spirit of Christ through apostolic witness rather than through apostolic office. This praxis of Pentecost became for Paul the "school" for theological reflection'.¹⁴ The gospels point to the same unity of knowledge. Many of the commands of Jesus link revelation with obedience: 'If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love' ([Jn. 15:10](#)); 'If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples' ([8:31](#)); 'If anyone keeps p. 202 my word, he will never see death' ([8:51](#)). Sometimes Jesus invited people to 'believe this'; more often Jesus said 'do this and you will live' ([Lk. 10:28](#); see also [Mt. 19:21](#)). Especially in the Gospel of Luke Jesus teaches that obedient action is the organ of further revelation. If they do not obey the law and the prophets, he said, 'they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead' ([Lk. 16:31](#)). He puts these words on the lips of Abraham in the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus and proclaims that even his resurrection from the grave will have no evidential apologetic value if they are not acting on the light they have. We know more through doing what we already know.

Biblical theological education is not inert theology and unreflective action but 'praxis-laden theory' and 'theory-laden praxis'.¹⁵ Immanuel Kant said something similar when he offered the maxim that experience without theory is blind but theory without experience is mere intellectual play.¹⁶ What we can learn by doing is much more than simple technique. Every action has implicit theory just as every theory has implicit action. So theological reflection *in* ministry or a societal occupation is essential to living theologically. But in these things we are not trying to squeeze blood from a rock. Daily life is bursting with theological meaning just as theological truth is laden with blessing for daily life. God can be known and loved through praxis in the realities of everyday life. What a strange marriage psychology would require one to love fully and only then to kiss, rather than to kiss in order to love! What a strange perversion of the Christian life that

¹³ See Max Stackhouse's discussion of *theoria*, *praxis* and *poesis* in Max Stackhouse, *Apologia: Contextualization, Globalization, and Mission in Theological Education* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988). His approach does not negate the importance of straight thinking: indeed, he critiques liberation theology for its faulty *theoria* on pp. 81–105.

¹⁴ Ray S. Anderson, *The Praxis of Pentecost: Reuisioning the Church's Life and Mission* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993), p. 196.

¹⁵ Philip S. Keane and Melanie A. May, 'What is the Character of Teaching, Learning, and the Scholarly Task in the Good Theological School?', *Theological Education* XXX No. 2 (Spring 1994), p. 40.

¹⁶ Quoted in Ludwig von Bertalanffy, *General System Theory* (New York: George Braziller, 1968), p. 101.

would forbid one to act until one knows, and not act in order to know! We are formed theologically not only by reading and reasoning but by action and by service.

My own story may be illustrative. I abandoned professional ministry at thirty-eight years of age, took up the trade of carpentry for five years and planted a church. It proved to be a theological education immersion experience. I learned theology through that.¹⁷ I prayed as much as a carpenter as I did as a pastor, possibly more, because I was so frequently beyond my comfort zone. But the experience deepened my theology and spirituality. Indeed, as Eberhard Jüngel said, ‘Everything can become the theme of theology on the basis of its relation to God.’¹⁸ In this we have a clue to our basic question—what makes practice Christian?

Inside Christian practice

What makes an activity Christian is not the husk but the heart. Preaching, caring for the flock and equipping **p. 203** the saints can be profoundly secular. Listening to a child, designing a software package, and examining a balance sheet can be profoundly Christian. What makes a work Christian is faith, hope and love. This is a crucial point. Orthopraxy is not merely accomplished by the skilful performance of ministerial duties like leading Bible studies, praying for the sick and doing acts of justice. This misunderstanding has seduced many non-clergy laity to aspire to ministerial duties in order to be ‘doing ministry’. They become paraclergy instead of regarding their ordinary service in the world as fulltime ministry. It is not the religious character of the work that makes service Christian but the interiority of it. William Tyndale said, ‘There is no work better than another to please God; to pour water, to wash dishes, to be a souter [cobbler], or an apostle, all are one, as touching the deed, to please God.’¹⁹ I can preach a sermon to impress people; I can fix our shower door at home for the glory of God. I have probably done both. The difference is faith.

Luther deals with this brilliantly in his *Treatise on Good Works*. He uses the analogy of husband and wife as an example of the Christian practices that spring from gospel confidence. Where the husband is confident of his acceptance he does not have to do big things to win his wife’s favour. In the same way the person who lives by the gospel ‘simply serves God with no thought of reward, content that his service pleases God. On the other hand, he who is not at one with God, or is in a state of doubt, worries and starts looking for ways and means to do enough and to influence God with his many good works’.²⁰ Faith defines orthopraxy. Faith by definition cannot be calculating, or even self-evaluative, just as the eye cannot look at itself, designed as it is for looking at another. When the eye is single or sound the whole of one’s bodily life is filled with the light of Christ ([Lk. 11:34–36](#)). Life centred on God transforms the ordinary into the extraordinary so we discover what Alfons Auer described as ‘the sense of *transparency in worldly matters*’.²¹

¹⁷ The reflection that was inspired by this practice is documented in *Liberating the Laity* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1985).

¹⁸ Eberhard Jüngel, *The Freedom of a Christian Luther’s Significance for Contemporary Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 1988), p. 22.

¹⁹ William Tyndale, ‘A Parable of the Wicked Mammon’ (1527), in *Treatises and Portions of Holy Scripture* (Cambridge: Parker Society, 1848), pp. 98, 104.

²⁰ Martin Luther, ‘Treatise on Good Works’, W. A. Lambert (trans.), James Atkinson (ed.), *Luther’s Works* Vol. 44 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), pp. 26–27.

²¹ Auer, *op. cit.*, p. 230 (italics mine).

The unselfconsciousness of such faith is the matter raised by the disturbing parable of the sheep and the goats ([Mt. 25:31–46](#)). The unrighteous protest if they had seen Jesus in the poor, hungry or stranger, even if they had known Jesus was disguised in the poor, they would gladly have done a service directly to the Lord. So the unrighteous are surprised that their failure to love their neighbour was a failure to love Jesus. They would have gladly done Christian practices for Jesus but not for others! Apparently that is not enough. In contrast the righteous found to their exquisite surprise that what they did not regard as a ministry to Jesus (but just loving their neighbour) turned out to be a Christian practice approved by the Lord. They too [p. 204](#) protest, ‘Lord, when did we see you, hungry, naked and thirsty, and feed you?’ Jesus says, ‘Whatever you did for one of the least of these my brothers, you did for me’ ([25:40](#)). We onlookers are caught up in the parable and are surprised also by the implication that compassionate actions (surely intrinsically Christian practices) are Christian precisely because they did not have a spiritual reward in view! They are Christian, Luther would say, because they arise from gospel confidence, from the generosity of a heart set free by acceptance in Christ. It is this element of surprise for which we are least prepared when we ponder the parable. Perhaps the purpose of theological education is to set us up to be as surprised as the righteous on the day of judgement to discover we acted in love without knowing it was for and to Jesus.

True Christian action—orthopraxy—is gratuitive, free from contrivance, free from a calculating spirit, free from contract—I do this for God and he does that for me. Orthopractic living is essentially spontaneous. With Jesus in our hearts we love because there is someone in need, not to gain approval by God or to receive the benefits of Christian action. This is the issue behind the question that dominates the book of Job. Satan said, ‘Does Job serve God for nothing?’ ([Job 1:9](#)). In the end our own service to God can be tested by the same probing question. One of the great lessons of the book of Job is this: Job proves that faith is not for the this-life benefits of having faith. Not for healing (indeed he never even prays for healing); not for the restoration of his fortunes (this comes after he meets God again). Faith is for the glory of God. Christian practice, whether developing a compensation package for a business or empowering the poor, is for God’s glory. The South American liberation theologian Gustavo Gutierrez comments on this insight-fully (and remarkably in view of his theological orientation):

The truth that [Job] has grasped and that has lifted him to the level of contemplation is that justice alone does not have the final say about how we are to speak of God. Only when we have come to realize that God’s love is freely bestowed do we enter fully and definitively into the presence of the God of faith ... God’s love, like all true love, operates in a world not of cause and effect but of freedom and gratuitiveness.²²

Orthopraxy is action in harmony with God’s purposes in which we can discover God and his truth. Orthopraxy is not necessarily clerical, though it includes the work of the pastor. Whether washing dishes or preaching, being a cobbler or an apostle, ‘all is one, as touching the deed, to please God’. Orthopraxis is not measured by excellence, by efficiency, or by its religious character, but by faith, hope and love. We must cultivate the heart and not merely the husk of such action. But that points to a third lens through which to investigate the theology-life connection: orthopathy.

Orthopathy literally means right passion. The word was coined by Dr [p. 205](#) Richard Mouw. There is also a hint in the writings of the Jewish author Abraham Heschel who said the prophets embodied the divine pathos, that is, what God cares for.

²² Gustavo Gutierrez, *On Job: God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocent*, trans. Matthew J. O’Connell (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1987/88), p. 87.

3. ORTHOPATHY

The cultivation of the heart—a more holistic way of knowing—is the very thing our postmodern culture is inviting.²³ But the biblical response to the postmodern challenge is not to abandon reason but to allow God to evangelize our hearts as well as our heads, to care for what God cares for. As Micah said, ‘He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God’ ([Mi. 6:8](#)). How can theological education cultivate these? Such orthopathic education would require healing the fragmentation of theological knowledge and recovering the view promoted in the Middle Ages that theology is a *habitus*,²⁴ a disposition of the soul. As a practical knowledge of God unifying head and heart, theology has the character of wisdom. But where do we get wisdom?

Educating the heart

It is often conceded that the academy cannot be a solo educator, but there is little evidence that the academy needs the home, the congregation and the marketplace, though all four are linked by God in a daily life system for learning. The first school, of course, is the home. The congregation and the academy are poor substitutes when it comes to the education of the heart. I refer to my own orthopathic education in a story I develop in *Disciplines of the Hungry Heart*.

Though my parents never intended it, their spiritual nurturing included exposing me to the ministry of the poor to the rich. They built our lovely family home on a three-acre plot next door to a one-room shack without water, electricity, indoor plumbing or a furnace. Albert Jupp lived with his aged and ill mother in that smelly, dank shack. As he was occupied with the care of his mother, Albert was unable to hold down a steady job. Somehow he eked out an existence beside the Stevens, his rich next-door neighbours. Today the rich hardly see the poor except on television or from an air-conditioned tour bus.

Each night Albert would get a pail of water at our outside tap, which was always kept running, even in the dead of winter when our neighbours had their taps safely protected from freezing. My mother was one of the most generous souls on earth and her sensitive conscience would not allow her to set a fine meal before our family without thinking of Albert and his mother. So night after night I was asked to make a pilgrimage up the hill to the shack with two portions from our table for our poor neighbours. I confess that as a teenager I usually resented doing this. But what I think was bothering me was how that nightly visit to the Jupps made me think about my own existence as a rich young man. Daily [p. 206](#) I was confronted existentially with the truth that the rich cannot know God well without relating to the poor. My neighbour made an evangelical invitation to my heart.

In a remarkable series of seven sermons on the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, the fourth-century Church Father John Chrysostom addressed the illusions of wealth. In these prophetic sermons, Chrysostom argues that the rich are not owners of their wealth but stewards for the poor.²⁵ Appealing to the prophets of the OT ([Mal. 3:8–10](#)),

²³ See Stanley J. Grenz, ‘Star Trek and the Next Generation: Postmodernism and the Future of Evangelical Theology Today’, *Crux* XXX No. 1 (March 1994), pp. 24–32.

²⁴ Farley, ‘Interpreting Situations’, p. 18.

²⁵ St John Chrysostom, *On Wealth and Poverty*, trans. Catherine P. Roth (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1984), p. 50.

Chrysostom warns about the spiritual dangers of the rich. ‘The most pitiable person of all’, he says, ‘is the one who lives in luxury and shares his goods with nobody.’²⁶ In contrast, ‘*by nourishing Christ in poverty here and laying up great profit hereafter we will be able to attain the good things that are to come*’.²⁷ In this last quotation Chrysostom hints that ministering to the poor simultaneously heals the hearts of the rich and nourishes Jesus. What should be observed is the truth that God has provided for the education of our hearts in love and compassion through our everyday family experiences and through our neighbour. Both are a means of grace.

Neighbour as educator

As we have already seen, the neighbour becomes a means of grace precisely when the neighbour is taken seriously as neighbour and not as a means of grace! We cannot simply deal with the poor, the stranger and the outsider in principle, or engage in theoretical or strategic considerations of how to care for our global neighbours. It is in the context of actual neighbour-relationships that we are invited to live the life of faith. It is precisely in the unplanned and uncontrollable circumstances of our lives that we can find God and be found by him. Bonhoeffer spoke to this with great depth in a conversation he reports he had with a young French pastor.

I discovered later, and I’m still discovering right up to this moment, that it is only by living completely in this world that one learns to have faith.... By this worldliness I mean living unreservedly in life’s duties, problems, successes and failures, experiences and perplexities. In so doing we throw ourselves completely into the arms of God.²⁸

We find God (and get our hearts educated) in the centre of life rather than the circumference. This was the case for Job.

Passion for God

Job is a stunning example of orthopathy. His school was his life. He, like David, was a man after God’s own heart. As he went through test after test, sometimes with obvious weariness, Job began to want God more than he wanted health. Indeed—and this is seldom noted—Job never asked for healing. What **p. 207** he wanted was the friendship of God ([Job 29:4](#)). So most of Job’s speeches are directed to God, inquiring of God, challenging God, exploring God, demanding of God, confronting God with holy persistence ([Jas. 5:11](#)). At times I think his orthodox friends with degrees from Regent and Fuller may have hidden under the table expecting God to liquidate him for his impertinence. But in the end the God-talkers were condemned and Job was justified, being blessed with a first-hand experience of God ([42:5](#)). Was this because Job spoke well of God (the primary theological task) *by speaking to him boldly, with passionate faith* (the primary theological method)?

Job used his experience of the absence of God in order to know God better. P. T. Forsyth once said, ‘Prayer is to the religious life what original research is for science—by it we get direct contact with reality.’²⁹ Job was not a half-hearted researcher. He took God on, like Abraham pleading, Jacob refusing to let God go until he had blessed him, like the Syro-

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 55, emphasis mine.

²⁸ Dietrich Bonhoeffer in a letter from Tegel Prison 1944, quoted in Melanie Morrison, ‘A One Who Stands Convicted’, *Soujourners*, May 1979, p. 15.

²⁹ P. T. Forsyth, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

Phoenician woman begging for crumbs under the table, like Paul asking three times for the thorn to be removed, like—dare we say it?—Jesus in the garden exploring his own heart options with the Father until he could freely do the Father’s will through submission rather than compliance. Job withstanding God, wrestling with God, extracting revelation from God and in the end knowing God—is this orthopathy? Is this proof positive that the kingdom of God is not for the mildly interested but the desperate? Godknowers (orthodox, orthopractic theologians) will ‘take’ the kingdom by violent, passionate (orthopathic) faith ([Mt. 11:12](#)). Luther described the qualifications of a theologian this way: ‘living, or rather dying, and being damned make a theologian, not understanding, reading or speculating’.³⁰ By undergoing the torment of the cross, death and hell, true theology and the knowledge of God come about. Job, the OT theologian, would say ‘Amen’. Caring for what concerns God, caring for God’s concerns in daily life, and caring for God above all—this is orthopathy.

IN CONCLUSION

Orthodoxy. Orthopraxy. Orthopathy. All three point to the marriage of theology and everyday life: theology and life linked in praise (orthodoxy), practice (orthopraxy) and passion (orthopathy). What God therefore has joined together let no theological institution put asunder.

Might not the most pernicious heresy in the church today be the disharmony between those who claim to be theologically approved but live as practical atheists? Is the greatest challenge not graduating from Regent or Fuller, but in the end, at the conclusion of our lifelong theological education, having [p. 208](#) the Lord say, ‘I know you’? Would not the most fearful failure be to have God say, ‘I never knew you’ ([Mt. 7:23](#); [25:12](#))?

One of the Desert Fathers was approached by an eager young student who said, ‘Abba, give me a word from God.’ The wise mentor asked if the student would agree not to come back until he had fully lived the word.

‘Yes’, the eager young student said.

‘Then this is the word of God: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind.”’ The young man disappeared, it seemed forever.

Twenty-five years later the student had the temerity to come back. ‘I have lived the word you gave. Do you have another word?’

‘Yes,’ said the Desert Father. ‘But once again you must not come back until you have lived it.’

‘I agree.’

‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’

The student never came back.

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³⁰ *D. M. Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Weimar, 1993-), 5, 163: 28–29, quoted in Alister E. McGrath, *Luther’s Theology of the Cross: Martin Luther’s Theological Breakthrough* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), p. 152.

Biblical Integration: The process of thinking like a Christian

Kenneth O. Gangel

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As the twentieth century draws to a close, the survival of the world seems tenuously dependent on the rationality of its leaders. Yet, it is a world in which the rationality of some of those leaders is increasingly being called into question, and with no small amount of evidence. It is also a world in which Christianity stands wrongly accused of irrationality by those who misunderstand the essence of biblical faith.

The premise of this book rests on a twofold presupposition: that the Christian teacher is our best hope for rationality in an irrational age; and, that those Christian teachers must have highly developed and thoroughly consecrated minds in order to meet the challenge of leadership in such an age. Such minds are tuned to the process of constant biblical integration of faith and learning, a spiritual and academic commitment which stretches far beyond the boundaries of content transmission.

The process of Christian mindbuilding begins at regeneration. T. F. Torrance spells it out:

At the end of the day that was the test I used to put to my students, as I read their essays and examinations or listened to them in the chapel. 'Has this person a genuinely theological instinct or not? Is his or her thinking spontaneously and naturally governed by the mind of Christ?' That is much more important than being theologically learned, much more important than being able to offer a formal academic account of some doctrine or historic debate in the church. What really counts in the end is whether a person's mind is radically transformed by Christ and so spiritually attuned to the mind of Christ, that he thinks instinctively from the depths of his mental being in a way worthy of God.¹ p. 210

WHY MUST OUR STUDENTS DEVELOP THEIR MINDS?

This first question seems almost primitive, certainly elementary, and I fear my answers may not be sufficiently profound. But surely those of us who stand before students with regularity are consistently called on to affirm the kind of Christianity which gives back to God all of what he has produced by grace in us, including intellectual capacity. Therefore, the first reason why our students must develop their minds is *because God has commanded it*. Indeed, the first commandment according to its affirmation by the Lord himself is, 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind' ([Mt. 22:37](#)).

This summary of the first table of the Law is expanded slightly in Mark's version by adding 'strength' ([12:30](#)). The passage emphasizes the worship of God with all aspects of the human being and the text stresses the comprehensive nature of serious Christian commitment. It is not enough to love only with heart; nor even with heart and soul; nor

¹ [Matthew 22:37](#), NIV.

yet with heart, soul, and strength. Serious Christian teachers emphasize the importance of worshipping God with the mind.

In the 1985 Griffith Thomas Lectures at Dallas Theological Seminary, D. Bruce Lockerbie reminded the students that after the eternal soul, the most Godlike attribute of man is the mind, and he warned that 'Christians may underrate the mind and overrate the heart and therefore have no stomach for the fight.'²

Oliver Barclay explains why the concept of worshipping God with one's mind seems so out of step.

This appears such an alien idea [because] our concept of love is becoming increasingly different from that of the New Testament ... it may or may not involve emotion. The Bible when it talks of the mind, is not asking us to develop a philosophy (useful as that may be in its place), but to allow revealed truth to control us. It is the truth that sets us free, it is the truth as it is in Jesus that we are to consider, believe, and act upon ... thinking is part of what it is to be a human being. The alternative is to be a 'fool' ([Prov. 18:2](#)).³

The second reason why Christians must develop their minds is *because thinking Christians are called on to construct an evangelical world and life view*. Here again the role of the Christian teacher at all levels remains foundational. According to James Sire, a worldview is 'a set of presuppositions (or assumptions) which we hold (consciously or unconsciously) about the basic make-up of the world'.⁴ How essential, therefore, for every Christian to learn how to interpret his culture 'Christianly'. But what does that mean? How can it be achieved?

How does one actually practise thinking Christianly about surrounding culture? And how does one [p. 211](#) teach one's students to do so? Such an integrated exercise requires analytical synopsis of society enlightened by God's revelation. At least three steps are involved.

Know The Scriptures Intimately

Integration of any kind can never rise from theological ignorance. This has long been a major problem in Christian elementary and secondary schools as well as in Christian colleges. While requiring adequate credentials in a particular age-level or content specialization, we require only the most rudimentary biblical instruction. Schools often hire faculty with little or no formal training in biblical and theological studies, expecting that strong church affiliation and personal devotions will fulfil that side of the requirement. Such teachers can no more construct an evangelical world and life view than a practising pastor can integrate Scripture and astronomy from watching several episodes of 'Nova'. The problem is exacerbated because the administrators who do the hiring and requiring do not themselves know the Scriptures intimately and, therefore, find that quality a less-than-demanding issue among their subalterns.

Study The Culture Diligently

For years I have been asking students to sort out and articulate the differences between secular humanism, religious humanism, and Christian humanism. Recent popular literature in the evangelical camp has been no ally in this campaign. Secular humanism is tangled in the swamp of human intellect and will rather than divine guidance. Christian

² D. Bruce Lockerbie, Griffith Thomas Lectures.

³ Oliver Barclay, 'Loving God with All Your Mind', *Christian Arena* (June, 1985), p. 17.

⁴ James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1976), p. 17.

humanism, by contrast (exemplified historically by Desiderius Erasmus and in greater modernity by C. S. Lewis), grounds itself in a commitment to God's revelation, both natural and special. Religious humanism takes a middle road, repudiating denial of God while at the same time refusing a commitment to the exclusiveness of Christian theism. All three are found in the current culture, and thinking Christians must be wary of maladroit use of terms.

Notice how the exercise of studying the culture depends on knowing the Scriptures.

One cannot bring his study of culture to any kind of fruition without running that evaluation through a distinctly biblical grid, an impossibility if he or she has too frail a familiarity with the Scriptures. This then leads us to yet a third step.

Analyze Events And Issues Theologically

As Christians live in the world they are bombarded constantly with ideas and issues in direct experience or through the instrumentality of the media. Five practical questions form powerful lines in the straining net of theological analysis through which all experience must pass.

Does the Bible speak to this issue? An obvious example here is the late twentieth century question of *homosexuality*. Some argue it is merely an alternative lifestyle; others, a genetically caused physical state. Still others place it within the arena of sin, dramatically condemned by any historic orthodox explanation of the Bible. When there are texts which apply, the serious Christian must find them; but sometimes there are [p. 212](#) not and the second question must be applied.

Are there general Christian principles which apply? Another cancer on the skin of contemporary life is *drug abuse* in multitudinous forms. One could argue that no specific Scripture condemns the use of drugs. But surely the principle of 'body control' provides an appropriate standard for dealing with drug and alcohol abuse: 'Everything is permissible for me,—but I will not be mastered by anything' ([1 Cor. 6:12](#)).

Have Christian scholars, past or present, dealt with this issue? The cabals of *pro-abortionists* include few evangelicals, but one could imagine a beginning integrationist, a college student struggling with relating faith to learning, thrown off balance by the less-than-dramatic body of Scripture which can be directed at this issue. Yet a part of God's gift to his church comes in the forms of those gifted individuals able to go beyond the boundaries of average thinking, to probe the depths of difficult and controversial issues. In this particular illustration, the work of Schaeffer and Koop provides strategic value and example.

Does this position or theory defy absolute standards of morality or value? Presumably when we discuss 'absolute standards' with students, we are prepared to defend that claim with specific passages drawn from special revelation. The inveterate tendency of the church, however, from ancient heresy trials to modern hyper-separationism, classifies the relative interpretation of man as the absolute standard of God and, therefore, codifies rubrics of behaviour.

Meanwhile, relativism offers us the other extreme, burning all absolute standards on the altar of expedience and existential situationism. *Premarital sex*, for example, has always been condemned by biblical Christians, who affirm the absolute value of chastity. The shifting standards of society offer no measure of morality for the Christian, for the 'times are always a changin'.

The attitude of the younger generation toward sexuality shifted in advance of their parents. Pollster Daniel Yankelovich noted that in 1969, 77 percent of college students believed extramarital sexual relations were morally wrong; in 1971, 57 percent; that in 1969, 42 percent of college students believed that relations between consenting

homosexuals were morally wrong; in 1972, 25 percent; and that in 1969, 34 percent of college students believed that casual premarital sexual relations were morally wrong; in 1971, 25 percent. A sexual revolution appeared to be in full swing.⁵

The Christian teacher has committed himself to thinking in a context which defines morality in terms of biblical absolutes and subjects all conclusions to Lord and Word.

Is the Holy Spirit leading me to a definitive viewpoint on this matter? Quite possibly, even after activating the first four rubrics, the Christian student still holds only a vacuous interrogative. Consider the questions of *war* or *personal self-defence*. The Bible truly speaks to these issues, but intelligent and committed believers down through the centuries p. 213 have differed on how that biblical information should be interpreted. We struggle with the endless flow of what seem to be conflicting values. If forced to the unpleasant choice, should I protect my family at any cost or refuse to take a human life? Should I fight for the freedom and safety of my homeland or place myself into a non-military situation allowing others to preserve my safety? Such issues we must finally decide on how the Holy Spirit teaches us with quiet but firm inner assurance. Assuming that we subject our own selfish minds to both text and principles of God's Word, such decisions can be made.

Adopt A Set Of Distinctly Christian Presuppositions

One could expound indefinitely on how these presuppositions might look and what they might include. The following list directs attention to areas which require attention, without expecting the wording to be comfortably adopted by all teachers.

Ultimate reality resides in the personal, sovereign, Triune God.

Absolute truth comes to man in the form of God's self-initiated, inerrant revelation, the Bible.

The nature of human beings is declared by God to be in his image, fallen through sin, but redeemed by the Cross.

Value is not determined by society or majority vote, but ascertained as a part of God's revelation. In short, Christian axiology (principles) depends on Christian epistemology (knowledge).

The meaning of history centres in the plan and power of God. As Groothuis puts it, 'His ordering of all events is leading to the consummation of His intent for man and the universe. The tragedy of rebellion in the Fall is followed by the drama of redemption—God pursuing man. History is not the meaningless reign of chance or impersonal necessity, but the unfolding of divine government most clearly seen in the invasion of God into time and space in Christ ([John 1:18](#)).'⁶

Our students must also develop their minds *because the structure of unbelief is more militant in our day*. Consider the knowledge explosion, the raw paganism in much of what passes for education in the public domain, and the obtuse irrationalism evident in the influence of leading educators. Marching alongside traditional paganism we also hear the occult tattoo evidenced in everything from advanced graduate classes in voodoo to documented cases of satanism.

Rejection of the disciplines of Scripture leads to the kind of loose morality commonplace in today's world. Governor Charles Robb of Virginia claims that 1.25 million teens are 'disconnected' from school, work, family, and the values these traditional agencies promote. He asserts the proportion of children in poverty has risen from 16

⁵ John D. Woodbridge, ed., *Renewing Your Mind in a Secular World* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), p. 13.

⁶ Douglas Groothuis, 'The Christian Mind', *CSSH Quarterly* (Winter 1984), p. 17.

percent in 1970 to 22 percent today; that drug and alcohol abuse among the young is up sixtyfold since 1960; that teenage homicide, suicide and crime have climbed steadily since 1950, and that in this most educated of nations, the number of school p.214 dropouts has risen dramatically to the point that, in some major cities, fewer than half the young people who enter high school actually graduate.⁷

Christian teachers storm the arena precisely because much of this cultural ennui can be attributed to wrong thinking, as Paul reminded the Ephesians.

So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more ([Eph. 4:17-19](#)).

Finally, our students must develop their minds *because Christian leadership in any form requires disciplined thinking*. The disciplined Christian thinker does not replace faith with reason; he integrates the two by bowing before a reasonable faith. Stott quotes Martyn Lloyd-Jones in support of such a concept.

Faith, if you like, can be defined like this: It is a man insisting upon thinking when everything seems determined to bludgeon and knock him down in an intellectual sense. The trouble with the person of little faith is that, instead of controlling his own thought, his thought is being controlled by something else, and as we put it, he goes round and round in circles. That is the essence of worry ... that is not thought; that is the absence of thought, a failure to think.⁸

Christianity invites investigation, as Thomas learned when he confronted the risen Lord ([Jn. 20](#)). Feeling is not enough, it is never enough. But such talk of defending the faith may quickly become too militant and the thinking Christian must be reminded to avoid unwarranted dogmatism.

Too much of what passes for Christian teaching today is nothing more than monarchical dogmatism wrapped in the robes of academic success. We must resist the sacred/secular paradox so that a total unified lifestyle can result from disciplined thinking. The believer's mind must be continually renewed ([Rom. 12:2](#)) as he exercises his freedom to think on virtuous things ([Phil. 4:8](#)). Woodbridge properly attacks false compartmentalization.

Though evangelical Christians affirm that the Bible is an infallible rule for faith and practice, many of them compartmentalize their faith in such a manner that biblical teachings do not much affect the way they live on a daily basis. They profess sound evangelical doctrine but betray those confessions by their deeds. They do not consciously seek each day to live under the direction of biblical ethics.⁹

HOW CAN A CHRISTIAN STUDENT BLOW HIS MIND?

⁷ Vernon Grounds.

⁸ Charles S. Robb, 'We Can't Write Off 1.25 Million Teens', *USA Today* (Nov. 8, 1985), p. 10A.

⁹ [Ephesians 4:17-19](#), NIV.

The ways seem numerous and widely variant in severity. One is reminded, for example, of that now infamous phrase which has come [P. 215](#) back many times to haunt its author—‘benign neglect’.

A Christian Student Can Blow His Mind Through Carelessness.

Shoddiness in study habits, procrastination in responsibilities, rationalization of sloth—all these and a host of other common practices trick us into ‘blowing’ this wonderful gift from God. Thousands graduate from Christian schools and colleges every year never to appear again in the ranks of Christian leadership, however severe the need.

Completing some phase of one’s education merely provides certain tools. Using those tools effectively beyond the boundaries of classroom and institutional regimentation relates more closely to wisdom than to knowledge. Nevertheless, Christian students at all levels must see their present tasks in biblical perspective—they are engaged in ministry, they are doing the work of the Lord.

A Christian Student Can Blow His Mind Through Pride

By positioning the mind at the centre of all life, one traps oneself into the error of Platonic idealism, the heresy of the Cartesian imperial self. The Bible teaches that spiritual pride is a horrible sin, but those who have enjoyed the privilege of serious learning may be prone to yet another pitfall—mental pride.

Perhaps the most humbling act, both intelligent and purposeful, is the cultivation of an attitude of worship. Surely that is what Jesus had in mind when he said, ‘Love the Lord your God with all your mind.’ When the thinking Christian allows intellectual success to go to his head, he may very well discover that it ‘blows his mind’. And a mind blown on one’s own achievements is no longer a mind capable of bowing before Jesus Christ.

[Second Corinthians 10:5](#) serves as compass and lodestar for Christian teachers: ‘We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.’ Many of the great minds of history were humble Christians who knew that mind-bowing in no way appeals to ignorance or shoddy anti-intellectualism.

A Christian Student May Blow His Mind Through Sin

Here the Scriptures offer repeated warnings but perhaps none more poignantly than the words of Paul, ‘The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so’ ([Rom. 8:6–7](#)).

Some Christian scholars maintain fortresses of faith which Satan can never besiege with temptations of drunkenness, debauchery, thievery, murder, or lust. With such his tool may have to be a sharpened spear of mental pride, forcing them to stand as modern models of Nebuchadnezzar and Herod, pointing out to an admiring world the great thoughts they have thought and the great words they have written.

God’s Word, meanwhile, continues to talk positively about the man whose mind is stayed on God ([Isa. 26:3](#)); who shares the unity of mind with other believers ([Rom. p. 216 12:16](#)); who possesses a willing mind ([2 Cor. 8:12](#)); who treasures a humble mind ([Philp. 2:3](#)); and who allows God to produce in him the Spirit of a sound mind ([2 Tim. 1:7](#)).

The Christian Student Can Blow His Mind Through Dogmatism and Rigidity

Renewal requires a process of change. The Scriptures attest to the progress involved in moving toward spiritual maturity ([Rom. 8:28–30](#); [2 Cor. 3:17–18](#); [2 Pet. 3:18](#)). The word

dogmatic is not in and of itself derogatory. We speak of a study in dogmatics as related to the pursuit of systematic theology. But modern usage has made the adjectival form almost parallel to the word 'rigid', and the epithet 'uncompromising' would be a welcome panegyric in the eyes of some Christian leaders. Nancy Barus points up the confusion in such thinking.

Sometimes we may detect an error of assurance so totally serious that it is disarming. That very sound of self-assurance should put a person on guard. Is there room for any attitudes or interpretations other than this one? If the speaker is convinced, and masterful, we will be left with the feeling that there are only two ways to view an issue: the right way and the wrong way, the good way and the foolish way. Giving you the impression of fairness and rationality, a thinker may actually be very unfair, suggesting that anyone with a clear mind would reach no other conclusions than these. If you detect such a stance, beware. This is likely to be dangerous ground.¹⁰

The Spirit-filled teacher then seeks a balance of law and gospel, of Word and Spirit. Douglas Moo reminds us that 'the new pattern of thinking that begins with conversion must undergo a constant process of renewal. In the building of this Christian mind, the commands of God and Scripture provide a basic blueprint, while the redeemed Spirit-filled mind itself applies those commands in certain situations.'¹¹

HOW CAN A CHRISTIAN STUDENT KEEP FROM BLOWING HIS MIND?

Quite obviously the way to stay healthy is to avoid disease—in this case, notably those mentioned above. But there is a positive dimension too in which the thinking Christian takes definitive steps towards mind-blowing as an alternative to mind-blowing.

A Christian Student Can Avoid Blowing His Mind By Recognizing The Dependability of Biblical Authority With Which To Combat The Irrationality Of The Age

In more than a quarter century of teaching I have frequently seen how difficult it is for students to grasp the appropriate relationship between natural and special revelation. Some are so biblically committed that they fail to see the reality and significance of God's revelation in means other than the Scriptures. Others, more inclined toward scientific research, struggle with the application of the faith principle to the learning process. **p. 217**

The Christian thinker, however, must rise to the level at which he can integrate faith with learning in any form. We must view natural revelation through the eyes of special revelation. Such a process puts it on our way toward Christo-centric thinking.

The more we see the biblical account as a reliable base, the more willing we become to test other experiences and ideas by its precepts. We find an even sanity, a respect for personhood, an undaunted realism, and, too, the possibility that restoration and redemption provide a surer foundation for goodness and idealism than the roads other thinkers have proposed. Nowhere else is there such a delicate balance between unblinking recognition of evil and commitment to human moral responsibility, such undaunted hope, such promise of goodness and restoration.¹²

¹⁰ John R. W. Stott, *Your Mind Matters* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1973), p. 38.

¹¹ Myron Augsburger.

¹² Woodbridge, *op cit.*, p. ix.

A Christian Student Can Avoid Mind-Blowing By Learning To Link Reason And Faith

This is apposite to the former discussion, but so crucial I offer it as a separate step. There is an unenlightened faith of which Paul once spoke: 'For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge' ([Rom. 10:2](#)). Christianity is indeed rational, but it is not rationalism; it is intellectual, but it is not intellectualism.

The mind is a tool of faith and the Christian leader allows reason and faith—the little boy and the strong man—to begin the hike together. But he must expect that somewhere down the road, perhaps in the difficult climb through mountainous terrain, the strong man (faith) may have to carry the little boy (reason) on his back. The process of believing/thinking and thinking/ believing, writes Groothuis, 'is the preoccupation and conviction of the Christian mind. One need not be an "intellectual" to apply the Christian worldview concretely to all of life and thus "give a reason for the hope that is in you" ([1 Peter 3:15](#)) to a doubting world.'¹³

A Christian Student Can Escape The Danger Of Mind-Blowing By Creating a Word-centred Environment

The reality of environmental conditioning and the impact of one's surroundings stand as fact. How many times we remind impressionable teenagers that the television programmes they watch, the music they listen to, the movies they attend, and the friends with which they surround themselves all make indelible impressions on their lives. Yet somehow we behave as though that influence is no longer significant in the adult years. The courts are full of cases clamouring for freedom of 'consenting adults' to engage in all manner of activities, many of which corrode both mind and body.

Against this pattern the apostle Paul offers a now familiar refrain: 'Everything is permissible—but not everything is constructive' ([1 Cor. 10:23](#)). Moo argues that the surroundings in which the Christian p. 218 voluntarily places himself offer the most important single factor in developing a renewed mind.

How can a Christian facilitate the process of training a renewed mind, the mind of the Spirit? The key would seem to be environment. What are the influences, the atmosphere in which his mind is being formed? What is determining the direction of his thinking? How ironic it is that many Christian parents who are concerned about the kind of school environment in which their children are being trained are completely unconcerned about or even unconscious of the environment that affects their own way of thinking. A mind that is exposed constantly to a barrage of secular television, secular advertising, secular literature, and secular ideas is probably going to turn out to be a secular mind.¹⁴

A Christian Student Can Avoid Mind-blowing By Submitting To The Holy Spirit's Control In All Things.

This is neither late medieval mysticism nor contemporary charismatic theology. Control of the mind by the Spirit is a theme melody running through the music of both Testaments, as old as God's relationship with his creation.

Earlier I alluded to the negative paragraph from the fourth chapter of Ephesians, a warning to reject the darkness of the past. The paragraph immediately following offers the positive corrective, reminding Christian thinkers to live as children of light.

¹³ [Romans 8:6-7](#), NIV.

¹⁴ [Isaiah 26:3](#).

You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness ([Eph. 4:20-24](#)).

Grant Osborn draws a parallel between the Ephesians passage and [Romans 8](#) and sees ‘the new mind as shaping the outlook and assumptions of the Spirit, fully committed to the Spirit rather than to the flesh’.¹⁵

Christian teachers labouring to reproduce students committed both to mind-building and mind-bowing offer up with meaning the prayer contained in a familiar hymn:

May the mind of Christ my Saviour live in me from day to day,
By His love and pow’r controlling all I do and say.
May the Word of God dwell richly in my heart from hour to hour,
So that all may see I triumph only through His pow’r.¹⁶

Christian integration rests on spiritual-mindedness. It reveres not dogmatism but tolerance; not shouting but reason. And perhaps teachers should never view it as an accomplished ideal. At best, we can point to some position along the journey and trust by God’s grace [p. 219](#) that it will be more advanced than positions at previous points of evaluation. Integrating faith and learning falls within the boundaries of that magical word *liturgy*—it is both worship and service. Perhaps that is what Charles Wesley had in mind when he wrote:

To serve this present age my calling to fulfil,
O may it all my powers engage to do my Master’s will.

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Women in the Church An Experiment in Pentecostal Hermeneutics

John Christopher Thomas

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I TOWARDS A PENTECOSTAL HERMENEUTIC

¹⁵ [Romans 12:16](#).

¹⁶ [2 Corinthians 8:12](#).

Perhaps few topics have generated the kind of discussion among Pentecostal scholars over the past few years than that which has emerged around the issue of 'Pentecostal hermeneutics'. Scholars who have entered into this debate range from those who deny the need for a distinctive Pentecostal hermeneutic, preferring to follow current evangelical models, to those who are in dialogue with a number of methodologies that have come to the forefront within the last decade. While no consensus has emerged as of yet, it appears that many scholars working within the Pentecostal tradition are less content to adopt a system of interpretation that is heavily slanted toward rationalism and has little room for the role of the Holy Spirit.

Several reasons account for the desire on the part of some Pentecostal scholars to identify and articulate a hermeneutic that is more representative of the tradition and its ethos. Disappointment with the results of rationalism is one major factor in the emergence of this trend. Owing to the promises made for rationalism, growing out of the Enlightenment, many western thinkers became convinced that pure reason was the key to the interpretation of any literature, both biblical and non-biblical. But the results of an unbridled rationalism have been anything but uniform, as witnessed in the diversity of current theological thought, which in and of itself suggests that there is more to interpretation than reason.¹ p. 221

The dearth of serious critical reflection on the role of the Holy Spirit in the interpretive process has also whet the appetite of several Pentecostal scholars for an approach which seeks to articulate what the Spirit's role is and how the Spirit works specifically. It is, indeed, one of the oddities of modern theological scholarship that both liberal and conservative approaches to Scripture have little or no appreciation of the work of the Holy Spirit in interpretation.² Obviously, such a hermeneutical component is of no little interest to Pentecostal scholars.³

Another contributing factor to this recent surge of hermeneutical activity among Pentecostals is the belief of several scholars that the role of the community in the interpretive process is extremely important. Given the community orientation of Pentecostalism on the one hand and the excesses of a somewhat rampant individualism among interpreters generally (both liberal and conservative) on the other hand, reflection on the place of the community in the hermeneutical process would appear to be a natural step in the development of a Pentecostal hermeneutic.

Finally, the recent paradigm shifts in the field of hermeneutics generally have suggested to some scholars that the time is right to enter into a serious discussion about Pentecostal hermeneutics. Not only have insights from recent hermeneutical discussions confirmed the appropriateness of certain Pentecostal interpretive emphases (such as the importance of experiential presuppositions in interpretation and the role of narrative in the doing of theology), but also the insights gained from a diversity of approaches to the biblical text have given some Pentecostals courage to believe that they too have some contribution to make to the current hermeneutical debate.

While it might sometimes be thought, or even charged, that Pentecostals desire to articulate their own hermeneutical approach merely to be distinctive, in point of fact it

¹ This assessment is true even of evangelical theology, where an extremely high view of Scripture has brought little consensus on a variety of interpretive matters.

² C. Pinnock, *The Scripture Principle* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984), p. 155.

³ One of the few serious treatments of this topic among Pentecostals is the work of J. W. Wyckoff ('The Relationship of the Holy Spirit to Biblical Hermeneutics' [PhD dissertation, Baylor University, 1990]), who, after a historical survey, proposes a model regarding the Spirit's role based largely on an educational paradigm of teacher.

would appear that, just as Pentecostals have been able to help the church rediscover a number of biblical truths with regard to pneumatology, so they may also have gifts to give when it comes to the interpretive process itself.

But what would a Pentecostal hermeneutic look like and, more importantly, how would it function? What would be the essential components of such an interpretive approach and how would one settle on them? These are just the beginning of a multitude of questions which this topic raises.

This short study seeks neither to offer an exhaustive overview of the topic of Pentecostal hermeneutics, nor to articulate in a detailed fashion a sophisticated theory of interpretation.⁴ p. 222 Rather, it seeks to explore one possible paradigm, which is derived from the New Testament itself. After a brief discussion of this interpretive paradigm, the approach will be tested by attempting to gain leverage on a particularly difficult issue by the use of insights derived from this biblical model.

II INTERPRETING ACTS 15:1-29

It is possible, of course, to find a number of different hermeneutical approaches in the New Testament and several full-length studies have been devoted to use of the Old Testament by various New Testament writers.⁵ Of these many interpretive approaches, one in particular has had a special appeal for many Pentecostals, especially at the popular level, and has recently also shown up in certain academic discussions on Pentecostal hermeneutics.⁶ This approach is that revealed in the deliberations of the Jerusalem Council as described in [Acts 15:1-29](#).

As is well known, the Jerusalem Council came together to determine whether Gentile believers in Jesus had to convert to Judaism in order to become full-fledged Christians,

⁴ For some recent attempts at Pentecostal hermeneutics see the following: G. T. Sheppard, 'Pentecostalism and the Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism: Anatomy of an Uneasy Relationship', *Pneuma* 6.2 (1984), pp. 5-33; M. D. McLean, 'Toward a Pentecostal Hermeneutic', *Pneuma* 6.2 (1984), pp. 35-56; H. M. Ervin, 'Hermeneutics: A Pentecostal Option', in P. Elbert (ed.), *Essays on Apostolic Themes* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1985), pp. 23-35; F. L. Arrington, 'Hermeneutics', in S. M. Burgess and G. B. McGee (eds.), *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), pp. 376-89; R. Stronstad, 'Trends in Pentecostal Hermeneutics', *Paraclete* 22.3 (1988), pp. 1-12; *idem*, 'The Hermeneutics of Lucan Historiography', *Paraclete* 22.4 (1988), pp. 5-17; R. D. Moore, 'Approaching God's Word Biblically: A Pentecostal Perspective' (paper presented to the 1989 meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies, Fresno, CA); L. V. Newman, 'Pentecostal Hermeneutics: Suggesting a Model, Exploring the Problems' (paper presented to the 1991 meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies, Lakeland, FL); R. Stronstad, 'Pentecostal Experience and Hermeneutics', *Paraclete* 26. 1(1992), pp. 14-30; J. D. Johns and C. B. Johns, 'Yielding to the Spirit: A Pentecostal Approach to Group Bible Study', *JPT* 1 (1992), pp. 109-34; G. Anderson, 'Pentecostal Hermeneutics' (paper presented to the 1992 meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies, Springfield, MO); A. C. Autry, 'Dimensions of Hermeneutics in Pentecostal Focus', *JPT* 3 (1993), pp. 29-50; D. Albrecht, R. Israel and R. McNally, 'Pentecostals and Hermeneutics: Texts, Rituals and Community', *Pneuma* 15 (1993), pp. 137-61; and T. B. Cargal, 'Beyond the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy: Pentecostals and Hermeneutics in a Postmodern Age', *Pneuma* 15 (1993), pp. 163-87; F. L. Arrington, 'The Use of the Bible by Pentecostals', *Pneuma* 16 (1994), pp. 101-107; H. K. Harrington and R. Patten, 'Pentecostal Hermeneutics and Postmodern Literary Theory', *Pneuma* 16 (1994), pp. 109-14; R. P. Menzies, 'Jumping Off the Postmodern Bandwagon', *Pneuma* 16 (1994), pp. 115-20; and G. T. Sheppard, 'Biblical Interpretation after Gadamer', *Pneuma* 16 (1994), pp. 121-41.

⁵ On this topic see especially E. E. Ellis, *The Old Testament in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992).

⁶ See especially the discussions of Arrington, 'Hermeneutics', pp. 387-88, and Moore, 'Approaching God's Word Biblically'.

Luke relates that when Paul and Barnabas arrived in Jerusalem with the report regarding the conversion of the Gentiles, certain believers who were members of the religious party of the Pharisees (τινες τῶν [p. 223](#) ἀπὸ τῆς αἰρέσεως τῶν Φαρισαίων) demanded that the Gentile believers (1) be circumcised and (2) keep the law of Moses. As a result of this report and its somewhat mixed reception, the apostles and elders gathered to look into this matter (ἰδεῖν περὶ τοῦ λόγου τούτου).

The first person to speak, Peter, begins by noting the actions of God among them. It was *God* who chose to allow the Gentiles to hear the gospel (through the mouth of Peter) and believe. It was God who knows all hearts who testified to the validity of their faith by giving them the Holy Spirit. *God* had made no distinction between Jew and Gentile either in the giving of the Spirit or in the cleansing of hearts. In the light of such experience, Peter reasons that to place the yoke (of the Law?) upon these Gentiles would be tantamount to testing (πειράζετε) God. In contrast to the bearing of this yoke, Peter says that it is by faith that all are saved!

This speech is followed by a report from Barnabas and Paul, which also places emphasis upon God and the things that he did through them among the Gentiles, such as signs and wonders.

James now takes centre stage and addresses the group. He not only interprets Peter's testimony to mean that God has received the Gentiles as a people unto his name, but he also goes on to argue that this experience of the church is in agreement with the words of the prophets, citing [Amos 9:11–12](#) as evidence. Therefore (διό), in the light of what God had done and the agreements of these actions with the words of the prophets, James concludes that the Gentiles who are turning to God should not have their task made more difficult than requiring of them the observance of circumcision and the keeping of the Law of Moses. Rather, these Gentile converts are to be instructed to 'abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood'. In the letter written to communicate the findings of this meeting to the church at large, the decision is described as resulting from the Holy Spirit, for v. [28](#) says, 'It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements'.

Several things are significant from [Acts 15](#) for the purposes of this inquiry. First, it is remarkable how often the experience of the church through the hand of God is appealed to in the discussion. Clearly, this (somewhat unexpected?) move of God in the life of the church (the inclusion of the Gentiles) was understood to be the result of the Holy Spirit's activity. It is particularly significant that the church seems to have begun with its experience and only later moves to a consideration of the Scripture.

Secondly, Peter's experience in the matter of Gentile conversions has led him to the conclusion that even to question the Gentile converts' place in or means of admission to the church draws dangerously close to testing God. Apparently Peter means that to question the validity of the Gentile believers' standing before God, in the face of what the Spirit has done, is to come dangerously close to experiencing the wrath of God for such undiscerning [p. 224](#) disobedience. In this regard it is probably not without significance that earlier in Acts ([5:9](#)) Peter asked Sapphira how she could agree to test the Spirit of the Lord (πειράσαι τὸ πνεῦμα κυρίου) through her lie. The results of her testing are well known. Is Peter implying a similar fate for those who stand in the way of the Gentile converts?

Thirdly, Barnabas and Paul are portrayed as discussing primarily, if not exclusively, their experience of the signs and wonders which God had performed among them as a basis for the acceptance of the Gentiles. That such a statement would stand on its own

says a great deal about the role of the community's experience of God in their decision-making process.

Fourthly, James also emphasizes the experience of the church through the activity of God as a reason for accepting the Gentile converts. It is clear that Luke intends the readers to understand that James adds his own support to the existence of the Spirit in the church, for James does not simply restate Peter's earlier words: he puts his own interpretive spin upon them.

Fourthly, it is at this point that Scripture is appealed to for the first time in the discussion. One of the interesting things about the passage cited ([Amos 9:11-12](#)) is that its appeal seems primarily to have been its agreement with their existence of God in the church. But how did James (and the church with him) settle on this particular text? Did Amos intend what James claims that the text means? Could not the believers from the religious party of the Pharisees have appealed with equal or greater validity to other texts which speak about Israel's exclusivity and the Gentiles' relationship to Israel (cf, especially [Exod. 19:5](#); [Deut. 7:6](#); [14:2](#); [26:18-19](#))?

When one reads the Hebrew text of [Amos 9:11-12](#), or a translation based upon the Hebrew text, it becomes immediately obvious that there is no explicit reference to the inclusion of Gentiles as part of the people of God. In point of fact, in the Hebrew text, Amos says that God will work on behalf of the descendants of David 'so that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations, which are called by the name, says the Lord that does this'. Although it is possible to read the reference to Edom and the other nations in a negative or retaliatory sense, it is also possible to see here an implicit promise concerning how Edom (one of the most hostile enemies of Israel) and other nations will themselves be brought into the (messianic) reign of a future Davidic king.⁷ Whether or not such a meaning was intended by Amos is unclear.

By way of contrast, the LXX rendering of [Amos 9:11-12](#) seems to intend a message about the inclusion of other individuals and nations who seek to follow God. At this crucial point, the text of Acts is much closer to the LXX, which reads, 'That the remnant of men and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, may seek after [me], says the Lord who does these things'. The difference between the Hebrew text and the LXX seems to have resulted, in part, p. 225 from reading 'Edom' ([אֲדוֹם](#)) as 'Adam' ([אָדָם](#)) and taking the verb 'they shall possess' ([יִירְשׁוּ](#)) as 'they shall seek' ([יִדְרְשׁוּ](#)).⁸ Whatever may account for this rendering,⁹ it is clear that James, as described in [Acts 15:17](#), shows a decided preference for the LXX's more inclusive reading.

But why did James choose this particular text for support when the other Old Testament passages ([Isa. 2:3](#); [42:6](#); [Mic. 4:2](#); and especially [Zech. 2:11](#)) appear to offer better and clearer support for the inclusion of Gentiles within the people of God? Such a choice is difficult to understand until one views it within the broader context of the Lukan narratives. Specifically, Luke seems concerned to demonstrate that the promises made to David are fulfilled in Jesus and thus have implications for the church.

⁷ So argues W. C. Kaiser, 'The Davidic Promise and the Inclusion of the Gentiles (Amos 9.9-15 and Acts 15.13-18): A Test Passage for Theological Systems', *JETS* 20 (1977), p. 102.

⁸ C. F. Keil, *Minor Prophets* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), p. 334 n. 1, and D. A. Hubbard, *Joel and Amos* (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1989), p. 242.

⁹ Some wish to argue that a Hebrew text that challenges the MT at this point lies behind the LXX. Cf. M. A. Braun, 'James' Use of Amos at the Jerusalem Council: Steps Toward a Possible Solution of the Textual and Theological Problems', *JETS* 20 (1977), p. 116.

In the gospel, Joseph is identified as a descendant of David (1:27). The angel speaks to Mary regarding Jesus, saying, 'The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end' (1:32-33). Zechariah (apparently) speaks of Jesus when he says, 'He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David' (1:69). Joseph and Mary go the city of David for the census because Joseph is of the house and line of David (2:4). Later, the angels direct the shepherds to the city of David to find Christ the Lord (2:11). In Luke's genealogy of Jesus, David is mentioned (3:31). In a dispute over the Sabbath Jesus appeals to the actions of David (6:3). The blind beggar near Jericho addresses Jesus as the Son of David when he calls for help (18:38-39). In a discussion with the Sadducees and teachers of the Law Jesus says that although the messiah is called Son of David, David calls him Lord (20:41-44).

This same emphasis continues in the book of Acts. Peter states that the Holy Spirit spoke Scripture through the mouth of David (1:16). In the Pentecost sermon Peter attributes Scripture to David again (2:25) and says that he foretold the resurrection of Jesus (2:29-36). A little later in the narrative David is again identified as one through whom the Holy Spirit spoke (4:25). In Stephen's speech David is described as one who enjoyed God's favour (7:45). Several references to David are found in ch. 13 in Paul's sermon at Pisidian Antioch. David is said to have been a man after God's own heart whose descendant is the Saviour Jesus (13:22-23). Jesus is said to have been given 'the holy and sure blessings promised to David' (13:34) and his death is contrasted with that of David (13:36).

The reader of Luke's narratives would not be surprised at this continued emphasis on David, nor that James would bring it to its culmination. It would appear then, that part of the reason for the choice of this particular text from Amos is to continue the emphasis on the continuity p. 226 between David and Jesus. It may also be significant that the first citation of Amos (5:25-27) in Acts (7:42-44) speaks of exile, while Acts 15 speaks of restoration.¹⁰ Consequently, to cite the rebuilding of David's fallen tent as the context for the admission of Gentiles into Israel was perhaps the most effective way of making this point.

Sixthly, James rather clearly speaks with authority as he discloses his decision. That the decision is closely tied to the previous discussions is indicated by the use of therefore (διό). That James has the authority to render a verdict is suggested by the emphatic use of the personal pronoun 'I' (ἐγὼ κρίνω). But as the epistle itself reveals (v. 24), the decision was one which involved the whole group and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Finally, several stipulations were imposed upon the Gentile converts. Most significant is the omission of a reference to circumcision. Aside from the directive to abstain from sexual immorality, the other commands refer to food laws. Although there is some evidence that their origin is in the regulations regarding aliens who lived among the Hebrews, as found in Leviticus 17-18, their intent is rather puzzling. Are they to be seen as the lowest common denominator of the Torah's dietary laws or as the true meaning of the food laws? Are they intended to be seen as universally valid? The practice of the later church (and perhaps Paul's own advice in 1 Cor. 8:1-14) has not viewed the food laws as binding, however.¹¹ Perhaps it is best to view them as (temporary) steps to ensure table

¹⁰ For a comprehensive discussion of this approach cf. P.-A. Paulo, *Le problème ecclésiastique des Actes à la lumière de deux prophéties d'Amos* (Paris: Cerf, 1985).

¹¹ There is some evidence that the decree regarding food was still followed as late as 177 CE in Gaul. Eusebius' report (*Eccl. Hist.* 5.1.26) of one Christian's response to her tormentor, shortly before her martyrdom, illustrates this point. She said, 'How would such men eat children, when they are not allowed

fellowship between Jewish and Gentile believers. When the composition of the church changed to a predominantly Gentile constituency, it appears that these directives regarding food were disregarded.

III THE ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY IN THE HERMENEUTICAL PROCESS

What sort of hermeneutical paradigm may be deduced from the method of the Jerusalem Council and what are the components of this model? Of the many things that might be said, perhaps the most obvious is the role of the community in the interpretive process. Several indicators in the text justify this conclusion. 1. It is the community that has gathered together in [Acts 15](#). Such a gathering suggests that for the author of Acts it was absolutely essential for the (entire)? community to be involved in the interpretive decision reached. 2. It is the community that is able to give and receive testimony as well as assess the reports of God's activity in [P. 227](#) the lives of those who are part of the community. 3. Despite James's leading role in the process, it is evident that the author of Acts regarded the decision as coming from the community under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. All of this evidence suggests that any model of hermeneutics which seeks to build upon [Acts 15](#) cannot afford to ignore the significant role of the community in that process.

A second element which must be mentioned at this juncture is the role the Holy Spirit plays in this interpretive event. In point of fact, appeal is made to the action of God and/or the Holy Spirit so often in this pericope that it is somewhat startling to many modern readers. For not only is the final decision of the Council described as seeming good to the Holy Spirit, but the previous activity of the Spirit in the community also spoke very loudly to the group, being in part responsible for the text chosen as most appropriate for this particular context. Such explicit dependence upon the Spirit in the interpretive process clearly goes far beyond the rather tame claims regarding 'illumination' which many conservatives (and Pentecostals) have often made regarding the Spirit's role in interpretation. While a model based on [Acts 15](#) would no doubt make room for illumination in the Spirit's work, it would include a far greater role for the work of the Spirit in the community as the context for interpretation. While concerns about the dangers of subjectivism must be duly noted, the evidence of [Acts 15](#) simply will not allow for a more restrained approach.

The final prominent component in this interpretive paradigm is the place of the biblical text itself. Several observations are called for here. First, the methodology revealed in [Acts 15](#) is far removed from the historical-critical or historical-grammatical approach where one moves from text to context. On this occasion, the interpreters moved from their context to the biblical text. Secondly, the passage cited in [Acts 15](#) was chosen out of a much larger group of Old Testament texts which were, at the very least, diverse in terms of whether Gentiles were to be included in or excluded from the people of God. It appears that the experience of the Spirit in the community helped the church make its way through this hermeneutical maze. In other words, despite the fact that there were plenty of texts which appeared to teach that there was no place for the Gentiles as Gentiles in the people of God, the Spirit's witness heavily influenced the choice and use of Scripture. Thirdly, Scripture was also apparently drawn upon in the construction of certain stipulations imposed upon the Gentile converts to ensure table fellowship between Jewish

to eat the blood even of irrational animals?' Cited according to the translation of K. Lake, *Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History* (London: Heinemann, 1926), I, p. 419.

Christian and Gentile Christian believers. This step seems to have been a temporary one and these stipulations in no way treat the Gentile converts as less than Christian nor as inferior to their Jewish-Christian brothers and sisters. These points unmistakably reveal that the biblical text was assigned and functioned with a great deal of authority in this hermeneutical approach. However, in contrast to the way in which propositional approaches to the issue of authority p. 228 function, [Acts 15](#) reveals that the text's authority is not unrelated to its relevance to the community, its own diversity of teaching on a given topic, and the role which the Scripture plays in the constructing of temporary or transitional stipulations for the sake of fellowship in the community.

In sum, the proposed Pentecostal hermeneutic built on [Acts 15](#) has three primary components: the community, the activity of the Spirit and the Scripture. In order to gauge the usefulness of this paradigm, it will now be tested by addressing a specific, particularly difficult, issue currently facing the church.

IV THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

One of the most significant current debates within the ecclesiastical world is that regarding the role of women in the ministry of the church. A number of problems complicate the issue, not least of which is the fact that the New Testament evidence ranges from texts that describe women as active participants in ministry to those that advocate the (complete) silence of women in the church. Although various approaches to these texts have been followed, for many interpreters the questions come down to one: did Paul (or someone writing in his name) mean what he said regarding silence? Normally, one of three interpretive decisions is made. One possibility is that Paul intended women to remain silent and, therefore, outside the ministry of the church. The passages which appear to advocate a leading role for women must mean something else or, at the least, be interpreted in a fashion that would not contradict the silence passages. Another option is to say that Paul meant what he said regarding silence but did not intend these statements to be taken as universally applicable. Rather, they were directed to specific situations and have nothing, or very little, to contribute to the broader question. Still another approach is to say that Paul simply did not mean what he seems to have said. Therefore, these texts do not contradict those which assign a leading role to women in the ministry of the church.

Each of these interpretive options, regardless of the theological orientation of the interpreters, is grounded in a somewhat rationalistic approach to the biblical text, which seeks to determine, primarily through historical-critical investigation, the meaning of these passages and how it is that they might fit together. For the most part, Pentecostals have followed the lead of others in attempting to come to a decision regarding this crucial issue. Unfortunately, there exists at present an impasse in most Pentecostal groups that shows few signs of being broken. It is to this issue that the paradigm contained in [Acts 15](#) is now applied.

The Pentecostal Community

As with the discussion found in [Acts 15](#), the appropriate place to begin this discussion is with the community in which this attempt at interpretation is to take place. Pentecostals should have little trouble with this component for the movement itself has been p. 229 one in which community has played a leading role. For our purposes, the community is here defined as those individuals called out of the world by God who have experienced salvation through Jesus Christ and are empowered by the Holy Spirit to do the work of

ministry in this present world. This community could be a single, local Spirit-filled body or a group (or denomination[s]) of such congregations. One of the crucial elements would be the presence of a sufficient level of knowledge of one another, accountability and discernment within this community to safeguard against the dangers of an uncontrolled subjectivism or a rampant individualism. It would be a community whose shared experience of the Spirit would allow for testimony to be given, received and evaluated in the light of Scripture. Therefore, so far as this issue is concerned, interpretation is no private affair, in the sole possession of scholars, but is the responsibility of the community. This observation remains valid even if, as in [Acts 15](#), a group of leaders representing the larger group are called upon to perform such a function.

The Work of the Holy Spirit

It is within such a community that the experience of the Spirit, or the acts of God, are manifested. As in [Acts 15](#), the activity of God is made known to the larger community through testimonies about the work of the Holy Spirit. What sorts of testimonies would such a Pentecostal community hear regarding the role of women within the movement, and whence would they come? The testimonies from the past found in the pages of publications like *The Apostolic Faith*, *Church of God Evangel*, *Pentecostal Holiness Advocate*, *Pentecostal Evangel*, *Latter Rain Evangel*, *Bridal Call*, the *Crusader* and many others from around the world would bear witness to the fact that God had gifted women to do the work of ministry in the Pentecostal revival. The ministerial records from various denominational archives would reveal the ways in which the Spirit has endowed sons *and daughters* with gifts for ministries that circle the globe and manifest themselves in the planting of churches, founding of schools and orphanages, publishing of newsletters and magazines, working with the poor and oppressed, as well as singing, preaching, teaching and supporting the church financially. In addition to these forms of testimony, would not those converted, sanctified, Spirit-baptized, healed and called into the harvest through the ministries of our sisters join in the raising of their voices as to God's actions among us?

In the face of such powerful testimonies to the activity of God in the church, is a response like Peter's not appropriate: why do you wish to test God by placing restrictions upon the ministry of our Pentecostal sisters? If indeed God is giving gifts to women for ministry, are we not in danger of divine wrath if we test God by ignoring his actions? What if there are some in the broader community who object that *they* have not seen such ministry among women? One could only respond that most of those in Jerusalem had not seen Gentile converts with their own eyes, but in the end were willing to [p.230](#) accept the testimony of others who had witnessed such conversions. At least within the Pentecostal community, the work of the Spirit would lead most to the conclusion that God does intend women to take a leading role in ministry. But what about the biblical texts? Do they not, at least in some respects, contradict what the Spirit appears to be doing in the community? How should these texts be approached and what exactly do they tell us about women in ministry?

The Role of the Scripture

The dilemma at this point is the nature of the biblical evidence itself. For, in truth, the New Testament seems both to deny and affirm a leading role for women in the ministry of the church.

On the one hand, it must be fully acknowledged that there are passages which state that women are to remain silent in the congregation ([1 Cor. 14:33b-35](#)), and are under no circumstances permitted to teach or have authority over a man but must be silent ([1 Tim. 2:11-12](#)). Both texts have proved to be notoriously difficult to interpret, in part because

they seem to be contradicted or at the least modified by other passages in the same epistle ([1 Cor. 11:5](#)) or group of epistles ([Tit. 2:4](#)).¹²

On the other hand, there are a number of texts which appear to assume a prominent role for women in the church's ministry. These texts indicate: (1) that it was expected that women would have the gift of prophecy ([Acts 21:9](#)) and would pray and prophesy in the community's public worship ([1 Cor. 11:13-16](#)); (2) that women were regarded as co-labourers with Paul in ministry ([Rom. 16:3; 12; Phil. 4:3](#)); (3) that somewhat technical terminology for ministry functions could be assigned to women, particularly the term διάκονον ([Rom. 16:1](#)) and perhaps even ἀπόστολος (Rom. 16L7);¹³ (4) that a woman could take the lead in instructing a man more fully in the way of the Lord ([Acts 18:26](#)); and (5) that women hosted house churches ([Acts 12:12; Rom. 16:3; 1 Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15](#)), which in all likelihood included more than simply providing space for worship.¹⁴

In the light of the experience of God in the community, there can be little doubt which texts are most relevant to Pentecostals in the question regarding the role of women in the ministry of the church. Simply put, it would appear that given the Spirit's activity, those texts which testify to a prominent role for women in the church's ministry are the ones which should be given priority in offering direction for the Pentecostal church on this crucial issue. To the objection that might be raised on the basis of the silence p. 231 passages, one can only respond that this objection is quite similar to the one that some of those present in [Acts 15](#) could have produced regarding the exclusion of the Gentiles from the people of God. Despite the fact that a couple of silence passages do indeed exist, the powerful testimony of the Spirit coupled with numerous New Testament passages that clearly support a prominent role for women in ministry necessitate a course of action which not only makes room for women in the ministry of the church but also seeks to enlist all the talents of these largely under-utilized servants of the Lord in the most effective way possible for work in the harvest.

A final way in which the Scripture might function in grappling with this issue concerns the possible need for the adoption of temporary stipulations in order to preserve the 'table fellowship' of the broader community. Whatever the precise nature of such stipulations, in keeping with the spirit of those adopted in [Acts 15](#), these stipulations should be grounded in the biblical tradition, should in no way serve to undermine the legitimacy of women as ministers, and should most likely be regarded as temporary stipulations for the sake of genuine sensitivity on the part of some, both male and female, in the broader community of faith. However, it must be stated in no uncertain terms that the Spirit of [Acts 15](#) would clearly be violated if discussion about what might be legitimate stipulations regarding women in the ministry of the church in a given situation were taken as opportunities to impose (in some cases existing) oppressive restrictions upon women under the guise of sensitivity.

CONCLUSIONS

¹² One Pentecostal scholar goes so far as to suggest that the passage found in 1 Cor. 14.33b-35 is a latter interpolation into the text. This somewhat radical decision is based almost wholly on internal considerations. See G. D. Fee, *First Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), pp. 699-705.

¹³ There may even have been an order of widows in the early church (1 Tim. 5.9, 10).

¹⁴ Cf. the relevant discussions in D. Birkey, *The House Church: A Model for Renewing the Church* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1988), and V. Branick, *The House Church in the Writings of Paul* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1989).

Several concluding observations are offered here in order to summarize the major results and implications of this inquiry.

First, this study suggests that there may indeed be a distinctive hermeneutical approach to Scripture, contained in the New Testament itself, that is more in keeping with the ethos and worldview of the Pentecostal community than are many of the interpretive approaches currently being employed by a number of Pentecostal interpreters. Three elements are crucial for this approach to Scripture: the role of the community, the role of the Holy Spirit and the role of Scripture.

Secondly, the community functions as the place where the Spirit of God acts and where testimony regarding God's activity is offered, assessed and accepted or rejected. It also provides the forum for serious and sensitive discussions about the acts of God and the Scripture. The community can offer balance, accountability and support. It can guard against rampant individualism and uncontrolled subjectivism. A serious appreciation for the role of the community among Pentecostals generally, and Pentecostal scholars specifically, might perhaps result in less isolationism on the one hand, and a serious corporate engagement with the biblical text rather than equating a majority vote with the will of God, on the other hand.

Thirdly, in this paradigm the Holy [p. 232](#) Spirit's role in interpretation is not reduced to some vague talk of illumination, but creates the context for interpretation through his actions and, as a result, guides the church in the determination of which texts are most relevant in a particular situation and clarifies how they might best be approached. [Acts 15](#) suggests that the Spirit may also offer guidance in the community's dialogue about the Scripture.

Fourthly, in this hermeneutical model the text does not function in a static fashion but in a dynamic manner, making necessary a more intensive engagement with the text in order to discover its truths in ways that transcend the merely cognitive.

Fifthly, this approach clearly regards Scripture as authoritative, for ultimately the experience of the church must be measured against the biblical text and, in that light, practices or views for which there is no biblical support would be deemed illegitimate. Thus, there is protection from rampant subjectivism. But instead of understanding the authority of Scripture as lying in the uniform propositions to which Scripture is sometimes reduced, in this paradigm an understanding of authority includes a respect for the text's literary genre and the diversity as well as the unity of Scripture. Therefore, this method regards Scripture as authoritative but allows the form and the content of the canon to define the nature of biblical authority. Consequently, one might say that it approaches the issue of biblical authority more biblically.

Sixthly, this interpretive model suggests a way forward for the church when faced with issues about which the biblical evidence is (or appears to be) divided. Just as the Spirit's activity in the community was able to lead the church to a decision regarding the inclusion of Gentiles, despite the diversity of the biblical statements on this topic, so it would seem that this paradigm could assist the (Pentecostal) church in grappling with significant issues that simply will not disappear (for example the issues of divorce and the relationship between the church and civil governments).

Finally, this hermeneutical method has been tested by examining the role of women in the ministry of the church. The results of this brief analysis suggest that many Pentecostal churches have not paid nearly enough attention to the activity of the Holy Spirit in empowering women for a variety of ministries in the church, and as a result, have allowed one or two texts to undermine the balance of the biblical teaching on this topic, as well as the Spirit's own witness. If this paradigm proves to be one of which Pentecostals make use, then perhaps the Pentecostal church will be less inclined simply to follow

others (whether liberal or conservative) on this topic and will have the courage, like the church in [Acts 15](#), to make decisions which ‘seem good to us *and the Holy Spirit*’.

This experiment, then, is offered with the hope that it might be of some assistance to Pentecostals in our attempt to articulate a Pentecostal hermeneutic.

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An African Doctrine of God and Images of Christ

M. Van der Raaij

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THE SUPREME BEING OF AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGIONS

Since the 1960s, African theologians have been striving to understand how God is working in their context and in their thought forms. Part of this struggle has been study on the value of the belief in a Supreme Being held by African traditional religions. As the Independent churches have grown, they have formed an ‘oral theology’ focusing on the Christological points of interest for Africans.¹

The question of whether the Supreme Being of African traditional religions (ATRs) is the same as the God of Christianity, the One True God, is an important issue in African Christianity. As part of the Independence movement and efforts to indigenize the church in African church² African Christians have been rediscovering their traditional beliefs about God.³

Almost all ATRs have a belief in a Supreme Being. Although each tribe has its own name for this god, they attribute similar characteristics to it. This god is the most powerful god in the traditional cosmology. He is Creator and the ground of all that exists but he does not control it directly. He is omniscient and lives ‘above the skies’. He is omnipresent but detached and unreachable because of some error made by humans.⁴ Thus, the lesser

¹ Black theology has also grappled with these issues, but this essay will be confined to the rest of African theology.

² S. G. Kibicho describes the context as a ‘response of resistance and struggle against the evil of colonial enslavement’, ‘The Continuity of the African conception of God into and through Christianity: a Kikuyu case-study’ *Christianity in Independent Africa* (ed. E. Fasholé, R. Gray, A. Hastings, G. Tasié: London: Rex Collings Ltd, 1978), p. 380.

³ As a result, many studies have been made on the theology of African traditional religions and these have been used to study traditional concepts of God.

⁴ I. K. Shuuya, ‘The Encounter between the New Testament and African Traditional concepts’, *Relevant theology for Africa* (Durban: Lutheran Publishing House, 1973), 48ff.

gods and p. 234 the ancestors have been given some authority by the Supreme Being to mediate between humans and himself.⁵ However, he is not often worshipped or invoked, except at important religious ceremonies, or as a last resort, in times of great disaster, misfortune or death.⁶ There p. 235 are evil attributes applied to this god.⁷



About the cover

The Cameroon artist Engelbert Mweng created this image in the apse of a chapel in Douala, Cameroon. In the original version, three colours were used that have special meaning in West Africa: black stands for suffering, white for the dead, and red for the living. 'In the semicircular apse he stretches his arms not only upward but also to the fore' (Weber). 'When the African comes into encounter with Jesus Christ, he welcomes him as the Son of God, as the Lord of the living and the dead, as the one who through life, doctrine, wonders, suffering, death, and resurrection is the greatest initiating teacher, as the one who knows the eternal truth of the doings of life and death, as the one who lives life definitively over death' (Engelbert Mweng).

From A. Wessels *Images of Jesus*

THE TENSION BETWEEN CONTINUITY AND DISCONTINUITY

There are various views on the significance of the traditional doctrine of the Supreme Being. Firstly, early western missionaries rejected any value in ATRs as *praeparatio evangelico*. At the time, all religions of 'primitive' peoples were considered animistic, that is, without any real knowledge of a Supreme Being. Also it would have been difficult for missionaries to understand the ATRs because there were no scholars and literature to

⁵ M. L. Daneel, *Christian Theology of Africa* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1989), p. 111.

⁶ Kibicho, 381.

⁷ C. Nyamiti, 'The Doctrine of God', *A Reader in African Christian Theology* (ed. J. Parratt, London: SPCK, 1987), p. 59.

B. H. Kato, *Theological Pitfalls in Africa* (Kisumu: Evangel, 1975), p. 71. One of Kato's criticisms of J. S. Mbiti's *Concepts of God in Africa* is that out of any of the 270 tribes that he studied, he included hardly any reference to evil characteristics attributed to the Supreme Being. Kato does not give any example of these evil attributes.

study from.⁸ In the case of the Kikuyu tribe, the missionaries concluded that the people were ignorant of the One True God because of the vagueness of the concept of Ngai (the Supreme Being), the confusion between Ngai and the spirits and the remoteness of Ngai from daily living.⁹

The second view emphasizes a continuity between the ATRs and Christianity, which is the general trend among African theologians. Many of them insist that the god that their fathers worshipped is the same God that they worship as Christians. Mbiti rejects the distinction between 'general' and 'special' revelation made by western theologians. He thinks that God's revelation is not limited to the biblical account and that salvation history includes other nations besides Israel. Just as the Old Testament is considered as preparation for the gospel, Mbiti places the ATRs in the same category.¹⁰ Kibicho suggests a radical continuity between ATRs and Christianity. The Kikuyu were not attracted to the 'new religion' because of a new god. There were new elements in this 'new religion' but the concept of God was similar. They believed that when they became Christians, they continued to worship Ngai.¹¹ They believed that since the other peoples around them (Maasai, Kamba, Dorobo) worshipped the same god, then he must be the God of the missionaries as well.¹²

This view recognizes the spirituality of Africans but it leads to problems. It waters down the uniqueness of the gospel by denying that a new faith is being brought to Africa.¹³ It affects the interpretation of Scripture and the canonical value of the Old Testament.¹⁴ Without the Old Testament, the New Testament p. 236 would be incomplete and incomprehensible. The early church (including Gentile Christians) recognized the Old Testament as the revelation of God in its purest form.¹⁵ The Supreme Being in ATRs is evidence of *imago Dei* by which people are still aware of the existence of God¹⁶ but what they know of him is not accurate, distorted by sin and deception. This has led many theologians to propose a third view which affirms the continuity but also perceives a discontinuity between ATRs and Christianity. They cite the situation in the Old Testament where Yahweh accepted the name of El, the highest god in the Semitic pantheon, as a paradigm.

In the Bible there is continuity and discontinuity between Yahweh and El.¹⁷ Bosch says that the name Elohim emphasizes the 'comparableness' of God, making him relevant and understandable to Israel and the surrounding nations, but the name Yahweh emphasizes

⁸ K. Bediako, 'Biblical Christologies in the Context of African Traditional Religions', *Sharing Jesus in the Two-Thirds World* (ed. V. G. Samuel & C. Sugden: Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), p. 85.

⁹ Kibicho, pp. 377-378.

¹⁰ J. S. Mbiti, 'The Encounter of Christian faith and African religion', *The Christian Encounter* (August 1980), pp. 817-818 cited in Daneel, 113-114.

¹¹ Kibicho, p. 384.

¹² Kibicho, p. 386.

¹³ Daneel, p. 116.

¹⁴ Daneel, p. 114.

¹⁵ J. A. van Rooy, 'Christ and the religions: the issues at stake', *Missionalia* 13:1 (1985), p. 9.

¹⁶ Kato, p. 75.

¹⁷ Daneel, p. 116.

the distinctness of God over against all other gods.¹⁸ El was a generic term and a personal name and so could be used for Baal. But Yahweh took the concept of El with its good characteristics and transformed them to indicate his own character. And so God has used the concept of the Supreme Being in ATRs but has transformed them. It is a common point of reference from which to launch believers on a new understanding of God.¹⁹ Christianity is the fulfilment of all the desires and needs of Africans and Christ is the fullness of revelation.

IMAGES OF JESUS IN THE AFRICAN CONTEXT

As the focus of Christianity, what is the portrait of Jesus in African conceptualization?²⁰ What are the images of Jesus that are most important or poignant to Africans? The Independent churches are the most fruitful ground for contextual theology.²¹ For these churches the birth, baptism and death of Jesus are important because they highlight the humanity of Jesus. For Africans, these stages of life are important as 'rites of passage' through which a person becomes fully human and is accepted into the community.²² Thus Jesus has gone through the necessary rites of passage and is portrayed as the perfect man, fully human yet without sin. Therefore, experience of the cross has more significance as an indication of the confirmation of Jesus' full humanity. Death is normal and the cross is **P. 237** merely a means of death. The people believe in the atoning work of Jesus' death but this aspect has less significance. The resurrection is what differentiates the work of Christ from normal humanity. The soteriological consequences are derived from the cross rather than caused by the cross.²³

The idea of a *Saviour* has no parallels in ATRs. Their mythologies concentrate on the past and the present. There is nothing to look forward to but the constant cycle of day and night, birth, death and entry into the realm of the ancestors. There is no promise or hopes of reconciliation with the Supreme Being. But Jesus comes as the Saviour who brings hope, reconciliation and fulfilment of their desires where there was no other known means of fulfilment.²⁴

Jesus, as Saviour, is able to release one from any bondage, spiritual or physical. This is important to Africans who are very aware of the influence of evil powers, curses and spirits which cause sickness, misfortune and death.²⁵ Protecting oneself from evil and

¹⁸ D. J. Bosch, 'God through African Eyes', *Relevant Theology for Africa* (Durban: Lutheran Publishing House, 1973), p. 69.

¹⁹ Bosch, p. 73. See [Acts 17](#) for Paul's treatment of continuity and discontinuity between Zeus, the unknown God and Yahweh.

²⁰ Bediako, p. 97.

²¹ J. S. Mbiti, 'Some African Concepts of Christology', *Christ and the younger churches* (ed. G. F. Vicedom: London: SPCK, 1972), pp. 52–53. Therefore, H. W. Turner's study of common themes in sermon texts in the Aladura church (Church of the Lord) is an important source of African theology (*Profile through Preaching* (London: 1965)).

²² K. Appiah-Kubi, 'Christology', *A Reader in African Christian Theology* (ed. J. Parratt: London: SPCK, 1987), p. 70.

²³ Mbiti, pp. 56–57.

²⁴ Mbiti, p. 60.

²⁵ Appiah-Kubi, p. 72.

remedying evil actions are a major preoccupation of daily life. Religion is a means of protecting life against destructive forces. Health is evidence of a harmonious relationship between people and their environment. Jesus as the Lord of the spirit-realm, has the power to overcome evil.²⁶ Thus *Christus Victor* is a dominant theme in Independent churches. But there is a risk of emphasizing a *theologia gloriae* at the expense of a *theologia crucis*.²⁷

Jesus as *Healer* is also an important theme. He offers total healing of the spiritual, psychological and physical states. Jesus is the power by which the people overcome their daily worries and fears, the source of entire life ([Mt. 10:8](#)).²⁸ Many Christians initially went to African Indigenous churches to be healed. If this *Wunderlust* is the only basis of their faith then it is weak and unbalanced because it will be shaken when God chooses not to do a miracle.

This image of Jesus as Healer has a parallel in the traditional healers (bongaka) among the Akan who relied on the Supreme Being for their power. At the moment of healing, the bongaka is merely an instrument of God. The difference with Jesus is that he is God himself.²⁹ Missionaries used the Congolese position of nganga (traditional healer) as a point of contact. The nganga is a mediator between people and the spirits not with God. But the office provides concepts of liberation and redemption. The ngangas willed to save people but failed, but Christ has succeeded.³⁰

Christ as the *Ancestor* who mediates for the people is a powerful image for Africans. Those who have died naturally after a good and fruitful life live on as ancestors in the spirit realm. They mediate between God and the people and ensure peace and harmonious relationships. They are the source of life and [p.238](#) the only route to the Supreme Being.³¹ They can also bring misfortune if they are angered. They are the Elder siblings who receive deference, respect and offerings. Through his resurrection and ascension, Jesus is now present in the spirit-realm.³² He is now the ultimate Ancestor, the Lord of all and the mediator between God and man ([In. 14:6](#); [1 Tim. 2:5](#)), giving abundant life ([In. 10:10f](#); [In. 6:51](#)). He is the Eldest Brother who has made the offering since he is responsible for the acts of his younger siblings ([Isa. 53:4-5](#); [Heb. 8-10](#)).³³ He is the closest to God and therefore he is the best mediator.³⁴ To Africans, sin is actions which damage the interests of another or the collective life of the community rather than moral error. So for Africans, Jesus' mediatory function is primarily to guarantee a harmonious life in community rather than pleading for forgiveness of sin.³⁵

²⁶ Bediako, p. 97.

²⁷ Daneel, p. 119.

²⁸ Appiah-Kubi, pp. 74-78.

²⁹ Daneel, pp. 127-128.

³⁰ Daneel, pp. 128-129.

³¹ F. Kabasélé, 'Christ as Ancestor and Elder Brother', *Faces of Jesus in Africa* (ed. R.J. Schreiter: London: SCM, 1992), p. 116.

³² Bediako, p. 104.

³³ Bediako, p. 103. Kabasélé, 'Christ as Ancestor', pp. 121-122.

³⁴ Kabasélé, 'Christ as Ancestor', p. 123.

³⁵ Appiah-Kubi, p. 71. Bediako, p. 103.

The Chief or King of a tribe has functions also as a mediator between the people and the spiritrealm. Among the Bantu Christians Jesus is called Mukalenge, the chief who holds authority as leader of the people and Ntita, a chief who is authorized to enthrone other chiefs and Luaba, one who is destined for power. He is the Chief because like an African chief, he is a defender and protector, he is strong (meaning he can perceive spiritual forces and can bring life; [Jn. 8:42](#); [Lk. 24:32-34](#)). He makes life pleasant and prosperous for his subjects and he brings reconciliation; he is called cinkunku.³⁶ Some object to the use of this title because the chief's authority is not absolute since he is dependent on his elders. The chief lives in walled settlements and is accessible only through intermediaries. This represents *theologia gloriae* at the expense of *theologia crucis* since the authority of a chief is not gained by suffering and humility.³⁷ Although it has potential, the image of Jesus as Chief needs to be transformed.

TESTING AFRICAN ORTHODOXY

It is easy to see that Africans have made considerable progress in forming theology about God and Christ as seen in their context. They are using cultural concepts that are relevant and recognizable to describe their understanding of God. But I cannot evaluate them properly because of the distance that separates me from their concerns, their worship and their traditions. I rely on what some scholars have recorded but this can be an optimistic or pessimistic report of what African Christians are doing and thinking. **P. 239** Also, I do not see the whole picture because I don't know how these beliefs work in practice. However, it is the responsibility of those who know the context and concepts thoroughly to test the orthodoxy of African theology.

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³⁶ F. Kabasélé, 'Christ as Chief', *Faces of Jesus in Africa* (ed. R. J. Schreiter: London: SCM, 1992), p. 104ff. Cinkunku means 'who gathers the hunters', like a tree under which the hunters gather to swap stories and share the soils.

³⁷ Daneel, pp. 126-127.

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M. Van der Raaij, a student at the Bible College of New Zealand, Auckland, wrote this article as a class assignment for Dr. John Roxborough, Professor of Missions at BCNZ. p. 240

Indigenization as Incarnation: The Concept of a Melanesian Christ

Joe Gaqurae

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All Melanesians experience colonialism politically and religiously. The present political and religious stage in every country is the product of efforts made by the colonizers. Foreign countries have put into these countries much money and manpower for the sake of development. For this, Melanesians are thankful.

Melanesians were and are a religious people. Traditional religions play an important role in the people's spiritual affairs and the total life of the community. Ancient Melanesians were not stupid people as we often think. They were a religious, clever and capable people. They knew what was right and what was wrong according to their particular society's recognized standard.

Western missionaries had experienced a new kind of religion, namely Christianity. They felt that they had to share this religion with others. Therefore they came to the Melanesian countries with an urgent gospel. Christianity came with western civilization. Political colonizers and missionaries arrived at about the same time. Thus Christianity was seen as the colonizing race's religion. At times, local people saw Christianity as identical with western imperialism. Although Christianity has done a lot to reform

Melanesian society, certain people are now questioning its destructive orientation. As well as making good contributions, it has destroyed much that could have been preserved.

Melanesians are now entering a new era: 'the era of independence'. As Melanesians are liberated and develop, a critical consciousness is born. This consciousness grows as more and more people are being educated secularly and religiously. The more they are educated, the more they look back to their own cultural heritage, which has been ignored. They start to question whether their traditional cultures have any value for the present and the future. They question the sort of attitudes and actions taken by missionaries p. 241 towards their culture. The reactions that come from this critical consciousness are both positive and negative. Some now want to return to their traditional cultures and religions. They want to get rid of everything foreign in these countries. This is a threat to Christianity. Others, however, want to see that Christianity is indigenized. They want to see that their good cultural values are revived. Generally, many do not find Christianity relevant and call it 'foreign religion' or 'white man's religion'. This situation certainly calls for attention. Christian Melanesians need their own apologetics. It is their task to defend Christianity as a religion for Melanesia. They need to say that Christianity is not a foreign religion. But they also need to ask why people call present Christianity foreign. This is the task of indigenization. Perhaps Melanesians will not attempt to defend every part of present Christianity as seen and interpreted by foreigners. It is now time for Melanesian Christians to read the Bible and interpret it in a way that speaks to the present situation in Melanesia. They are to rely on the living Christ who is here in the situation through the Holy Spirit as interpreter. The views and opinions of foreigners should be respected, but they should not be worshipped or taken as the final measuring stick.

Therefore there is a need for a relevant theology or theologies for Melanesia. This is what the writer calls 'an indigenous Christian theology'.

INDIGENIZATION AS INCARNATION

The theological understanding of indigenization is based on the Christian doctrine of incarnation. 'And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only-begotten Son from the Father' ([Jn. 1:14](#)); 'That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life' ([1 Jn. 1:1](#)). '... Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men' ([Philp. 2:6-7](#)). The late Dr. Byang H. Kato writes:

The New Testament has given us the pattern for cultural adaptations. The incarnation itself is a form of contextualisation. The Son of God condescended to pitch his tent among us to make it possible for us to be redeemed ([John 1:14](#)). The unapproachable Yahweh whom no one has seen and lived, has become the object of seeing and touching through incarnation ([John 18:9](#); [1 John 1:1](#)). The moving old hymn of humiliation and exaltation of Jesus Christ the Lord ([Phil 2:5-8](#)) was evidently an incentive to Apostle Paul in his philosophy of the ministry which was to become 'all things to all men'. This in turn should motivate us to make the Gospel relevant in every situation everywhere as long as the Gospel is not compromised.¹

The reconciling mission of God was p. 242 achieved by the incarnation of his Son, culture-bound to a certain extent as a Jew, and a Jew of Galilee, a speaker probably of Galilean

¹ Douglas, *Let the Earth Hear His Voice*, p. 1217.

Aramaic, by occupation a carpenter in the tradition of his earthly father. In Christ, God became culture-bound. He became subject to time-space limitations. If one accepts the incarnation as a fundamental Christian belief, the church which is in Christ's body in this world has to incarnate in Melanesian cultures. Certainly Jesus has his disagreements with the Jewish culture but he could not cease to be a human Jew. In the same way, the church in Melanesia should incarnate in the Melanesian cultures but at the same time bring about necessary reformation. Indigenization respects and appreciates the local cultures just as Jesus Christ enjoyed Jewish culture. In Melanesia the church is to be Melanesian but at the same time Christian. Indigenization does not tolerate those who rubbish local cultures as if they were all bad. It appreciates the good elements of God's gifts and tries hard to work through them and reach the hearts of men with the true gospel of Jesus Christ.

The church at present needs to empty itself of all the unnecessary elements of western heritage and pitch its tent in Melanesia. It needs to adapt itself to the cultural life of Melanesians, speak their languages and listen to their particular needs. Only through incarnation can that reformation effectively take place in any situation. The church needs to identify itself with this culture but at the same time maintain its true nature and reform it. It has to have special distinctive marks of Melanesian-ness.

Indigenization as incarnation raises a Christological issue. A theology of indigenization is basically an incarnational theology. Thus it is to be based on the biblical doctrine of incarnation. It is to be centred on the incarnated Christ.

Dr A. R. Tippett points out that a church is indigenous 'when the indigenous people of a community think of the Lord as their own, not a foreign Christ'.² Unfortunately Dr Tippett does not spell out clearly what he means. If Christ is not to be a foreign Christ then he must be a Melanesian Christ. To be my own, Christ must be a Melanesian Christ. This is important because it is our belief that there is a relationship between Christ and the Christians. How can this relationship be understood in Melanesia? It may be helpful if we first look at the people's concept of Christ and the Christians. How can this relationship be understood in Christ today? Local people certainly have some images of Christ in their minds.

PEOPLE'S IMAGES OF CHRIST

Certain Melanesians in the village setting have been asking the following questions: Who is Jesus Christ? What is the colour of his skin? What does he look like? What do you understand about Christ? Generally, most of them think of Jesus Christ as a white man—a European. A small proportion of them think of him as a Jew, but describe him generally as a **P. 243** white person. He is tall and fat. He has a beard and hair like the missionaries. He wears a long robe. He is clever and rich like the white missionaries. He gives power and knowledge to Christians, but not money. Melanesians have not got any ancestors like this. An old man said to the author: 'The reason why white people are very clever and rich is that Jesus, their ancestor, was the cleverest person who ever lived on this planet'. How did people get such ideas? It is hard to say. The thing that strikes one here is that Christ has been conceptualized as a white person, a foreigner. People have a distorted concept of Christ. How much of this distortion has been contributed by missionaries is an interesting question. The conclusion the local people have drawn from this concept is that the white race is a superior race. The white people are more spiritual and more clever—the 'know-alls'. They can never make mistakes. They are clean whereas the local people

² Tippett, *Verdict Theology in Missionary Theory*, p. 158.

are dirty, stupid and limited in knowledge. Some local people even think that God is closer to white people than to them. Thus Melanesians have a very strong feeling of inferiority.

Also linked up with this idea of the foreign-ness of Christ is the idea that missionaries brought Christ to Melanesia. Certain missionaries encouraged the notion through their preaching that Christ was not here until the pioneer missionaries came. Therefore God was thought to have abandoned this part of the world. This was the basis of the belief that Melanesian cultures were full of sin and evil. One is tempted to argue at this point for the fact that Christ or God was here even before the missionaries. God created the world, including Melanesia. It is hard therefore to believe that God had abandoned this part of the world until the missionaries came. God was here preparing the peoples and cultures towards fulfilment in Christ. Missionaries were not bringers of God to Melanesia. They were in fact bringers and revealers (or better witnesses) of what God has done in their own parts of the world. They were witnesses to a unique experience.

What can we do to correct the distorted concept of Christ in Melanesia? A Christian Melanesian theologian must develop his own apologetics. He must defend Christianity against those who accuse it of foreign-ness. His task as a theologian is to confirm that Christ is neither white nor foreign. Thus he cannot avoid saying that Christ is a Melanesian Christ. He is Melanesian. Just as the early fathers considered him the 'Logos of God', for the Greek mind, we need to say that he is the Melanesian Christ. This is indigenization. Therefore the theology of indigenization raises a Christological issue based on the Christian doctrine of incarnation.

CHRIST THE MELANESIAN

The first attempt at indigenizing the concept of Christ in recent years was made by black American theologians. Dr James H. Cone argues that in the American black context Christ is black. When this was first voiced, the whole world was shocked, [P. 244](#) especially the western Christians and theologians; it was syncretistic and blasphemous to many of the faithful Christians of the West. 'Christ cannot be black', they said. After some years, people came to realize that black theologians have made a vast contribution to Christian theology, especially in our understanding of the doctrines of incarnation and resurrection. Their theology is an indigenous theology in black America. It is situational and local. This perhaps teaches something to those who for so long confused theology with the gospel. These indigenous theologians want to say that theology is not the gospel, and the gospel is not theology. Theology is not universal but the gospel is. Theology is the local interpretation of the universal gospel.

The author wants to advocate the idea of the Melanesian Christ. This is not an intellectual exercise but a pastoral concern. It is unfortunate that Christ has been conceptualized as a white person and a foreigner in many places, despite many sermons on the fact that he was a Jew. Christ cannot be separated from the white person in the thinking of many people. This is a form of heresy and must be uprooted if we want Christianity to take root in Melanesia. This is not syncretistic or blasphemous. If we think this is blasphemous, then why do we preach the Greek concept of Christ as the Logos of God?

Many people believe that no one can localize the concept of Christ because he is supracultural. This cannot be true because the incarnation proves that the supracultural was localized in Bethlehem. He was culturalized in Jewish culture. More than that, it is because Christ is universal that Melanesians can see him localized. If he is not universal, localization is an impossibility.

What do we mean by the phrase 'Melanesian Christ'? First we do not intend to water down the fact that historically he was a Jew. He would still remain as a historical figure for reference. A point that we may want to affirm is that he was a Jew but in humanity he shared certain characteristics which a Melanesian also shares with the Jewish race. As far as common human characteristics are concerned, Christ was both a Jew and a Melanesian. A Melanesian is not a Jew but he is also not entirely different from him. They are both human beings created in the image of God ([Gen. 1:26](#)). Both are sinners and in need of salvation ([Rom. 3:23](#)).

Second, we do not attempt to make Christ become a Melanesian. We cannot make him a Melanesian. He is already a Melanesian. The incarnation affirms the fact that he is already a Melanesian. He has been indigenized or localized by God himself. We cannot do what already has been done. We only have to recognize the fact. We just have to wake up to the fact that through incarnation Christ has already incarnated and identified himself with the whole of humankind, not only Jews. Third, it is not the pigmentation of skin that we are concerned with, but Melanesian human-ness. As far as pigmentation of skin is concerned, he was a Jew. The concern is that in the Melanesian eye of faith, Christ must be a Melanesian. If it was possible for Christ to become a Jew, what can stop him from becoming a Melanesian to me? If this is impossible [p. 245](#) and blasphemous then the incarnation is a false story and has no meaning for a Melanesian.

What is the concept that Christ is the Melanesian Christ?

1. We have already mentioned that the basic evidence is the doctrine of incarnation ([In. 1:1ff](#); [Philp. 2:5-8](#)). Christ became a human being. He was literally a Jew, but shared many common human characteristics with other races, including the Melanesian race. In this respect he was also a Melanesian. He was already the Melanesian Christ. It is only in this sense that a Melanesian can say with the writer of Hebrews, 'For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sinning' ([Heb. 4:15](#)). Christ was the Melanesian Christ who knew Melanesians in the very depth of their hearts. He experienced their experiences and suffered their sufferings.

2. The resurrection of Christ: We believe that the living Christ lives in Melanesia as well as in Australia and New Zealand. This Christ is the same Christ who incarnated as a human being—the Melanesian. If it is true that he rose from the dead and lives here, then he is the Melanesian Christ. He is not a foreigner but a native of this land. A foreign Christ will be a stranger in Melanesia. He will not understand Melanesian people fully. He will not experience their suffering and pains. He will be a Christ who has no culture here. Therefore the resurrected Christ is the Melanesian Christ in this situation: a Christ who is neither remote nor an outsider.

3. Christ the neighbour: The concept that the living Christ is the Melanesian Christ leads to the idea that a Christian is a Christ to his or her neighbour. We probably do not mean that this man or woman is the Christ. Nor do we want to multiply Christ. What we mean is that here is a close identification between Christ and Christian. The Spirit in us is Christ living with us. We meet Christ in our neighbours. He comes to us through them. In this sense, our neighbour is Christ coming to us. Therefore in Melanesia, our Melanesian brother or sister is the Melanesian Christ coming to us.

It is interesting to see that the New Testament writers have no fear of presenting Christ as the one who identifies himself with people. In the well-known parable of the sheep and the goats, Christ is presented as saying, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, You did it to me' ([Mt. 25:40](#)). In [Acts 9](#) Paul persecuted the Christians. But Jesus said: 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' Christ identifies himself with the Christians under persecution. In [Matthew 18:5](#) he said, 'Whoever

receives one such child in my name receives me'. He identifies himself with children. In Melanesia then the Melanesian Christ identifies himself with the Melanesian Christians, Melanesian children and the Melanesian people as a whole. This is the wonderful gospel. It is true that Melanesians in general are not perfect but they are not completely imperfect either. In the same way the Jewish race and humanity as a whole were neither perfect nor [p. 246](#) imperfect when Christ incarnated. But Christ through his love is prepared to identify himself with Melanesians.

In saying that Christ is the Melanesian, we do not deny his sovereignty, as some think. The contrary is true. By doing this we uplift him as the Christ of all people. Only through my experience of him as my personal Christ (Melanesian Christ) can I admire the fact that he is the Christ for all peoples. Christ's incarnation does not deny his sovereignty at all. Instead it uplifts it. Christ remains supracultural in quality but incarnates so that people will be able to understand him more concretely. In the same way, he has to incarnate in Melanesia so that Melanesians will understand him more fully as their personal Lord and Saviour.

Christ is to be seen as a tribesman as far as relationships are concerned, the person who shares and knows his people more than a foreigner possibly can, the person who understands their cultures and helps them to develop. Calling him a tribesman may give someone the impression that Christ is confined. This is not true because Christ cannot be confined to anyone or anything. He is still universal, but his relationships with people of different cultures can be meaningful only when Christ is seen as the local person of that society. A foreigner cannot be the ideal person in any society; he must be a tribesman.

One may think that the danger of this is that Christ will become every Melanesian. This can happen, but is not inevitable. The fact that he was a Jew does not mean that he was every Jew. He was a single Jew—the ideal Jew, a different Jew because he had the very nature of God in his human form. Therefore in saying that he is a Melanesian we do not mean he is every Melanesian. He is a different Melanesian—the ideal Melanesian. The Melanesian Christ. The ideal.

4. Christ the creator: 'In the beginning was the Word and the Word was God' ([In. 1:1](#)). 'He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities—all things were created through him and for him' ([Col. 1:15, 16](#)). Melanesian Christians believe that God was the creator of Melanesian countries because he is the creator of the world. God was here even before the arrival of Christianity. He continually worked and transformed the primal societies. Therefore they believe also that Christ was, is and will be in Melanesia. He is the Christ of Melanesia because it was through him and for him that the Melanesian world was created. If it is true that he is the creator of the Melanesian world, then no one will doubt that he is the Melanesian Christ who lived, is living and will always live in Melanesia. He loves the whole world, including Melanesia, so much so that he gave his own life for our salvation. What a wonderful Melanesian Saviour!

This attempt to localize the concept of Christ in Melanesia is basically a pastoral concern. If it is not taken seriously, Christ will always remain an abstract figure and a white [p. 247](#) man in the thinking of many people. He will remain remote and have no relevance for Melanesians. If Christianity is a Christ-centred religion then its relevance in Melanesia will largely depend on the 'Melanesian Christ theology'. This theology's primary task is to define the Melanesian-Christ relationship. How does the Melanesian see Christ in his cultural setting?

The concept of the 'Melanesian Christ' is not without dangers and disadvantages. It is conscious of its inadequacy. But we need to remember that no theology (western or Melanesian) is ever without dangers and inadequacy. p. 248

Evangelism: Some Biblical and Contemporary Perspectives

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I

EVANGELISM: ITS DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS

Right at the start we note from our English word 'evangelism' an integral connection between the gospel itself (the *evangel*) and the process by which it is passed on. However, 'evangelism', is not strictly a biblical word at all.

It is derived from three related biblical words: *euangelisasthai*—a verb occurring 52 times in the NT meaning 'to announce good news', *euangelion* the noun (occurring 72 times) referring to the good news which is announced, and the noun *euangelistes* (occurring 3 times¹)—meaning the one who brings the good news, i.e., the evangelist in person.

The Concise Oxford Dictionary takes this background at face value when it defines evangelism as 'the preaching of the gospel'. The root of the word (*evangel*) is understood as the content of what is preached (from the Gk. noun), whilst the suffix 'ism' is understood as 'the act of preaching, explaining, or spreading it'.

Evangelism and Words

There are of course numerous definitions of evangelism, and I do not particularly want to add to them. Suffice it to say that the NT gives grounds for establishing that what sets evangelism apart from wider concepts of 'mission' is that it involves the use of language. Biblical evangelism takes place where the gospel is explained or declared.

To be sure the *context* of such an explanation will happen in a variety of different ways for different people, and for the great majority the means by which such words become possible will be *via* relationships expressing love and care within the local community.² In this sense p. 249 evangelism and what has become known rather clumsily as 'social

¹ [Acts 21:18](#); [Eph. 4:11](#); [2 Tim. 4:5](#).

² See John Finney's important study of 500 conversion stories (*Finding Faith Today: How does it happen?*, Bible Society, Swindon 1992) for the importance of relationships in the process of conversion.

action' belong together and are in fact inseparably connected.³ Nonetheless, within this wider context, it is proper to defend an understanding of evangelism which is necessarily connected with the use of language. For actions by themselves are ambiguous. They may unlock doors but without words to explain or interpret them they will not permit the hearer to open and pass through.⁴

The NT explains this theologically in two ways. First, faith—as Paul argues in [Rom. 10:17–18](#)—‘comes from *hearing* the message, and the message is *heard* through the word of Christ’.

Secondly, when the word ‘gospel’ is used as a noun in the New Testament it is always combined with words of hearing and speaking when the process which we would understand as evangelism is being described. When it is being handed on to someone else it is described as being ‘preached’ or ‘proclaimed’, ‘heralded’ or ‘spoken’, ‘made known’ or ‘taught’. When it is described as being accepted it is usually ‘heard’, or simply ‘received’.⁵

Evangelism and a message

If therefore the process of evangelism involves the communication of the ‘evangel’, what is the ‘evangel’ that is being communicated? Lack of clarity and vision at this point has dogged Anglican consultations in the past.⁶ More seriously, if—as we shall argue—the gospel is its own imperative, then the content of the gospel must be its message.

God the evangelist

It is impossible to establish an understanding of ‘theology’ or evangelism from the Bible without realizing that it is woven into its very fabric. For evangelism begins with the character of God. Indeed, there can only really be any discussion about a ‘theology of evangelism’, for the fundamental reason that God is evangelistic in his very nature.

In mission parlance this allembracing theological starting point has become identified with the term *Missio Dei*—‘the mission of God’.⁷ Here is both the primary focus and [p. 250](#) the principal impetus behind the whole subject of evangelism.

As David Bosch puts it:

³ For an in-depth study of the relationship between evangelism and social action, see R. J. Sider, *Evangelism and Social Action* (Hodder, London 1993).

⁴ The relationship between word and deed in the presentation of the good news is illuminated in the NT by the frequency with which *spoken* opportunities are brought about by the impact of Christian *lives*—e.g., [Col. 4:5–6](#) (with the emphasis in v [6](#) on the world ‘answer’); [1 Pet. 3:15](#).

⁵ For example, the noun *euangelion* occurs 8 times in the gospels—always with the verb *kerusso* to preach, or proclaim.

⁶ See, e.g., the Report of the Church of England’s Partners in Mission Consultation of 1981 (*To a Rebellious House?*, Church House, London 1981) where the external partners disagreed so strongly with the internal partners over the nature of evangelism that, though the remainder of the report was printed as a unanimous document, the section on evangelism has two differing sections, one from each group. ‘The final plenary session of the Consultation agreed that the difficulty experienced in reaching mutual understanding and agreement about evangelism, as witnessed by the form of this section, is one of the most serious questions facing the Church of England’ (par. 127). Happily things have improved since then.

⁷ For a brief survey of the origin of the term, see D. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Orbis, New York 1991), pp. 389–93.

Mission has its origin in the heart of God. God is the fountain of sending love. This is the deepest source of mission. It is impossible to penetrate deeper still; there is mission because God loves people.⁸

A biblical overview

It is this fundamental outlook which undergirds the flow of biblical truth, and thereby reveals the character of God. In fact it is hard to identify one biblical doctrine which does not reflect the desire of the creator that his creatures should live in a transformed relationship with him. Creation itself sets out God's original intention for humankind as one in which fellowship between creature and creator lies at the very heart of all that the creature is intended to be.

The fall is tragically pictured as the exclusion of Adam and Eve from the place in which the intended fellowship was created, and with this exclusion comes the accompanying judgement of death.⁹ The biblical narrative then picks up the creator's determined plan that through him God's original intention will be brought to fulfilment, i.e., that through him blessing will be brought to the nations.¹⁰ The Old Testament story as a whole centres around Israel's subsequent calling and ultimate failure to fulfil her role as God's missionary people amongst the nations—that she might fulfil the calling given to Abraham to be a blessing to the nations.¹¹ This global perspective pervades the material from start to finish.

This evangelistic calling was ultimately fulfilled in the incarnate life of God's Son, through whom the possibility of fellowship with the creator was not only restored but taken to greater depth.¹² In the gospels Jesus (using predominantly kingdom language) calls people to submit to him and follow him as Lord, and speaks of his coming death in Lordship categories.¹³ The storyline then picks up the calling of the church, which is commissioned by the resurrected Jesus in [Matthew 28](#) to carry forward the work of [p. 251](#) reconciliation in world-wide terms again.¹⁴

⁸ Ibid., p. 392.

⁹ [Gen. 3:23–24](#) in the context of v. [19b](#).

¹⁰ [Gen. 12:2–3](#). Cf. G. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, (Word, Waco 1987) p. 275 for the connection between the blessings promised through the patriarchs and God's original intentions for humankind.

¹¹ E.g. [Isa. 49:6](#) ('I will ... make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth') which picks up the patriarchal language of blessings for the world which were made in the promises to Abraham. For its apostolic counterpart, cf. [Acts 13:47](#).

¹² The language of restoration is integral to much of Jesus' teaching and preaching (e.g., [Luke 15:1–7](#) and [John 10:1–18](#) esp. [16](#) with their fulfilment of the restoration of the lost to fellowship with the 'Shepherd', which had been the intended role of the shepherds of Israel under the old covenant—[Ezek. 34:4–6, 11–13](#)).

¹³ See e.g., [Mark 3:27](#) in the context of vv [22–30](#) where Jesus interprets his coming struggle with Satan as a strong man overpowering another in order to free those under his charge. The language used is that of the kingdom ('one kingdom divided against another'); also [John 12:31–32](#) where Jesus see his 'drawing' of people to himself from the cross (v [32](#)) as the result and consequence of his casting out 'the ruler of this world' (v [31](#)). In more general terms, the gospel stories and miracles are a demonstration that the true Lord and King of the world is at work over against his arch imposter. The theme of the kingdom picks up the vision in Daniel (esp. ch. [7](#)) of the true divine kingdom (ruled over by the Son of Man) being established amongst the kingdoms of the world. This framework provides the cosmic background for the gospel stories.

¹⁴ There is surely a deliberate tying up of themes in this commission at the end of the gospel. The commissioning to take the gospel to 'all nations' ([Mt. 28:19](#)) links with the opening verse of the gospel which

The ultimate fulfilment of this missionary activity of God through his people is described in the breathtaking imagery of the book of Revelation. Here the promises to the nations are finally fulfilled. They shall bring the 'honour and glory of the nations' into the New Jerusalem ([Rev. 21:24–26](#)). Here 'the home of God is among mortals, he will dwell with them as their God; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them' ([Rev. 21:3](#)).¹⁵

Here then—in brief overview—is the outworking of God's missionary character in biblical terms. You cannot read the scriptures without sensing the work of the divine evangelist permeating all that is happening.

Relating theology and evangelism

There is therefore an inextricable connection between theology and evangelism which we may begin to define in the following ways. In the first place, the proper study of theology will inevitably take us nearer to a true understanding of God, and the nearer we get the more we shall understand of his missionary nature. Viewed from this perspective, theology itself is the exhilarating attempt to work out the implications of the missionary character of God.

But a second way of defining this relationship is to say that the *practice* of evangelism must always be theologically grounded if it is to reflect the biblical nature of the task. Peter's first letter encapsulates this connection. The task of the church in practice is to 'declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light' (v. [9b](#)). The church is a redeemed community called out to speak of its *God-given* redemptive vocation. In being faithful to its mission in practice, the church must be faithful to the message which brought it into being and which it now bears. The church did not create evangelism but was itself brought into being by it, through the power of the gospel. We stand in direct line with the Christians to whom Peter wrote, and therefore also engage in a task which is not of our own making.

The third way of defining this relationship is to emphasize the two-way dynamic between theory and praxis which is the hallmark of biblical theology. For theology can never be simply abstract or theoretical. It must properly be mirrored in new and appropriate actions which reflect a growing theological understanding.

This was, of course, inherent in [p. 252](#) the apostle Paul's properly holistic theology. He writes, for example, to the Corinthians, 'Since we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade others' ([2 Cor. 5–11](#)). Paul could no more divorce his understanding of God from its evangelistic implications than he could cease to follow Christ. The remainder of the chapter repays close study as a sustained outworking of this fundamental connection between theology and praxis. For Paul's understanding both of the cross and of the nature of the gift of salvation both lead to the same end. His view of the cross was not simply an academic recognition that God had accomplished something remarkable for the world (v. [14b](#)—'we are convinced that one has died for all, therefore all have died'). It is inherently bound up with an inwardly unstoppable motivation for evangelism (v. [14a](#) 'For the love of Christ *compels* us because we are convinced ...', and v. [15](#) 'He died for all, *so that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him* who for their sake died and was raised'). Likewise, he cannot divorce the gift of salvation from the calling which results

begins the Jesus story with his descent from the patriarch Abraham. For Matthew, the evangelization of the world is the fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham that through him he would bring blessing to the nations.

¹⁵ Note again the way in which this picture fulfils the original evangelistic intention of God that his creatures should know the sort of communion with him for which they were created (cf. [Lev. 26:11–12](#); [Ezek. 37:27](#); [Zech. 8:8](#)).

from it. This he emphasizes in vv. [18–19](#) ('All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself *and gave us the ministry of reconciliation*; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and *entrusts to us the message of reconciliation*.')

For Paul then, this connection between the evangel as gift (we are saved because of God's work in Christ) was extricably bound up with the work of evangel-ism (the spreading of this good news). Theology and praxis are inseparable.

Much contemporary theological method has lost this vital connection. In part this is the result of the rise of critical method in the last century, with its increasing concentration upon the human aspect of the biblical material, and upon questions of authorship and origin. This has led to a fragmentation in theological studies in which any sense of a unified biblical vision became lost as the big picture became dispersed by many smaller ones.

In this evolution, epitomized by the way in which theological faculties evolved in our secular universities, the divorce between an academic pursuit of biblical knowledge for its own sake, and the application of those same biblical documents to personal life became axiomatic. We need to be continually recapturing this connection between study and discipleship, between the pursuit of knowledge with the mind and the worship of the heart, between our theology and its implications. The ramifications are enormous and profound. As David Bosch puts it:

... dare we today read Paul's letters devotionally, dare we preach from them, unless we allow ourselves to be infected with the missionary passion of Paul? And does not Paul himself extend his vision and image to his fellow-workers and to the churches he has founded?¹⁶ [p. 253](#)

II EVANGELISM: ITS MESSAGE

At this point we need to develop an idea addressed earlier. For if the Bible clearly establishes the missionary nature of God's character as the foundation for all that he reveals about himself, it does so by describing historical events in which he evangelizes his creation—either directly, or through his people. Not only therefore is the Bible about God the evangelist, it is also about the means and methods by which he does it. In a global perspective, the gospel must go to 'all nations', and therefore will inevitably be culturally adapted.

A message summarized

I propose to earth the discussion about this gospel message by examining the preaching of the apostles in Acts. There are two reasons for this. First, because Luke records for us a number of examples of the early evangelists at work declaring or explaining the gospel, but secondly, because they are seen as doing so in different *cultural* contexts. If you like, here are paradigms of the commission to all nations in action. The resulting elements of similarity and dissimilarity will help to give definition to our contemporary task.

No doubt these records are summaries of what was actually said, but this is actually an advantage in our present task—which is that of identifying the core elements of the message.

¹⁶ Op. cit. p. 171.

I am aware that since C. H. Dodd's work (*The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments*¹⁷) in which he argued that the apostolic message could be reduced to a 7-point outline, there has been caution expressed about articulating any common outline in the early preaching. Perhaps Dodd's scheme was over precise. Nonetheless there is good evidence for demonstrating strong elements of repeated emphasis within the apostolic preaching—be it to Jews in Jerusalem, Godfearing Gentiles in Joppa or articulate pagans in Athens.¹⁸

Let us then ask the question, What did the early apostles understand the good news to be? In terms of similarity, there appear to be three basic elements or themes:

A message from God

First, the gospel exists to be spread because of God's initiative. This is a prominent theme throughout the recorded sermons (e.g., [Acts 2:22–24, 32, 36](#); [3:13, 15](#); [10:34–38, 39–42; 17:24ff](#)), and should not come as surprise in the light of our overview of the biblical material so far. In fact the divine derivation and God-centredness of the whole message form the axle around which the evangelistic enterprise was always understood to rotate. God therefore is continually shown to have initiated the gospel, brought it to fulfilment in his son Jesus, confirmed it, and finally underlined its meaning. This God-centredness is apparent even at Athens where Paul spends the majority of his recorded sermon [p. 254](#) defending God's personhood and Creative majesty before explaining that by raising Jesus from the dead he was telling us something vital about who Jesus is.

A message about Jesus

Secondly, the gospel message is all about Jesus Christ. If the message has a divine imperative about it, its content concerns the man Jesus Christ (cf., [Acts 2:22–35; 3:13–18; 10:36, 38, 39–41; 17:31](#)). This might be considered as something of a truism (although perhaps we need to be reminded of it in the light of some contemporary evangelistic preaching!). Yet in the identification of the content of the evangel, I have found that these earthly sermons map out a very stimulating and challenging grid within which the gospel message was always, and should always, be explained. For they are not simply *about* Jesus. Rather, each sermon culminates in a divine statement of *who Jesus is declared to be in the light of his death, resurrection and exaltation*. The test of apostolic evangelism is that the evangel will always find its authentic expression within the parameters of these christocentric gospel affirmations.

There are five such titles. The first two appear together at the conclusion of Peter's Pentecost sermon ([Acts 2:36](#)¹⁹). They are that Jesus is both 'Lord'²⁰ and 'Christ'²¹. Here the particular Jewishness of the gospel and its fulfilment in Jesus as Messiah ('Christ') is

¹⁷ Hodder, London 1936.

¹⁸ For a summary of these common strands in the apostolic literature, and a fuller attempt to draw conclusions, see Eugene Lemcio's two articles, 'The Unifying Kerygma of the New Testament', part one in *JSNT* vol. 33 (1988), pp. 3–17, and part 2 in *JSNT* vol. 38 (1990), pp. 3–11.

¹⁹ 'Let all the house of Israel know for sure that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.'

²⁰ *Kurios*—cf. also [Acts 10:36](#).

²¹ *Christos*—cf. also [Acts 3:18, 20; 10:36](#).

combined with the title that more than any other sums up the NT message: Jesus is Lord.²² The first came to invest the gospel with a particular Jewish flavour; the other with universal relevance. Theologically, as we shall see, the title 'Lord' is the one within which each of the others is subsumed. The third title is that Jesus is 'Leader'.²³ He is the one who has gone before, who is the originator of life and who heralds a new life as 'pioneer'. The fourth title is that Jesus is 'Saviour'²⁴—perhaps the title with which modern evangelists are most conversant in their preaching. Jesus is the one who saves us from our sins. The final title is that Jesus is 'Judge'.²⁵

A message about new life

The third major strand of continuity within the sermons is that the message guaranteed the forgiveness of sins and the promise of new life to those who turn in repentance and faith.

According to the message of the apostles the offer of salvation and the bestowal of the Holy Spirit as a sign and guarantee of the new age promised by God in the OT [p. 255](#) becomes a possibility only in the light of who Jesus has been declared to be. It is precisely because of his exaltation that the gift of the Holy Spirit may be given to those who obey God ([Acts 5:32](#)).

It is also precisely because he has been declared to be both Lord and Saviour that forgiveness of sins can be offered in his name (c.f., [5:31](#) 'God exalted Jesus to his own right hand as Prince and Saviour that he might *give* repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel'); and perhaps even more explicitly (this time by Paul to Gentiles), 'the one whom God raised from the dead did not see decay. Therefore, my brothers I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you' ([10:37-38](#)).

This then is the nub of the gospel according to the apostles. It is a message from God in which he has *declared certain things to be true about his son Jesus*—things which have made forgiveness and the promise of new life a possibility through repentance and faith.

This general pattern in which the gospel is set out may be mirrored elsewhere in the NT. It is certainly plausible to argue a basic continuity of presentation. One other example will suffice to illustrate this: Paul's introduction to the letter to the Romans.

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for *the gospel of God*—the gospel he promised beforehand and through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures *regarding his Son*, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was *declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.* ([Rom. 1:1-4](#)).

The same basic pattern emerges. The gospel is the gospel of God. It is about his son, Jesus. He is declared to be 'Son of God', 'Christ', and 'Lord' by his resurrection. Paul's calling—as he goes on to describe it—is to call Gentiles to the obedience which is due to Christ as Lord—an obedience which comes through faith ([1:5-6](#)).

²² Cf. [Rom. 1:4](#); [10:9](#); [1 Cor. 12:3](#) for the centrality of this phrase in summing up the good news.

²³ *Archegos*—[Acts 3:15](#); [5-31](#)—also translated 'Prince' or 'Author' (cf. also [Heb. 2:10](#); [12:2](#) where it is usually translated 'Pioneer').

²⁴ *Soter*—[Acts 5:31](#); [13:23](#).

²⁵ *Krites*—cf., [10:42](#) where Peter explains to Cornelius the command given to the apostles by the risen Jesus that they should preach that he will judge the living and the dead; also [17:31](#) where the verb is used with the same meaning as the climax to Paul's sermon at Athens.

III

EVANGELISM: SOME CONTEMPORARY IMPLICATIONS

There are a number of issues which arise from this material. The remainder of the article will focus on some of the similarities and dissimilarities between the apostolic sermons and attempt to draw some contemporary implications for further reflection.

Gospel and culture

The first concerns the relationship between gospel and culture. It is clear from the apostolic sermons that culture *did* affect the way in which the message was preached. One example is the discernible shift in emphasis between what might be termed 'Jewish' and 'Gentile' styles of evangelistic proclamation in the Acts. For the latter, the Messiah and Saviour categories give way to the more cosmic category of Jesus as judge (e.g., [Acts 10:42; 17:31](#)).

This theme is introduced at Athens in the context of the Athenians' idolatrous worldview.²⁶ It is significant [p. 256](#) in both Paul's recorded sermons in pagan cultural contexts (Lystra and Athens), along with references in two of his epistles, that his first evangelistic contact with Gentiles seems to have been on the subject of idolatry. It would appear that it was subsequent to this initial contact that he concentrated on the cross. At Lystra for example ([Acts 14:8-18](#)), Paul 'brings the good news' that they should 'turn from these vain things to a living God'. The content of his evangelistic sermon is very similar in thought and style to the later address at Athens where Paul concentrates heavily upon idolatry. To take one example from the epistles, he writes concerning the Thessalonians of how they 'turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God' ([1 Thess. 1:9](#)).²⁷

There is still an instructive parallel to our contemporary style of evangelism here. Much of it still proceeds on 'Jewish' lines in the sense that it often makes assumptions about the degree to which people can understand and assent to the sort of Judaeo-Christian religious framework within which the language of salvation fits and makes sense. My own experience as an evangelist suggests that this is in fact very rarely the case amongst today's non-Christians, but that the notion of idolatry is just as relevant today as an initial point of contact. Most people have a much clearer idea of what it is in life that they are relying upon to give some sense of purpose and hope, than of any idea that they need 'saving' from anything. For the latter implies some recognition of a sense of 'sin' which deserves judgement—a notion which we must acknowledge to be far removed from most minds today, whereas the former (with its echoes of so much of the quasi-religious language of materialism) is much closer to the surface of contemporary culture. In line with Paul at Athens, the contemporary evangelist is more likely to make a meaningful initial contact with the non-Christian by exploring and challenging such contemporary forms of idolatry than by moving too quickly to notions of salvation.

In this sense we do not live in a society which has ceased to 'worship' or to exercise any kind of religious aspirations. As Lesslie Newbigin remarks:

²⁶ [Acts 17:16, 23](#) and the content of Paul's sermon in vv. [24-29](#).

²⁷ Note the similarity to Paul's language at Lystra; the other example in the epistles is [1 Cor. 12:2](#) in the context of [1 Cor. 2:2](#).

We have learned, I think, that what has come into being is not a secular society but a pagan society, not a society devoid of public images but a society which worships gods which are not God.²⁸

We need to understand how these aspirations are focused and expressed if we are to find ways to communicate the gospel more effectively.

On the other hand, our study has sought to demonstrate that there were apostolic parameters within which such cultural explanations took place. A second observation is therefore that cultural relevance was never at the expense of apostolic faithfulness. [p. 257](#)

The challenge of subjectivism

This faithfulness moreover is full-bloodied. The early apostles might easily have been tempted to point to themselves as the recipients of God's end-time blessing. But perhaps the boldest characteristic of these sermons is their objective nature: not what God had done *in* them so much as *for* them.

In our contemporary context, the pressure of a prevailing culture of subjectivism (what is happening *in* me as the test of truth) presents us with peculiar challenges at just this point. My own observation (both in my ministry as an evangelist and in seeing others at work) is that it presents the temptation to limit the gospel's significance to the realm of feelings and its relevance to those outside the church who are aware of some *felt* need for it. The content of the evangelist's message is designed to evoke a recognition of those felt needs and the message communicates that Jesus can meet them.

Of course there is truth here. We will often build from perceived needs to talk about true spiritual need. But if our gospel is presented only as a panacea for such needs we have to ask whether this really is the biblical gospel. What continually strikes me about the apostolic presentation is the stress on the objective nature of the gospel. Action is demanded of the hearers not to meet a felt need but to square with God's truth and the nature of his world as it is now and will be on the last day. The aspect of the apostolic gospel (again stressed in pagan contexts) which puts this most forcefully is that Jesus is judge. Perhaps this brings with it connotations of the sort of hell-fire preaching from which we want to shrink; and perhaps rightly so. Maybe also, in our post-modern culture which appears to reject the sort of truth claims that are dependent upon historical happenings in the past as the guarantee of what is yet to be, such an apologetic appears doomed from the start.

Yet, two points need to be made. First, we have to admit that the spirit of subjectivism which wants everything to increase the personal 'feel good' factor has affected the church as well, not least in its evangelism. If we shrink from the bold apologetic of insisting that the world revolves not around ourselves but around the God who will call all people to account, we may be saying more about our own cosy world view than we care to admit. But secondly, where the message is faithful in content to the apostolic witness, the evangelist will have no need to give the message some sort of relevance that it does not already possess. If God is going to bring the world to account, then the message about him and his son Jesus is relevant whether we choose to believe it or not.

The challenge of pluralism

A third observation leads on from this. If a major modern western cultural characteristic is that of subjectivism, its manifestation in the religious realm is that of pluralism. It is on

²⁸ *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (SPCK, London 1989), p. 220.

this issue that the church faces its greatest challenge in the coming decades. Newbigin again rightly interprets this when he writes:

As long as the Church is content to offer its beliefs modestly as simply one of the many brands available in [p. 258](#) the ideological supermarket, no offence is taken. But the affirmation that the truth revealed in the gospel ought to govern public life is offensive.²⁹

But just such a claim is put forward by the apostles in the simple affirmation that ‘Jesus is Lord’. As noted above this is the descriptive title under which the other apostolic titles find their meaning and coherence. The others are, in effect, aspects of this lordship. Jesus is able to save, and will come as the cosmic judge at the end of time—precisely *because* he is Lord.³⁰

The distinction sometimes made between the gospel of Jesus as a gospel of ‘the kingdom’ and the gospel of Paul as a message about ‘personal salvation’ needs to be reevaluated at this point. Evangelicals have often so stressed the cross of Jesus (and thereby his status as Saviour) that the message about substitutionary atonement has become divorced from the NT emphasis upon his lordship. In fact the two belong inextricably together. The lordship of Jesus is the overarching category in both epistles and gospels under which the different evangelistic emphases cohere. There is no essential difference in Paul’s theology.³¹ This separation between Jesus as Saviour and Jesus as Lord is a false one which leads much contemporary evangelism into either a presentation of the gospel which sells the call to discipleship short, or else fails to make the message connect with those for whom ‘salvation’ language has no relevance.

CONCLUSION

The church’s faithfulness to the apostolic message about the lordship of Christ will undoubtedly be severely tested in the decades to come. It is inextricably connected to historic events which are themselves the guarantee of what is yet to come. We may shrink from this kind of apologetic in a culture that has effectively relativized the importance of any kind of absolute truth claims. Yet the challenge facing us is to find ways to communicate relevantly with contemporary cultures the brilliance of this global gospel. Perhaps one of the key elements to the church’s future effectiveness is whether Christians in their private and public lives live out confidently the view of the world which the gospel proclaims.

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²⁹ Ibid., p. 7.

³⁰ This may perhaps explain why in the Acts sermons there is not such an emphasis upon the cross as one might expect. Because the idea of lordship is to be the fore, the cross and its benefits are implicit rather than explicit. The idea seems to be that to submit to Jesus as Lord entails with it the gift of forgiveness (through the cross); cf. [5:31](#).

³¹ E.g., [Col. 2:13–15](#), with its remarkable similarity of thought to [John 12:31–32](#); also [Acts 28:31](#) where at the conclusions of the book, Paul is said to have continued to preach the ‘kingdom of God’ which, in the context of Paul’s recorded sermons, refers to the sort of lordship idea we have been referring to.

Urban Missions in Historical Perspective

Bong Rin Ro

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INTRODUCTION

Every day 10,000 Indians are pouring into the commercial city of Bombay from villages to find employment. This phenomenon is typical throughout Asia and around the world. The interest in urban studies in recent years has captured the attention of both secular and Christian scholars. Between 1981 and 1984, the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelisation alone conducted more than 60 evangelism consultations in Cairo, Mexico City, Bombay, Belgrade and Copenhagen.¹ The Trinity Consultation on Evangelizing World Class Cities, jointly sponsored by Moody Bible Institute, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, and Wheaton College and Graduate School, was held at the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, March 14–17, 1986. The Urban Conference, December 27–31, 1987, focused on urban missions. The ATA held its 8th Theological Consultation on ‘Theological Education for Urban Ministry in Asia’.

With the study of urban ministry being a relatively new phenomenon, historical materials on the subject are quite scarce. Moreover, the historical scope of this topic is so vast that the author has selected only two areas of study relevant to the Asian church.

First we have to understand how urban ministry has developed historically from the Early Church to the Modern Era. Secondly, we must see how the Asian church has responded to the urban situation, particularly since World War II.

The objective of this paper is twofold: to encourage Asian church leaders to see how the Christian church has dealt with urban situations, and to emphasize the importance p. 260 of urban challenges of today’s Asia.

I

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF URBAN MINISTRY

Francis M. Dubose, professor of mission at the Golden Gate Baptist Seminary, stated that Jesus was born in the city of Bethlehem, grew up in the city of Nazareth, and was crucified and resurrected in the city of Jerusalem. He loved the city and wept over the city ([Lk. 9:35](#)) and went around cities and villages to preach the kingdom of God ([Mt. 9:35-36](#)).

The ministry of the apostle Paul centred around major cities of Palestine, Asia Minor, Greece, and Rome to plant churches. Hasteley elaborately describes the apostles’ urban ministries in the first century.²

Early Church (100–450)

¹ Raymond J. Bakke, ‘Evangelization of the World’s Cities’, Larry L. Rose and C. Kirt Hadaway (eds.), *An Urban World: Churches Face the Future*, (Nashville, Broadman Press, 1984), p. 89.

² Ervin E. Hasteley, ‘Reaching the Cities First: A Biblical Model of World Evangelization’, *An Urban World*, pp. 147–165.

Early Church Christianity was rapidly spreading throughout the major cities of the Roman Empire. By AD 200 the first church buildings appeared in cities only, while the Christians prior to this time had their worship in homes.

David Barrett, who edited the *World Christian Encyclopedia* published a very helpful booklet, *World Class Cities and World Evangelization*, with ample statistics and historical data. There were many early church fathers who established strong Christian centres in cities. Irenaeus (120–202), who wrote *Against Heresies*, became Bishop of Lyon in AD 175. In Rome, Hippolytus (170–235) fought against Manicheanism, and in 249, seven missionary bishops were sent by Cornelius of Rome to the cities of Tours, Arles, Narbonne, Toulouse, Paris, Limoges and Clermont in Gaul. There were 45,000 Christians, which represented 5% of 900,000 people, and 46 presbyters in Rome in 251. More than 100 bishoprics existed in southern cities in Italy.³

To the east, Abgar IX, King of Edessa in the Tigris-Euphrates valley (now Urfa) became the first Christian ruler in 179, and by 225 Christianity in Edessa became the first city-states religion and thus became the mission centre for Eastern Syria.⁴

In North Africa, Christianity spread to major cities from the 2nd to 5th century, and the North African Church became one of the strong Christian witnesses in early church history. Men such as Tertullian of Carthage (150–225), Bishop Cyprian of Carthage (248–258), Clement of Alexandria (155–220), Origen of Alexandria (185–254), who wrote the *Hexapla*, and St. Augustine of Hippo (354–430), actively engaged in Christian ministry. St. Augustine, who produced the 14-year work of the *De Civitate Dei* depicted the fall of Rome and introduced a new model of a city which Christ will establish.⁵ p. 261

Enormous spiritual contributions to the cities of Palestine and Asia Minor by the Cappadocian Fathers cannot be forgotten: St. Basil of Caesarea (329–379), Gregory of Nazianzus (329?–389), and Gregory of Nyssa (330–395). Since the dedication of the city as the capital by Emperor Constantine I in 330, Constantinople (now Istanbul) became the centre of Christianity in the Eastern Empire. Renowned preachers such as John Chrysostom, Bishop of Constantinople (398–403), preached the gospel fervently. In Antioch, by AD 380; 50% of the population of 200,000 people claimed to be Christian.⁶

The system of the metropolitan bishops was developed in the early church. The bishop was the spiritual leader in a city in which all the Christians joined the city-parish. The principle of one parish per city was decided by legislation and the council of Chalcedon (451) even stipulated that a parish must be built on a city before it can be recognized as a city.⁷ Therefore, Christianity was predominantly urban in the early church.

The beginning of rural churches occurred only in the 3rd century in northern Italy. In the 4th and 5th centuries, rural churches began to multiply in France, and by this time Christianity became widely spread throughout Europe.⁸

Medieval Church (450–1350)

³ David B. Barrett, *World Class Cities and World Evangelization*, (Birmingham, New Hope, 1986), p. 40.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Harvie M. Conn, 'The Kingdom of God and the City of Man', Roger S. Greenway (ed.), *Discipling the City* (Grand Rapids, Baker Book House, 1984), pp. 14–15. See also Raymond J. Bakke, *The Urban Christian* (Bromley, MARC Europe, 1987), pp. 85–87.

⁶ Barrett, p. 41.

⁷ Hastey, p. 39.

⁸ *Ibid.*

With the fall of the Roman Empire in 476, the church became the powerful institution in Europe. Rome and other cities deteriorated because of the invasions of barbarians (Visigoths, Vandals and Ostrogoths) from northern and central Europe. The imperial authority had no power to protect the citizens in the cities, and the urban population sharply declined. This initial five hundred years after the fall of Rome is known as the Dark Ages.

With the weakening of the central power, the feudal system developed fully especially from AD 900–1150. In the feudal age, most parishes had rural populations; towns were neither numerous nor populous. Castles and walled towns were safely guarded by the feudal lord's armies that provided security to peasants and townsmen. Consequently, the church structures disintegrated because of feudalistic pressures.

During the medieval age, a new religious movement, known as monasticism, developed. With the establishment of the Benedictine order at Monte Cassino in 529, monasticism spread quickly throughout the medieval church. The monastery, which was a religious community, 'in fact a new kind of polis',⁹ replaced religious functions of the early church and became a link between the classical city and the medieval city.

It was in the monastery that the ideal purpose of the city was sorted out, kept alive and eventually renewed. It was here, too, that the practical values of restraint, order, regularity, p. 262 honesty, and inner discipline were established before these qualities were passed over to the medieval town and post-medieval capitalism in the form of inventions and business practices: the clock, the account book, the ordered day.¹⁰

Thus, the monastery played a very important role of keeping alive the relationship between the image of the heavenly city and the Roman cities.

The withdrawal of the church from cities to monasteries caused the church to be oriented more inwardly than to the outward ministry and helped to create spiritual strength to meet the chaotic challenges of the medieval period; consequently, it affected the church so that it was ill-prepared for the new urban development during the Renaissance period.¹¹

From the 11th to 13th centuries a surge of new urban development took place. With the rise of the new Holy Roman empire (962–1806) in Europe, the imperial conflict with the papal authority intensified. In 1054, there was the permanent separation between the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church. The papal power in the West rapidly gained power through Pope Gregory VII (1075–85) who degraded Emperor Henry IV of the Holy Roman Empire at Cannosa in 1077. Papal authority reached its peak during the reign of Pope Innocent III (1195–1216).

With Papal blessing, the imperial rules of Europe launched eight major Crusades (1096–1270) against the Muslim Turks to recover the Holy Land. The decline of feudalism saw a new developing mercantilism in the 12th century. Guilds, free industrial classes developed in the 12th century. By the 13th century a credit system was established in cities; consequently, Venice and Genoa became influential commercial cities in Italy. Early scholasticism began to rise in the middle of the 11th century and universities were erected in cities like Salerno and Bologna (1150) in Italy, Paris (1200), and Oxford

⁹ Lewis Mumford, *The City in History* (New York, Harcourt Brace Jovanrich, 1961), pp. 246–247. See also Hasteley, p. 40.

¹⁰ *De Civitate Dei* XIV, 28, quoted in A. H. Armstrong, (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy* (London, Cambridge University Press, 1967), p. 414. See also Conn, pp. 15–16.

¹¹ Conn, p. 40.

(12007); and Aristotle's literature was introduced in the West (ca. 1130–1280);¹² St. Anselm of Canterbury (1033–1109), Thomas Aquinas (1226–1274), and other scholars tried to unify reason with faith. Thus, the late medieval cities became the education centres that made contributions to urban development.

The new religious orders of Friars, the Dominicans, Franciscans, Augustinians, and Carmelites, developed in the 12th–13th centuries in cities and on the outskirts of the cities. Quite different from the earlier monastic monks who spent time alone in prayer and meditation, these friars worked in hospitals and alms houses.

In the Eastern Church one must not forget the important development of the Nestorian Church based in Syria. By AD 1000, the Nestorian p. 263 Church in Eastern Syria had 250 dioceses across Asia with 12 million members. These dioceses were organized in cities under 15 metropolitan provinces within the Arab Caliphate and five in India and China. The Patriarch of Constantinople in the Greek Orthodox Church managed 624 dioceses in eastern Mediterranean cities. By 1150 the Western Syrian Church (Jacobite) had 20 metropolitan sees and 103 bishops based in cities.¹³

Renaissance (1350–1650)

With the sharp decline of the papal power from the beginning of the 14th century and the rise of the Renaissance, the secularization of cities took place in Europe. Conn in his 'Kingdom of God/Kingdom of Man' stated that the nominalism of Ockham, which emphasized the concept of positivism and empiricism, led the Christian faith into probability rather than to certainty; consequently, the humanist tendency not only within the secular society but also within the church developed during the Renaissance period.¹⁴

New scientific discoveries uplifted human aspiration. Gunpowder began to be used from 1350, and Gutenberg's lead-cast printing led to the publishing of the first book in 1450. Copernicus' (1473–1543) 'Heliocentric theory', Galileo's (1564–1642) use of the telescope and Johann Kepler's planetary motion challenged the traditional scientific views of the church.

The money economy in this period created the banking system and led to the rise of capitalist economy. From the end of the 15th century trade and exploration were being carried out from Europe. Columbus discovered America in 1492 and Vasco de Gama went to India via Capetown in South Africa in 1497. K. M. Panikkar, an Indian historian, in his *Asia and Western Dominance*, called (the next 450 years of the western colonial period) the 'Vasco da Gama Epoch' (1497–1945).¹⁵ Furthermore, Renaissance art, sculptures and gorgeous cathedrals created the humanistic and secularistic interpretation of religion and urban development.

The Reformation Era (1517–1600)

In the midst of the rapid transition from the 'theopolis to megalopolis',¹⁶ i.e., from the church-state supported urban cities inherited from the Constantine Era to the very large

¹² Earle E. Cairns, *Christianity Through the Centuries* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1981), pp. 240–231.

¹³ Barrett, p. 41.

¹⁴ Conn, pp. 18–19.

¹⁵ K. M. Panikkar, *Asia and Western Dominance* (London, George Allen and Unwin, 1961), p. 13.

¹⁶ Harvie Conn uses four terms to describe the urban development from the early church to modern times: Cosmopolos for ancient cities, Theopolis for medieval cities, Megalopolis for the cities of the Renaissance and the Reformation, and Necropolis for modern cities. See Conn, pp. 10, 13, 26, 28.

urban development of the Reformation Age, the Reformation encouraged the further development of urban cities.

First of all, the Reformation doctrines of *sola scriptura*, *sola fide*, *sola gratia*, and the priesthood of all believers, minimized the authority of the medieval church, and helped the secular rulers to be free from the medieval concept of the *corpus p. 264 Christianum*, a Christian society in which both the church and state, as God's instruments, were to achieve God's purpose for man.

On the other hand, the Reformation attempted to bring the church and the state under the authority of the Scriptures and exhorted true Christian freedom to be exercised for the establishment of God's kingdom on earth. Both Luther and Calvin, as the children of the medieval *Corpus Christianum* tradition, did not separate the church from the state as the Anabaptists advocated.

Luther emphasized, in his commentary on [Psalm 101](#), the distinctive and peculiar nature and commission of the state which he considered God-ordained, not the secular arm of the church. There is no doubt that the separation of the two powers was a real problem to Luther. Recent historians differ somewhat in their interpretations of Luther's separation of two powers as to whether he was more concerned with the medieval concept of the church and state. However, his main concerns were to bring Christian moral and spiritual blessings to the society, deeply stricken by sins.¹⁷

Calvin, 23 years younger than Luther who called Luther 'much respected father', also distinguished the two separate worlds and repudiated both the magistrate's interference in the internal affairs of religion and the ecclesiastical claim of authority in the secular government. Apparently paradoxically, however, Calvin also believed in the close interrelation between church and state since the church and the state had the same Lord and the same goal. After two decades of struggle, Calvin finally established a theocentric 'Christian commonwealth' in the city of Geneva (1555–1564).¹⁸

The impact of the Reformation on the development of urban development cannot be minimized. Fifty out of 65 imperial cities in the Holy Roman Empire officially recognized the Reformation either permanently or periodically as a majority movement. Almost 200 cities and towns in Germany with a population of over 1000 people, including large cities with over 25,000, such as Nurnberg, Strasbourg, Lubeck, Augsburg, and Ulm, had strong Protestant influences.¹⁹

Modern Church Age (1600-)

Industrial Revolution and Rapid Urbanization

With new discoveries in science in the 17th and 18th centuries, the Industrial Revolution made inroads into major cities in Europe. Isaac Newton's law of gravity (1678), Richard Arkwright's spinning machine (1768), James Watt's steam engine (1769), Edmund Cartwright's powerloom (1784), James Hargreave's spinning-jenny (1770), and steam power and coal fuel (1775), produced the first Industrial Revolution in England (1760–1830). This Industrial Revolution later came to other European nations, and finally crossed the Atlantic Ocean to America in [p. 265](#) the middle of the 19th century. Adam

¹⁷ Bong Rin Ro, 'The Church and State in Calvin', unpublished S.T.M. thesis (St. Louis, Concordia Lutheran Seminary, 1967), pp. 20–21.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 52–56.

¹⁹ Conn, p. 21.

Smith published *The Wealth of Nations* in 1776 to encourage the laissez-faire concept of free enterprise.

The Enlightenment Age in Europe from the middle of the 18th century further undermined the traditional biblical beliefs. With Charles Darwin's *Survival of the Fittest* (1859) and Karl Marx's *Communist Manifesto* (1848) man became nothing but an animal conditioned by socioeconomic environments.

One of the consequences of the Industrial Revolution was the rapid growth of urban population. According to Barrett's report, the population in London jumped from 861,000 (1800) to 2,320,000 (1850), 4.2 million (1875), and 6,480,000 (1900); and in Paris, from 547,000 (1800) to 1,314,000 (1850)²⁰ 2,250,000 (1875), 3,330,000 (1900). The population of New York city had sharply increased from 682,000 (1850) to 1.9 million (1875), and 4,242,000 (1900). Teeming millions migrated to cities to find jobs and happiness: Conn stated that the question during the medieval time was, 'Am I a good man?' and the question of the modern man is, 'Am I a good man?'"²¹

In 1800 no city had a million people, but in 1900 11 cities had more than a million, all in Europe and America, except for Tokyo and Calcutta. In 1980, 235 cities had over a million, and by AD 2000 there will be 439 cities with over a million people, 25 of which will have more than 11 million. Twenty-two out of these 25 metropolitan cities will be in the Third World. By AD 2000, the number of cities with populations more than 100,000 will be 2200.²²

The over-crowded urban cities had many problems: child and female labour, slums, poverty, prostitution, congestion, air-pollution, etc. The horrible conditions of industrial cities in Europe and the United States caused the churches to pay more attention to these human needs.

Evangelical Christians' Responses to Urban Problems

Evangelical Christians in England, Europe, and America in the 18th and 19th centuries were not unaware of the crying needs of the urban cities. Many Christian social agencies were established to help the poor. Rev. Thomas Guthrie's statue with the Bible in one hand and his loving arm around a homeless child from the city slums stands in Edinburgh, Scotland.

The Wesleyan revival in the 18th century produced the Clapham Sect of wealthy Christian politicians and businessmen who initiated social reform in England. Henry Venn ministered to the people of the Clapham Sect, and his son, John Venn, who founded the Church Missionary Society, were champions of the abolition of slavery and prison reform.²³

At the end of the 18th century p. 266 when poverty was the greatest social problem in England, Sir William Wilberforce, a prominent Christian politician, set up the 'Society for Bettering the Conditions of, and Increasing Comforts of the Poor' in 1796, produced the Clapham Sect's manifesto in 1797 and led the way for the abolition of the slave trade in 1807.²⁴

²⁰ Barrett, pp. 42–43.

²¹ Conn, p. 27.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 48. See also Barrett, p. 49.

²³ William N. Kerr, 'Historical Evangelical Involvement in the City', Craig Ellison (ed.), *The Urban Mission* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1974), p. 29.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

Lord Shaftesbury, out of his deep Christian social concern, tried to improve the conditions of the working class, with better housing, health, sanitation, schools and labour legislation. In 1845 he reported to parliament about the housing conditions of the poor in St. George's Hanover Square in London in which 929 families had one-room dwellings and sometimes five families lived in one room; consequently, the model lodging houses were erected.²⁵

The Rauhe Haus in Germany was a well-known Christian social institution founded for abandoned boys by Rev. Johann Hinrich Wichien (1808–1881), a Lutheran pietist in Hamburg. There were 250 branches of Rauhe Haus in Germany alone, and these Haus became the 'Die Innere Mission' in 1848.

Roger S. Greenway, former editor of *Urban Mission* in America, pointed out a critical period of 1870–1910 in the history of the United States when many Christian social agency programmes developed. The American Christian Commission was established by James E. Yeatman in 1865. The Commission gave reports on urban needs in 35 representative cities and recommended a cohesive strategy for Protestant churches for urban ministry.²⁶

The Salvation Army, founded by William Booth in London in 1878, engaged in extensive slum ministry in both England and America. D. L. Moody built a humble church structure on Illinois street in Chicago especially for the urban poor and invited everyone to the church. Moody hung a sign at the doorstep: 'Ever welcome to this house of God are strangers and the poor; the seats are free'.²⁷ In 1876 Jerry McAuley started the Wall Street Mission and founded the Gremorne Mission in 1882 in a deprived area of New York city. Between 1872 and 1892 more than one hundred rescue missions were established in America and abroad.²⁸

Rise of Social Gospel (1900–1920) and Evangelical Reactions

The social meaning of the gospel was already expressed in the writings of Horace Bushnell, J. W. H. Stuckenberg, and others, but it was Walter Rauschenbusch (1861–1918) of the Rochester Theological Seminary, who popularized the implications of the social gospel for the 20th century through his writing: *Christianity and Social Crisis* (1907), and *A Theology of the Social Gospel* (1918). He was influenced by the thoughts of Kant, Hegel, Darwin, Karl Marx, Pleiderer, Ritschl, and p. 267 Dewey had tried to establish the kingdom of God on earth through 'a progressive reign of love in human affairs'.²⁹

Evangelicals and fundamentalists in the 19th and 20th centuries were very much alarmed by the increasing influence of theological liberalism and the social gospel in theological schools and local churches. J. Gresham Machen, A. T. Robertson and many other orthodox theologians and churchmen fought against theological liberalism which promoted the social gospel. Roger Greenway states:

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 32–33.

²⁶ Roger S. Greenway, 'History of Evangelizing World Class Cities', Unpublished paper presented at the Trinity Consultation on Evangelizing World Class Cities in Chicago, March 14–17, 1986, p. 16.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

²⁹ J. L. Neve, *A History of Christian Thought*, vol. 2, (Philadelphia, Muhlenberg Press, 1946), pp. 316–318, 324–325.

The controversy between Protestant fundamentalists and advocates of the Social Gospel did serious damage to urban missions. The one side offered positive suggestions for improved social conditions but lacked the soul-saving message of the Bible. The other side preached the gospel in a truncated form which left society as a whole unjudged and unchanged. In many ways we still face the dilemma caused by this controversy and the fears and suspicions which it created. Consequently, protestant missions to the city have not moved much beyond the place where they were eighty to ninety years ago.³⁰

Changing Ecumenical Theology of Missions for Urban Cities

Conn traced the history of ecumenical involvement in meeting human needs in urban cities from the International Missionary Council in Jerusalem in 1928 to the 1960s.

The rise of liberal theology from the Age of Enlightenment in the middle of the 18th century down to the present World Council of Churches' Salvation Today theology (Schleiermacher-Ritschl-Hamack-Barth-Bultmann-Liberation Theology) has had direct influences upon the present ecumenical urban mission.³¹

The population explosion, rapid increase of megalopolis, inhumane conditions of living, and rising problems in urban cities, all directly influenced the theology of missions. In 1932 Dr. William E. Hocking in his *Rethinking Missions*, redirected the theology of missions to the position of appreciation of other religions rather than bringing other religionists to Christ for conversion.³² Gerald Anderson, Director of Overseas Ministries Study Centre in Hartford, Connecticut, succinctly summarized the historical development of Christian missions, as expressed by Conn:

... the debate has moved from the strategy question of How mission? at Edinburgh, to Wherefore missions? (Jerusalem 1928), to Whence missions? (Madras 1938). Whither missions (Whitby 1947) and Why missions? (Willingen 1952). The Ghana Assembly of 1957-58 pushed it one step further, to the most radical question in history, What is the Christian mission?³³

The whole emphasis on the horizontal relationship between man and man in this present world, often at the expense of the vertical relationship p. 268 with God, has redirected the ecumenical thrust to poverty and human rights in urban cities and rural areas. WCC has a department of urban ministry which has its regional offices in different continents including Asia.

In recent years the evangelical response to urban ministry has sprung up rapidly. The Lausanne Committee for World Evangelisation (LCWE) produced a booklet on *Christian Witness to the Urban Poor* out of the Pattaya meeting in Thailand in 1980. Dr. Raymond Bakke, LCWE Urban Ministry Coordinator, has been extensively travelling around the world to conduct urban seminars. The Evangelical Coalition for Urban Mission (ECUM) in England represents another effort to reach the cities with the gospel. Urban mission programmes have been set up at an increasing number of theological seminaries both in the West and in Asia. Evangelical foreign missions are giving more thought to urban ministry than ever before. There is no doubt that the future battles for the church and the worker against Satanic influences will be fought in urban cities.

³⁰ Greenway, pp. 23-24.

³¹ Conn, pp. 47-51.

³² Stephen Neil, *A History of Christian Missions* (Baltimore, Penguin Books, 1971), p. 456.

³³ Conn, p. 52.

II

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF URBAN MISSION IN ASIA

'Modern civilization is European in origin, and it was not till our day that the Asiatics awakened to the need of modernization',³⁴ said J. Salwyn Schapiro in his *Modern and Contemporary European History*. Certainly the urbanization of Asian countries has an intimate relationship with western trends.

Colonial Rule, Industrial Development, and Rapid Urbanization

An Indian historian, K. M. Panikkar, in his *Asia and Western Dominance*, divides the Vasco da Gama Epoch of Asian History (1498–1945) into four periods: the Age of Expansion (1498–1750), the Age of Conquest (1750–1858), the Age of Empire (1858–1914), and Europe in Retreat (1918–1939).³⁵ The European colonial powers of the Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, British, Germans, and Americans, along with the Japanese during World War II, colonized all the nations of Asia except Japan and Thailand.

As the colonialists and western missionaries developed urban cities in their colonies, rapid changes of life style particularly in cities, took place, for they brought industrial development, modern education, science, medicine, as well as western cultures, to the East. Ceylon was controlled by the Portuguese (1509–1658), Dutch (1658–1796), and the British (1796–1948). In the 18th and 19th centuries it was *Pax Britannica* which saw the British Empire providing the balance of power around the world. Britain ruled India, Malaysia, Singapore, Burma and Hong Kong. The Dutch ruled Indonesia, the French in former French Indo-China (Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia), and the Spanish and Americans in the Philippines. p. 269

China was torn into pieces by the foreign colonial powers: British in the Yangtse river valley, French in the south, Germans in the Shantung Province, Russians in the North, and Japanese in Manchuria. Following the visit of Commander Perry to Japan in 1853, Japan was forced to open her door to the West, and from the beginning of the Meiji period in 1868 modernization began. The hermit nation of Korea was opened to the West by the Open Door Treaty in 1882.

The Industrial Revolution occurred in Asia later than in Europe (1750-present) and North America (1850-present). The Industrial Revolution began in China in the 1870s. The first steam navigation company was organized in 1872; the first railroad construction between Shanghai and Woosung was built in 1876, and 768 miles of railway were constructed between Peking and Kankow in 1895. The first telegraph line was established in 1881, and in 1980 the Hanyang iron works started. Timothy Richards founded the first public school in Shanghai in 1891.

Japan first experienced the Industrial Revolution in 1895, with the common man and the middle class freely entering into many business careers; the second phase of the Industrial Revolution occurred in the early 20th century (1901–1912). The modern Japanese economic miracle traces back to the Korean War (1950–1953).

As the British East India Co., Dutch East India Co., and other colonial companies in Europe and America had extensive trade centres in major seaport cities in South Asia and South East Asia, the population of these cities swelled. There was a mass migration of population from one country to another under the colonial rule. For example, a large

³⁴ J. Salwyn Schapiro, *Modern and Contemporary European History*, (Cambridge, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1957), p. 617.

³⁵ Panikkar, p. 8.

number of Chinese migrated to Malaysia in the 1850s and 1880s to work on tobacco plantations. Thousands of Indians were brought into Malaysian and Singapore by the British for rubber plantations. Consequently, there are a vast number of Chinese and Indians in major cities in South East Asia today who are now controlling the economy of the countries.

The rapid urbanization of the Far East is more recent and has occurred in close relationship with the industrial development over the last 25 years. In 1983, among 57,330,000 workers in Japan 18,820,000 (32.8%) were classified as factory workers, and another 14,080,000 (24.5%) as factory-related industrial workers. These millions of workers reside in urban cities like Tokyo (12 million) and Osaka/Kobe.³⁶

With the export processing zones developing in urban cities like Seoul and Kaohsiung (Taiwan), millions of factory workers were brought into cities from rural areas. For example, Dr. Tsai Kuo-Shan, Director of the Taiwan Industrial Evangelical Fellowship, reported that the industrial sector provided jobs for nearly 80,000 people in 1952 and over 2.8 million in 1983; and the projection is for 3,863,000 jobs by 1989, which represents 46.9% of the total labour force. Between 1953 and 1982, the p.270 agricultural employment fell from 52.1% to 18.9% of the total work force, while the industrial work force rose from 16.9% to 41%.³⁷

Asian cities, like major cities in the West, are becoming overcrowded, with increasing economic, political, social and moral problems, and provide tremendous challenges for the Christian church in Asia.

One of the horrible consequences of rapid urbanization is the creation of slums for the poor. Some 730,000 people, according to the a survey by the Centre for Urban Studies (1983), lived in 771 squatter areas in the modern city of Dhaka which had a population of 3 million. By the end of this century these urban poor may make up the majority of a total population of 20 million people. The destitute conditions of the poor in the relocation of Manila have also created real concerns within the Filipino churches.³⁸ In Bangkok there were 1020 slums with only two churches and two house groups in the areas, and two Christian ministers are trying to witness to 600,000 prostitutes. In early 1986 a Christian group launched out in Malaysia to reach 500,000 drug addicts.

History of Urban Ministry

There is a wide range of development in church history among the Asian nations. The Indian church claims to trace its origins to St. Thomas of the first century. *The Acts of Thomas*, written in the early 3rd century, describes the ministry of Thomas in north and south India; and by AD 226 the churches in north-west India, Afghanistan, and Baluchistan had bishops and did missionary work. When Marco Polo visited India in 1288 and 1292, he found many Christians and considered the Syrian church, which used the Syriac language, very significant.

Nestorian Christianity was introduced in China during the 7th to 13th centuries, and the Roman Catholic friars and the Jesuits carried out their missionary work in Asia in the 13th to 16th centuries.

³⁶ Manoru Nakajima, 'Factory Workers in Japan', *Asia Theological News*, vol. 12, no. 4, (Oct.–Dec. 1986), p. 8.

³⁷ Tsai Kuo-Shan, 'Growing Factory Evangelism in Taiwan', *Asia Theological News*, vol. 12, no. 4, (Oct.–Dec. 1986), p. 8.

³⁸ Viv Grigg, 'The Urban Poor: Prime Missionary Target', *Evangelical Review of Theology*, vol. 2, no. 3, (July 1987), pp. 263–265.

Protestant missions were initiated mainly by William Carey in Calcutta (1793) and Robert Morrison in China (1807). Many foreign mission societies in Europe and North America sent their missionaries to Asia during the 19th century. Except in Japan, most recipients of the gospel in Asia in the initial years of missionary work were rural people. However, missionary popular education revolutionized the traditional educational systems in many Asian nations where only the elite class had previously had the privilege of education. Consequently, missionary education produced the middle class 'white collar' Christianity in urban cities of many Asian nations.

While many western missions agencies concentrated their ministries in urban areas, others like the China Inland Mission, which was founded by Hudson Taylor in 1865, had a strong emphasis on ministry in the interior of China.

In the light of rapid urbanization in p. 271 Asia after World War II, national churches and foreign mission agencies have given more thought to urban ministry. The urban Rural Mission (URM) of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (WCC) has its regional offices throughout the world including one in Singapore and has promoted urban mission through its *URM Newsletter* three to four times a year. The ecumenical Salvation Today theology, or 'doing theology', has provided the theological basis for urban mission. A number of urban study centres have been established throughout Asia to train pastors for urban ministry: The Institute of Urban Studies and Development at Yonsei University in Korea, Kansai Institute for Workers' Culture and Education in Japan, and the Asian Labour Education Centre, which is a government agency Filipino Christians utilized in the Philippines.³⁹

Although the Christian mass movements have taken place mainly in rural areas in India, the Evangelical Fellowship of India (EFI) initiated in 1968 the 'City Penetration Plan' in two major cities, Poona in the west and Shillong in the northeast of India. Various kinds of evangelistic literature were distributed to homes, schools and colleges. At the same time, revival meetings were held in local churches, followed by discipleship training programmes and Christian education seminars. The plan in the Shillong area, which had many nominal Christians, experienced great success; but in Poona, where philosophical Hinduism was strong, the fruits were small.⁴⁰

Under the sponsorship of World Vision, Ray Bakke conducted urban ministry consultations in eight major cities of India. As a result, a number of urban ministry fellowships sprang up throughout the country. The Bombay Urban Fellowship started in 1985 and meets every month to pray for the 10 million people in the city. In January 1987 more than 50 members were helping pastors and lay leaders in various urban ministry programmes. Similarly, the Madras Committee on Urban Evangelism draws 400 church leaders every month to a day of fasting and prayer for the city. The Ahmedabad Urban Evangelistic Fellowship which was established in 1985 is able to reach 50,000 people with the gospel.⁴¹

Met Castilo, Director of the Philippines Crusade, encouraged Filipino churches to concentrate more on urban ministry with a proper methodology. Since the Filipino culture is dominated with the spirit of *bayanihan* (community self-help), the pastor should

³⁹ Richard P. Poethig, 'Theological Education and the Urban Situation in Asia', *The South East Asia Journal of Theology*, vol. 13, no. 2, (1972), p. 66.

⁴⁰ Theodore Williams, 'India, A Seething Subcontinent', Donald Hoke (ed.), *The Church in Asia*, (Chicago, Moody Press, 1975), pp. 223, 257.

⁴¹ P. Winfred Jeyeraj, 'Indian Churches Strategize for Urban Mission', *Together*, (April-June 1988), p. 10.

build up a healthy team spirit for urban ministry against the foreign elements of destructive criticism, judgement attitudes, and extreme individualism.⁴²

The rapid rise of nationalism and resurgence of traditional values, p. 272 which have been promoted by the government since 1945, have made it increasingly difficult for the church to reach rural communities. Mass migration of people into cities and the rapid transitional status of national cultures today have provided ample opportunities for urban evangelism throughout Asia.

CONCLUSION

The Barrett survey shows that among the 10 largest cities in the world in 1985 four were in Asia: Tokyo/Yokohama (21,800,000), Shanghai (17,500,000), Beijing (14,600,000), and Seoul (10,200,000). By AD 2025, seven out of the ten largest cities will be in Asia: Shanghai (36,100,000), Beijing (31,900,000), Bombay (27 million), Calcutta (26,400,000), Jakarta (23,600,000), Dhaka (23,500,000), Tokyo/Yokohama (20,700,000), and Madras (20,600,000).⁴³

In 1985 there were 2400 cities in the world with population of over 100,000 people and 276 megacities with more than a million. By 2000, more than half of the world's population will reside in cities.⁴⁴

What do all these mega-numbers mean to the church in Asia, particularly theological institutions in Asia?

1. We must develop urban ministry courses in the theological curriculum and offer degrees in this field. Qualified lecturers and research materials must be provided.

2. We must find more urban-ministry-oriented practical work for theological students and closely supervise them. Continuing education on urban ministry is also needed for pastors.

3. We must find more nontraditional forms of theological education to train the laity of the urban church, i.e., different forms of extension education (TEE).

As Jesus wept over the spiritual and physical conditions of the people in Jerusalem in the first century, Christians today must have the same compassion and burden for the peoples of the urban cities in order to win them to Jesus Christ.

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⁴² Met Castillo, 'Shepherding the Urban Church', *Philippines Church Growth News*, vol. 5, (April-June 1982), p. 6.

⁴³ Barrett, pp. 45-46. Bakke's statistics indicate that 17 out of the 25 largest cities in the world will be in Asia by AD 2000.

⁴⁴ Raymond Bakke, 'Sociology and Demographics of the World Class Cities', Unpublished Paper presented at the Trinity Consultation on Evangelizing World Class Cities in Chicago, March 14-17, 1986, pp. 4-5.

Developing and Disseminating a Life-Changing Curriculum

Tom A. Steffen

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We gathered under one of the Ifugao homes for our bi-weekly evangelistic Bible studies from the book of Genesis. After the lesson, Daniel commented: 'If our ancestors had known how to write, our stories (myths) would probably be very similar to those you are telling us. But because they could not write, the stories changed over the years and we no longer know what it true.'

Visitors frequently attended the sessions for evangelism and Bible study, often requesting study materials to take home. The same request came from Ifugao living in close proximity. (Many Ifugao feel that written materials lend legitimacy to the spoken word.) Although we had produced a number of lessons, they really required further testing. In fact, we desperately needed an overall strategy to facilitate the development and dissemination of our materials.

At the same time, we asked ourselves a number of questions: How does one involve the target people in the curriculum process? What layouts should be used? How should the publications be distributed? How do curriculum developers know the lessons are accomplishing the stated goals? Can the lessons be designed to facilitate phase-out? I will now set forth fourteen guidelines that emerged from my efforts to develop and distribute both written and taped curriculum among the Antipolo/Amduntug Ifugao.

DEVELOPING LIFE-CHANGING CURRICULA

Since Christianity is a way of life, the curriculum should address all areas of life. For our purposes here I define curriculum as including all written or taped materials (videos and cassettes) that are developed to encourage people to experience God—that is, to grow in their love for him, themselves, others and for his creation.

How the curriculum is produced and disseminated will impact the [p. 274](#) team's goal of phase-out in several significant ways. First, it helps to preserve the message of the gospel and other fundamental teachings. It also helps to develop astute national teachers who can discover the meaning of a passage and know to apply it. Third, it encourages ongoing evangelism and church planting. Finally, it can also play a major role in enabling national leaders to look to the Word and the Holy Spirit as their authority, rather than to the church planters.

Its Focus is on the Whole of God's Word

Just as a good picture frame enhances a painting, so a life-changing curriculum should elevate and intensify the entire Word of God. Such a curriculum leads its readers to and through the Bible to find the answers to life's suggestions.

A curriculum that suggests finding answers within its own text, or from expatriate authorities, rather than from God's Word, fails to give credence to the authority of Scripture. It also fails to encourage the spiritual development of national believers, and limits (or inhibits) the disengagement of expatriates. On the other hand, a curriculum that

has been well designed will challenge both readers and listeners by focusing their attention on the source of all wisdom.

Prior to his ascension, Jesus reminded his followers to 'obey everything I have commanded you' ([Mt. 28:20](#), NIV). Paul, in his farewell address to the Ephesian elders, declared: 'I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God' ([Acts 20:27](#), NIV). Thus, both Paul and Jesus emphasized the importance of studying all of Scripture. Wise Christian workers will do likewise by teaching the 'whole will of God', which in turn will facilitate the development of curricula with the same emphasis.

It is Appropriate to Specific People Groups

No one single Bible curriculum can address significantly all people groups of the world. Cognitive learning styles differ, to say nothing of all the different political and religious backgrounds, felt needs, and even successive generations within a people group. Beyond that, the materials that aid in the spiritual development of the Christian workers will most likely not have the same impact upon the target people. Every people group, therefore, requires and deserves its own curriculum.

Western curriculum developers who write cross-cultural materials tend to receive two major criticisms: 1) the content is too heavy, and/or 2) it lacks cultural relevancy. Use of western lessons, tapes and textbooks with verbatim translations into the specified language is one reason given for such criticisms. Although this approach may save time initially, in the long run the recipients suffer.

Ward suggests six levels of complexity when adapting a curriculum from one people group to another. These included:

Level 1: Translation (language).

Level 2: Adjusting the vocabulary (to match the reading level of the adapted material match the original). [p. 275](#)

Level 3: Changing the illustrations to refer to local experiences.

Level 4: Restructuring the instructional procedures implied and/or specified to accommodate pedagogical expectations of the learners.

Level 5: Recasting the content to reflect local world and life views.

Level 6: Accommodating the learning styles ('cognitive styles') of the learners.

Curriculum developers who desire to produce life-changing materials should: 1) maintain a learner role themselves, and 2) include nationals in the developing process from the beginning. This attitudinal and participatory approach will make it much easier to design culturally relevant materials (e.g., calendars, a soccer rule book, a daily newspaper, maps, an accounting book, baptismal certificates, Bible studies). This two-dimensional approach will also contribute to ownership by the nationals and help to develop indigenous writers to replace the team members or work in partnership with them.

To change lives, a curriculum must touch lives. People respond to a curriculum that relates to current experience. Sadly, most imported curricula fail to do this because they were prepared with another audience in mind.

To be life changing, the curriculum should be geared to the needs and learning styles of a specific people. It must wed theology to life and life to theology. It must tie content to context and focus on an in-culture theology rather than an unknown theology of a culture strange to them. It must utilize the familiar learning styles of the people rather than those of team members. Readers and listeners of the curriculum should begin to feel that God walks in their garden and lives among them. An effective curriculum calls for adapting, not reprinting.

It Challenges Individual People Groups

Because the Bible calls for transformed behaviour individually and corporately, the curriculum must do likewise. In fact, it should challenge the status quo by urging that God's way be followed in every area of life.

It Derives From Tested Teaching

Published materials that result from time-tested teaching will have taken into account the issues that surface during the preparation of the materials. Cultural, theological, sequential, and applicational weaknesses that inevitably surface over a period of time can be eliminated or altered. Moreover, it allows time for revising so that a finely honed, targeted curriculum results. For instance, after a lesson about the Flood, an Ifugao observed that perhaps a more effective way to evangelize would be to begin with the flood (since that is where Ifugao history begins) and then ask them about their origin. When the Ifugao respond that they do not know, present the genealogy from Noah to Adam. (Genealogy demonstrates validity for the Ifugao.) His suggestion now finds itself in print. To be life-changing, the curriculum should be based on extensive input from [p. 276](#) both listeners and teachers, for no one knows the needs of a people better than those who participate in its daily activities.

It Retains a Narrow Focus Yet Broad Application

Bulky libraries have little place among the majority of the world's peoples. As someone has stated: 'The church on the march needs a compact theology.' The same holds true for a church's curriculum. Curriculum developers must become skilled in the fine art of omission.

Life-changing curricula should be narrow in scope yet broad in application. A narrow focus is intended to assure that basic truths can be reproduced readily by its listeners and readers. Consider, for example, the two basic commandments that tie the entire Bible together: 1) Love God with all one's heart and 2) love others as oneself ([Mt. 23:37-38](#)). These two basic themes definitely narrow the focus of the Bible, yet make its root message easy to grasp in any community.

On the other hand, by incorporating a narrow focus, a wide range of application is possible. Just how one loves God, one's neighbour, and others, will differ greatly from one people group to another. Narrowness in content and breadth in application allow for quick grasp of the heart of the message and cultural specific application.

It Integrates All Aspects of Life

Since many people view life holistically, it is imperative that a prepared curriculum does the same, particularly if it is to achieve maximum impact. Subject matter of the spirit world, health, agriculture, economics, politics, history, theology, should be interwoven all through the curriculum lest the areas neglected cause the readers and listeners to look to other sources to fill the voids. Insiders usually know far better than outsiders what should be included. Therefore, they should be included in the decision-making process from the very beginning. The problem of syncretism can be minimized by integrating all aspects of life into the curriculum.

It is Graded

Many curriculum developers include every detail possible in a lesson rather than limiting the inclusions to that which an audience can assimilate readily at one sitting. Jesus recognized the problem of overload when he commented: 'I have much more to say to

you, more than you can now bear' ([Jn. 16:12](#), NIV). The writer of Hebrews did the same when he differentiated between the type of instruction required for the immature and the mature ([Heb. 5:11-14](#)).

A key word in Jesus' statement in [John 16:12](#) is 'now'. His audience required 'much more' instruction, *but* at a later time. The same was true for some of the Hebrews. This illustrates the need to design the materials in spiral fashion so that the readers progress from the simple to the more complex. In other words, a life-changing curriculum begins with an audience's ability to assimilate, and builds upon it. This approach not only facilitates learning for the mature, but it also enable more effective communication of the [p. 277](#) materials to those having less understanding.

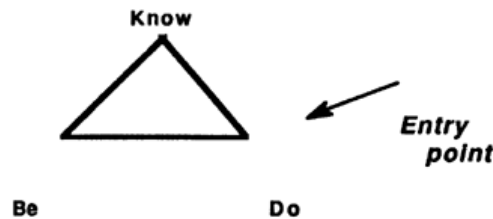


Figure 1. The interrelationship of knowing, being and doing.

Figure 1. The interrelationship of knowing, being and doing.

It Builds Solid Relationships

Many people groups prefer group activities. Life-changing curricula apply this value by specifying in the application sections that groups of people teach, study, and apply the materials together, rather than singling out individuals to take such risks alone. Curricula that encourage team teaching should result in the development of teams of teachers since the responsibility for a lesson is shared by several people.

On an individual lesson level, group studies should be designed to encourage group action. As participants complete a lesson they should be challenged to apply its meaning collectively. Applications questions should promote group discussion and require group action. For example, 'How can we help Mary while she is recuperating?' 'What should the Tayaban family do?' Life-changing curricula build community by bringing people together to teach, study, discuss, and make application. Relationships between God and his people are strengthened, and the development of indigenous teachers increases.

It Calls for Immediate Action

The team's education background, influenced heavily by the Enlightenment, tends to result in an overemphasis on cognitive knowledge. This explains perhaps their desire for facts, and why they tend to require the same from cross-cultural audiences. This problem becomes acutely apparent when ministry is conducted among people who usually learn through active participation rather than from internalizing isolated facts.

Determining how learning takes place among a particular people group, whether by an emphasis on knowing, doing, or being, is a key factor in curriculum development strategy. Although each of these three influences the others, different people groups tend to prefer one over the others. The curriculum should reflect this reality. For instance, because the Ifugao prefer to learn by doing, reflective action became central in the design. It also provided tangible benchmarks by which to measure the stated objectives. Figure 1 depicts the inter-relatedness [p. 278](#) of the three aspects and identifies the appropriate entry point for people who learn customarily through active involvement.

It is interesting to note the emphasis on 'doing' in both Old and New Testaments: 'give thanks', 'sing', 'remember', 'say', 'sell what you have', 'give', 'come and see', 'go and tell',

‘watch’, ‘love one another’, ‘pray’, ‘preach’, ‘come down’, ‘follow me’, ‘turn the other cheek’, ‘sin no more’, ‘encourage one another’, ‘forgive’, ‘praise the Lord’. Just as Christianity calls for putting one’s faith into action, so a life-changing curriculum goes beyond ‘mind-training’ to emphasize immediate, doable tasks. It goes beyond asking, ‘Who are you, Lord?’, to ask, ‘What shall I do, Lord?’ ([Acts 22:8; 10](#), NIV). Christian maturity is produced most readily by practising one’s faith.

It Builds Hermeneutic Skills

Basic hermeneutic skills are necessary to understand God’s Word accurately. To accomplish this, some suggest courses in hermeneutics. But there may be an easier and more natural way to execute this, at least initially.

How Christian workers design a Bible study curriculum is at least as important as the content of the lessons. Use of the same format for each lesson, and each series, helps readers and listeners to learn intuitively how to study the Bible. Continual repetition of the same forms will cement basic hermeneutic principles into the reader’s and listener’s minds. For example, if those designing a commentary on Philippians include background information about the author, its intended audience and the setting, such inclusions indicate to the readers the importance that background information plays in grasping the author’s central message.

Lesson design also underscores hermeneutic principles. For example, the lesson may ask for a passage of Scripture to be read and for prayer that the Holy Spirit will help their understanding. The exercise points to the primacy of the Word, and its Author. This could be followed by a short series of culturally relevant questions (when culturally appropriate) to encourage audience discussion of the main thrust of the passage. Such questions will cause participants to think through the passage to discover the writer’s intent.

Transformed behaviour, of course, is the final goal of the hermeneutical exercise. A number of pertinent questions to conclude the lesson could bring discussion on how the meaning of the passage could be applied immediately to family members, peers, and others.

Curriculum developers should be concerned particularly with whether the study format presents a simple, reproducible, life-changing, yet comprehensive approach to the study of Scripture. If it does, the lessons will teach basic hermeneutic skills implicitly, assist nationals in analyzing and applying the Scriptures (transformed behaviour), and expedite the phase-out process.

In relation to Bible studies, curriculum developers should be particularly concerned with whether the study format presents a simple, reproducible, life-changing, yet comprehensive [p. 279](#) way of studying Scripture. If it does, the lessons will teach implicitly basic hermeneutic skills. Nationals will become proficient in analyzing Scripture and applying the message, bringing about transformed behaviour.

Its Layout Considers the Reader’s Needs

The physical design, together with the format design of the curriculum, both affect its acceptance. What size of publication do the people prefer? What colours do they prefer for the cover? Although one of the favourite colours of the Antipolo/Amduntug Ifugao is red, they seem to prefer a darker colour for the cover. They reason that the smoke in their houses will soon darken the covers anyway. The team’s research should assure that all publications will be produced in the appropriate size and colour.

Another factor is use of space in a layout. Empty space often enhances comprehension because it minimizes the content load of a page while maximizing key points. Blank space is not necessarily wasted space.

There are also other ways to ease comprehension within the lesson text: Some find it helpful to have key statements underlined. Others prefer boxes that outline specific sections, e.g., in the application section of a lesson. The 'Easy Readers Series' produced by the Bible Society indents sentences on the left margin slightly further than the previous one. This breaks the straight line look usually found, and makes it easier to pick up the next line when the eyes return to the left side of the page. (Right margins remain staggered as well.)

Symbols can be utilized to convey information economically. For example, rather than writing out instructions to 'discuss the following sections', a question mark (?) could be placed before the section. Another symbol that could be used is an outline of an open Bible that contains a reference. The symbol will alert readers to note the text indicated within the outlined Bible.

It Becomes the Property of National Churches

Expatriates too often consider the curriculum as 'our' product 'for' the target people. This view can certainly impede the development of national writers. The development of the curriculum must become integral to, and owned by the national community of faith. It is therefore imperative that a multinational team of curriculum developers be formed from the start.

While flow charts have certain limitations, e.g., they fail to reflect either the dynamics of interpersonal relationships or potential creativity, they can serve as effective guides. Figure 2 provides a flow chart that focuses on a participatory model for curriculum development. The chart considers: preliminary definitions, identification of needs and interests, objectives, content, resources and methodology, implementation, and evaluation.

Before launching a writing project, outsiders and insiders alike should recognize the potential influence of their worldviews, basic assumptions, and personal/collective agendas on an overall curriculum [p. 280](#) Team members should also be aware of their agency's agenda, as well as the agenda of the national government. There should be open dialogue between all parties so that a needs consensus may be reached.

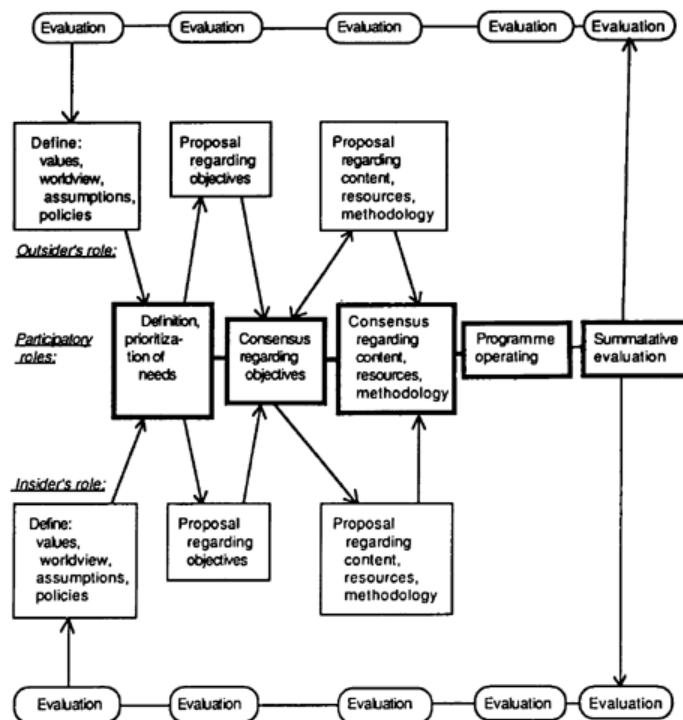


Figure 2. A participatory model for curriculum development.

Figure 2. A participatory model for curriculum development.

Once the needs are identified and prioritized, the group can determine the objectives collectively. The objectives will include at least the materials to be produced and the strategy—the latter having four parts: ongoing evaluation, distribution, funding, and turnover.

After the multi-national team reaches a consensus on the objectives, discussion will turn to decisions regarding content design, resources, and methodology. Content design decisions include: relevant p. 281 issues and needs, pedagogical expectations, content overload, pictures and illustrations, layout, and application. Resource decisions refer to the choice of size, colour, shape, and lay out. Methodology deals with the 'haws' by taking into consideration the values of outsiders and insiders relative to the stated objectives. After these decisions are made, the multinational team is ready for implementation.

Evaluation is another step in the participatory model, that is, checking the value outcomes of the curriculum. Effective evaluation takes place on a continual basis (formative) and again at the completion of the project (summative). Such evaluation allows for mid-course correction and gained insights for future projects.

A participatory model for developing a curricula takes time and flexibility. Moreover, it should be regarded as a service rendered 'among' or 'with' people, not 'to' or 'for'. The advantage is that in the long run it produces ownership, accountability, and relevant evangelists and teachers—all of which facilitate the phase-out process.

It Calls For Marketing Visibility

Many cults select highly effective ways to package and disseminate their philosophy. Expatriates and national believers must become more effective.

In that one goal of the national churches is to reach all their community with the gospel, the distribution of literature, videos, and tapes is one way to expedite this. The Ifugao believers, for example, make periodic trips to every village to sell literature. As the residents ask questions about Christianity, it becomes culturally appropriate to

evangelize. Listed below are a number of ways in which the Ifugao provide high visibility for the curriculum. How should these differ in your community?

The Ifugao:

- (1) make literature, videos, and tapes available for browsing and buying during social and public activities,
- (2) give selected materials as a gift to grade school and high school graduates.
- (3) encourage storekeepers to sell the materials,
- (4) carry literature, videos, and tapes when travelling,
- (5) appoint responsible believers to stock and sell the productions,
- (6) send out teams annually to advertise the curriculum in the surrounding areas,
- (7) give complimentary copies of materials to school teachers and government officials, and
- (8) give materials along with wages to those working for them.

It includes Bible Examples of Phase-out

Lessons that include biblical examples of those who left ministries in order to share the gospel with others will undoubtedly help local believers understand, and anticipate the phase-out of team members. For example, Jesus moved continually from city to city so that his message could be heard more widely. Jesus' disciples followed his example. The ministries of Paul's teams provide a later example. The book of Acts capture the idea of the apostles' [p. 282](#) mobility for Christ, and introduces readers to the problems and successes of those left behind. Thus, the New Testament examples of departure can help nationals understand that the disengagement of team members can result in the spread of the gospel as well as maximize opportunities for the development of the spiritual maturity, gifts, and skills, of the entire body of Christ.

CONCLUSION

A life-changing curriculum takes its readers to and through the Bible in ways that are culturally appropriate while at the same time issuing a strong challenge to follow God's universal demands. A curriculum that follows the fourteen guidelines, and is modelled by respected teachers, should produce skilled indigenous writers and perceptive evangelists and Bible teachers. A life-changing curriculum will draw the target audience to the Bible and the Holy Spirit, rather than to the transient team members. It will prepare maturing nationals for the departure of team members.

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Book Reviews

THE SCANDAL OF THE EVANGELICAL MIND

By Mark A. Noll

(Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B Eerdmans Leicester University Press, 1994 hb 274pp.
ISBN 0 8028 3715 8)

(Reviewed by Dr. David Parker)

Prolific writer Mark A. Noll of Wheaton College has brought together themes from his own and other people's works in what he calls 'an epistle from a wounded lover' which identifies and analyzes reasons for American evangelicalism's poor record in intellectual endeavour. 'The scandal of the evangelical mind', he states at the outset, 'is that there is not so much of an evangelical mind'. That is, for the last century or so evangelicalism has not made much contribution from its distinctive beliefs to the broad spectrum of modern learning, including such areas as literature, economics, politics, science and philosophy. (The last three of these are given special treatment by Noll.)

Noll readily concedes that even though intellectual life is not necessarily the sole or even the most important area of Christian activity, it is nonetheless important to love God with the mind—after all, the world and its processes are part of God's creation, just as the human spirit is. Then there is the practical value of intellectual training for the evangelical community and the strategic importance of academic work for the extension of the kingdom, quite apart from the fact that the twentieth century failure to exercise the mind for Christ is a denial of evangelicalism's heritage.

In seeking an explanation for this state of affairs, Noll does not point to laziness or limited intellectual ability, but to the structures of evangelical theology and spirituality as moulded by fundamentalism, the 'Keswick' deeper life movement and Pentecostalism. It is not even strictly a case of anti-intellectualism, for evangelicalism influenced by these movements developed its own forms of intellectual activity. But these forms did not lead to critical or creative engagement with the world, human society or foundational issues of thought and reality; hence evangelism could make no contribution to contemporary thought.

Noll examines a wide range of [p. 284](#) social, cultural and historical factors which helped lead to this situation, but perhaps his most valuable contribution is to outline the concepts and characteristics of evangelicalism in previous eras which were suitable enough in their original context and produced a virile evangelicalism at that time; they were far from helpful when they lived on virtually unchanged into a later era. He emphasizes, for example, that evangelicalism was populist, activist, biblicist and uncritical and that it endorsed the prevailing Baconian scientific epistemology, or what he calls 'the evangelical enlightenment'. This was, he explains, appropriate enough in the cultural synthesis which prevailed up to the end of the 19th century, but proved disastrous when that synthesis broke down; this left evangelicalism in a poverty-stricken state intellectually, even though its heavy stress on biblical authority and evangelism was valuable enough.

It is only in the period following World War II that any signs of a renaissance of evangelical thought has occurred and even then, according to Noll, the integrity of evangelical approaches to politics and science are highly questionable. Thus he claims that creation science has 'damaged' evangelicalism by making it difficult to think properly about human origins and related questions; furthermore, it has 'done profound damage by undermining the ability to look at the world God has made and to understand what we see when we do look'. He adds, 'Fundamentalist habits of mind have been more

destructive than individual creationist conclusions. Because those habits of mind are compounded of unreflective aspects of nineteenth-century procedure alongside tendentious aspects of fundamentalistic ideology, they have done some serious damage to Christian thinking.'

The strength of this important book lies in its historical analysis of the development of the evangelical mind. The constructive section (in the final chapter) is brief—it is even presented like an afterthought. Its suggestions about ways of altering the situation by broadening the outlook, avoiding false disjunctions and basing a new approach explicitly on distinctive evangelical themes like biblical authority, salvation and divine sovereignty are totally inadequate to meet the challenge as detailed in the main body of the book. Furthermore, there is no analysis of modern intellectual life, or suggestions about how evangelicals might engage in a new cultural synthesis and thus place themselves in a position to understand and perhaps make a contribution to contemporary thought from the distinctive perspective of their own theology and spirituality.

In fact, Noll's conclusions about the somewhat untypical success of Christians in philosophy might even point in another direction altogether. In contrast with evangelical efforts in politics and science, Noll suggests that for a variety of reasons the crippling effects of fundamentalistic thinking have been 'largely absent from the remarkable renewal of orthodox Protestant philosophy'. But even so, distinctly evangelical ideas have not been the source of this growth but the dynamic for [p. 285](#) intellectual endeavour has been found elsewhere.

Noll appears to be somewhat ambivalent as to whether evangelicalism as a religious movement can contribute 'anything intrinsic to the life of the mind'. He reiterates his basic point, 'The scandal of the evangelical mind seems to be that no mind arises from evangelicalism.' Then he makes the telling point, 'Evangelicals who believe that God desires to be worshipped with thought as well as activity may well remain evangelicals, but they will find intellectual depth in ideas developed [in other traditions].'

But in response we might observe that if evangelicalism is understood as a renewal movement, then it is not so surprising that it will point back to the gospel for intellectual as well as for spiritual dynamic rather than to itself! To recognize this point would relieve the scandal by restoring authenticity to evangelicalism as a movement and at the same time open up the possibility of intellectual integrity by sanctioning the employment of other more appropriate sources for this endeavour.

ROOTS OF THE GREAT DEBATE IN MISSION

by Roger E. Hedlund

(Bangalore: Theological Book Trust, 1993, 511pp with bibliography, \$20)

(Reviewed by Ken Gnanakan, Bangalore)

If you are looking for a one volume book that will introduce you to both the historical and the theological background to the recent debate on mission, Roger Hedlund's 'Roots of the Great Debate in Mission' will come quite near to satisfying you. Revised and updated, the book contains a wealth of material made available in the documents that have been issued from major conferences right from Edinburgh 1910.

The book basically includes two types of material. There are documents—a variety of them ranging from evangelical to ecumenical expressions, even the Pentecostals and Charismatics. Then there are interwoven comments by Hedlund which certainly help the student to get behind the major issues behind these documents and unravel the issues contained.

With his rich experience in teaching missions in India, first at the Union Biblical Seminary, and later in the Church Growth Research Centre which he helped to found, Hedlund speaks not merely as an armchair missiologist but as a practitioner very much in touch with all that is happening in the field of study of missiology.

The strength of the book is in the compilation of so many crucial documents that have shaped the course of the thinking in mission today. One picks up the early fervour of the missionaries who had gathered for Edinburgh 1910. Hedlund helpfully sets the scene with references to William Carey, the father of modern mission.

'Roots' is a powerful pilgrimage along the course of modern missions. Hedlund enables the students to travel through the period as the whole concept of mission shifts from being evangelism to everything else [p. 286](#) but evangelism in some circles. As early as in Jerusalem 1928 one begins to see 'theological disarray' and 'theological confusion' as he refers to it.

Hedlund wishes his readers to see the depth of the confusion caused and hence exposes them to the variety of expressions made in the name of Christ. The revised edition includes even Prof. Chung HyunKyung's sensational presentation at the Canberra Assembly—'Come Holy Spirit, Renew the whole creation.'

While Hedlund's selection of documents are commendable, one will have to commend him for his commentary. The comments are to be appreciated for their clarity and the assistance provided for the reader to get to the root of the debate. However, what the reviewer misses is a comment on more of the positive aspects of even the liberal documents. While one would not agree with everything stated, the reminders that have come even from that section of the church could well help Evangelicals to move forward a little less defensively.

Roger Hedlund writing from the 'Church Growth' perspective appears to be confined to mission as evangelism and church growth. Although he does see mission in a wider sense, his burden appears to be for his particular perspective. 'Mission will continue. Its format is changeable,' he admits, but a little more of this changing format would help the reader grasp the enormous challenge that is faced.

Further, what is lacking in Hedlund's treatment is some theological grappling. But as with all writers one cannot demand everything. Roger Hedlund does approach the issues as a missiologist with a concern for mission, not merely a theologian of mission. Yet, some more meaty theological conclusions would help evangelicals in mission to be a little more concretely involved in making the message known to the world.

But strengths and weaknesses aside, here is an excellent addition to the library of every student of mission in its fullest sense. At \$20, 'Roots of the Great Debate in Mission' (512 pages) is another achievement by Theological Book Trust, Bangalore, India, to make available reasonably priced books within Asia.

JESUS AND THE LAST DAYS

by G. R. Beasley-Murray

(Hendrickson, Peabody, Mass., 1993, 518pp)

(Reviewed by Francis Foulkes, Auckland)

This is the third book written by George Beasley-Murray on [Mark 13](#), representing the fruit of many years of patient study of that chapter. In 1954 *Jesus and the Fruit* was published, and in 1957 *A Commentary on Mark 13*. This work is a combination and an updating of those two earlier works. Almost 350 pages are given to a survey of the critical study of [Mark 13](#) in the last 160 years. More or less in historical order, he surveys the opinions of more than 200 different scholars. He weighs up the views of those who see

the chapter as a unit in itself, a Jewish apocalypse or a Christian apocalypse. He considers the standpoint [p. 287](#) of those who see it largely as Marcan redaction, and those who see it as a collection of the teaching of Jesus, or of a variety of sources in the early Church taken over and used by Mark.

In a chapter entitled 'A fresh approach to the discourse of [Mark 13](#)' Beasley-Murray sets out his own view. He points to the catechetical teaching that we have in the epistles, called a 'pattern of teaching' by the apostle Paul in [Romans 6:17](#). This teaching, as it related to the future, included the elements of eschatology and exhortation and warning about false prophets. These same elements of teaching can be seen gathered together in [Mark 13](#), and because of the diversity of the material, this is a more likely explanation for the chapter than that of a 'little apocalypse'. The importance of the collection of this material for the life of the church at the time of writing can be realized. It would have been especially important in the critical initial days of the Jewish War. Reasons are given for dating the presentation of this material to that period rather than after or more immediately before the fall of Jerusalem. At that time such an eschatological discourse would have been most helpful 'to inspire faith, endurance, and hope in face of the impending suffering of the church and of the Jewish nation' (p. 367); and it would 'warn Christians against false teaching concerning the end' (p. 368).

The last 100 pages of the book are a detailed section-by-section, verse-by-verse commentary on the chapter. Although Beasley-Murray sees Mark as having a part in the shaping of the material of this chapter, he gives reasons against the views of those who constantly oppose any idea of the teaching being given by Jesus himself. In his exegetical work Beasley-Murray considers different interpretations, but then presents his own conclusions. He indicates clearly where the Old Testament background helps in understanding what is being presented, and indeed where the reader may be led astray by not taking that into account. He considers carefully what may relate most directly to the crisis of the fall of Jerusalem, and what moves beyond that. He gives invaluable help in some of the most difficult passages of the chapter like verse [30](#), 'this generation will not pass away until all these things he taken place'. Any who are making a careful study of [Mark 13](#) will certainly benefit from this commentary section of the work, even if they are impatient of the massive detail of the history of critical study in the earlier sections. [p. 288](#)

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