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Evangelical Review of Theology

*Articles and book reviews reflecting
global evangelical theology for the purpose
of discerning the obedience of faith*



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EDITOR: DAVID PARKER

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The Executive Committee of the WEA Theological Commission
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Editorial Policy

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Editorial—Scripture and Theological Education

THIS issue concludes our special series for the 30th anniversary of the formation of the WEA Theological Commission. The opening article brings our history up to the present time, but we have no prophetic gift to see where the future will take us! However, in good biblical spirit, we can rejoice in the past activities of the Commission, which include some solid work in theological education, as witnessed by the articles which follow by Patricia Harrison and Roger Kemp. Both of these authors have made significant contributions to our work—Dr Harrison especially in TEE and consultation work with smaller and more remote colleges which were, and remain, her passion. Dr Kemp's work as General Secretary of ICAA (now ICETE) was more wide ranging, a perspective which continues to inform his current work in consultancy and teaching in Europe, Australia and globally.

Dr James Stamoilis, who served on the Commission and as its Executive Director in more recent times, reminds us of the important changes of emphasis and method that have taken place during our thirty year life in such areas as hermeneutics, ministry and church

life. No doubt, other key leaders of the TC who have not been able to contribute to this series could give parallel reflections, which emphasize the importance of the work of a body such as the TC in helping evangelicals to 'discern the obedience of faith' in changing and often confusing times.

Appropriately, we conclude this series with two Bible studies. The first is from former TC Study Unit convenor, Dr Donald A Carson, who contributes to our anniversary with a detailed exegetical study of a key passage for evangelicals, Romans 3:21-26. Then we have a reflective Bible study from Ephesians by John Lewis, reminding us that theology must be 'done in the context of praise, a situation that gives meaning to the theology it seeks to express.' He therefore sets before us a vision of 'God's people doing theology through the gates of heaven.'

As we conclude another volume, we invite contributions of Bible studies of this kind so that we can not only feed the mind but also be caught up in the worship and faithful service of the God who comes to us in cross and resurrection!

David Parker, Editor

'Discerning the Obedience of Faith' A Short History of the World Evangelical Alliance Theological Commission Part 3: 1994-2004

David Parker

KEYWORDS: *Theological education, publications, missions, ecumenism, evangelical theology, eschatology, Internet, evangelism, ecclesiology, globalisation*

TC at 20 years¹

Despite a busy and productive year in 1993, the TC Executive had not met. This meant that it did not have the opportunity to address the significant changes to its role that had been proposed by the WEF which would change it from a body committed primarily to theological reflection to one working at

the grassroots level in leadership development and training. This disturbance was symptomatic of more to come during the twentieth year of the organization's history.

The TC Executive finally met at Elburn, Illinois 7-10 January 1994 with a large agenda, catching up the backlog since the previous meeting a year and a half earlier in Manila. In particular, WEF International Director Jun Vencer personally presented his new vision for the TC, and urged the TC to fall into line with moves towards greater integration and unity which were taking place within the WEF. Dr Bong Rin Ro (now known as Executive Director) reinforced this policy by proposing a threefold plan—tackling major theological issues through the Study Unit program, training church leaders and strengthening national evangelical fellowships.

He emphasized that the TC could accomplish its accreditation work and

¹ The sources for this history are mostly the official records of the WEF/A Theological Commission. For this section, acknowledgement is also made for assistance by R. Kemp, P. Kuzmič, C. Weber, the Billy Graham Center Archives, the WEA International Office, and present and former members of the Theological Commission.

the establishment of seminaries through the ICAA, but there was a need to expand the scholarship and library development schemes, and to work through national alliances and developing networks of theologians, including the encouragement of younger ones. He urged the establishment of the previously proposed Evangelical Leadership Development Fund to meet the great demand for financial resources, and to work closely with groups such as Overseas Council and the Langham Trust who were also involved in supporting theological education globally. However, the Executive concluded that his suggestion about the TC conducting seminars in churches was one that needed more thought because it was doubtful that it was appropriate for the TC as a global body to be working at this local level.

Publications were again a major concern at this Executive meeting, with serious consideration given to the plans of the WEF Publications Commission for a coordinated approach to the task, and also the idea of expanding TC publications into various world languages. Although *Beyond Canberra* had finally appeared, there was uncertainty about whether the book from the 1992 consultation could be funded by Paternoster. However, approval was given for the publication of the papers from the consultation on the Evangelisation of the Poor when that issue was clarified. Bruce Nicholls would now be assisted in his work as editor of *Evangelical Review of Theology* by two new appointments—Dr John Roxborough of the Bible College of New Zealand, as Associate Editor, and TC member, Dr David Parker (Australia) as Book Review Editor. *Theological News* con-

tinued to be supported financially but there were no issues published in 1994.

There was little to report from the Study Units (apart from Ecumenical Issues)—they seemed to have run out of momentum. Finances were very difficult. No new Scholarship applications were considered.

Nevertheless, some concrete plans were laid for the future with a decision to endorse and co-sponsor with the Overseas Council the Consultation of Theological Education Leaders of Schools in the Post-Communist world at Oradea, Romania, 4-7 October 1994. This proved to be a highly constructive event in helping to develop a vision for theological education in the region. In addition, there was a commitment by the participants to the creation of an organizational structure to facilitate study, faculty development, networking, research and publication. As a result of these efforts, the East European Accrediting Association was formed in 1997 with more than forty members and became a constituent of ICAA (or ICETE as it was known by then).

The next TC consultation and general meeting was due in 1995, but these events were deferred because of the major plans for the WEF General Assembly the following year. In any case, the large impact that GCOWE II would have made such a decision a necessity.²

² GCOWE II was held 17-25 May 1995 at the Korean Center for World Mission, attracting nearly 4,000 Christian leaders representing 186 nations, and was regarded as a highly significant event, especially for third-world Christians.

Pace slackens

There was a positive mood and plenty of ideas for the development of the TC at the January meeting in Elburn, but these hopeful signs did not translate into action. Instead, the rest of 1994 was characterised by a marked slow-down in TC operations. Bong Ro was often on the move travelling, and he had also added to his teaching responsibilities at ACTS. In addition, he was now Overseas Ministry Director for the Korean Center for World Missions; he hoped this activity might develop local support for the TC, especially in the area of publications, but nothing concrete emerged. Plans to hold a second Executive meeting in 1994, this time in Seoul in association with a consultation on 'Prosperity Theology and the Theology of Suffering', were also part of this strategy.

This consultation was speedily arranged with the enthusiastic interest and support of the Korea Evangelical Theological Society. Despite the short time for preparation, it was highly successful, attracting fifty people, including the TC Executive members who participated fully. There were seven major papers from biblical, theological and geographical perspectives. There was also a lengthy statement pointing out, among other matters, the suitability of the holding of such a consultation in Korea which, 'having passed through the fires of intense persecution and suffering during the first part of this century, has become quite prosperous and is rapidly becoming one of the dominant sending churches in the world Christian mission'.³

The Executive meeting, held 26-28 September just before the Consultation, was well attended, but reports indicated that TC activity was weak and many of the initiatives from the previous meeting had not been pursued. The outlook for scholarships continued to be poor, and no new offers were made. In fact, applicants had been referred to the Overseas Council.

There was little substantial Study Unit activity to report, with the exception of the Ecumenical Issues Unit. It had met 23-26 May 1994 for the Scripture and Tradition project, first established in 1992, and now had material ready for publication.⁴ The Convenor, Dr Paul Schrottenboer, also advised that he had been informed that the conversations with the Roman Catholic Church would now be moved from the responsibility of the WEF International Director (where they had lain since the beginning), and would now come under the direct control of the TC. He hoped this arrangement would make for smoother and more efficient administration.

Publications was one area in which there was a more positive outlook. After the multiple additions to the monograph series in 1993, the full length book of the 1992 consultation, *The Unique Christ in our Pluralistic World* would appear in October 1994, and work on the book from the consultation on the Evangelization of the Poor (1993) was well advanced.

The biggest matter facing the TC Executive was the next general meeting and consultation, which were scheduled for 1996 when the 10th

3 The papers were published in *ERT* Vol 20 No 1 (Jan 1996).

4 *ERT* Vol 19 No 2 (April 1995).

WEF General Assembly would meet. Due to restrictions on the amount of time Dr Ro was able to give to TC matters, Dr Bruce Nicholls was appointed to organize the consultation, and his initial proposals about speakers and funding were endorsed. Dr David Parker of Australia was also appointed as an assistant to Dr Nicholls for the consultation organization in addition to his work with *ERT*.

The Chairman, Dr Peter Kuzmič, was also struggling to find time to devote to TC work because he was increasingly involved in the worsening military and political conditions in his homeland area. He was also much in demand as an international speaker and now had responsibilities as a professor at Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, Boston, USA, where he had taken up a prestigious appointment in 1993.

Over the next few months, interest was focused mainly on preparations for the 1996 consultation, other activities having seriously declined. Dr Paul Schrotenboer was looking for a decision from the TC Executive on the next stage of the talks with the Roman Catholic Church. The Ethics and Society Unit was planning for a further consultation to be held in Korea early in 1996 on the vexed topic of bribery, but because of organizational problems, it failed to eventuate. *TN* appeared again in early 1995 after a year's break and there was some hope of better publishing arrangements after top level talks in March and April 1995 between WEF and Paternoster (which was by now the theological publishing arm of the STL group within Operation Mobilization). The ICAA developed an increasing sense of purpose, which was reflected

in news that it was considering adopting a new name that would be more descriptive of its functions as an autonomous full service organization.

New focus at Prague

These developments meant that decisive action was required by the TC Executive when it met next in Prague, April 3-5, 1995. It was a small session, with only five members present, apologies being received from Ward Gasque, Bong Ho Son and Bishop Gbonigi. Roger Kemp represented the ICAA. Dr Jun Vencer, WEF International Director, was present to reinforce his views about the new vision and strategies for the TC, and to give details about how the commissions were expected to integrate with the forthcoming General Assembly. It was clear that the most important task of the meeting was to focus on organizing a stimulating consultation and to plan for a TC meeting that would provide a launching pad for the revival of the Commission.

With just one year to go, the Executive endorsed the plans which had been developed by Dr Bruce Nicholls and Dr David Parker for a consultation which would have as its theme, 'Faith and Hope for the Future: Towards a vital and coherent theology for the 21st Century'. There was a strong emphasis on gaining the active involvement of TC members with whom there had been little contact for some time; it was also planned to broaden the scope of the TC by attracting representatives from national fellowships and other key theological bodies. It was hoped that these strategies would provide new personnel, effective leadership and a program of activities which would

allow the TC to resume its positive thrust once again.

Decisions were also necessary on the leadership of the TC. Dr Peter Kuzmič's term as Chairman would expire in 1996. Furthermore, Dr Bong Ro was due to take a year's furlough from mid-1995, so it was decided that he would conclude his active involvement as TC Executive Director at that point. Dr David Parker was appointed Honorary Administrator to prepare for the 1996 Consultation and general meeting. Dr Bong Ro would be officially farewelled at the consultation, and honoured for his contribution over a seven year period.

In the first stage of his leadership, he had skilfully balanced several responsibilities and succeeded in giving a great deal of hope for the TC, despite being engaged only on an interim basis. After being appointed on a full time basis and returning to Korea, his passion, energy and vision produced a flood of activity, but from about 1992, new concepts and a variety of influences resulted in a loss of focus. Bong Ro himself gave increasing time to important local activities, which he was able to pursue more fully following his furlough until his retirement in 1999.

The future vitality of the TC now depended on a successful consultation in April 1996 and the appointment of a new Executive Director who could develop its potential, but there was a great deal to be done to prepare the TC for this new opportunity. With Ro's departure on furlough, the TC office in Seoul was closed on 31 July 1995, and a thorough review of the TC organization, finances and programs began. Regular publication of *TN* was contin-

ued in the form of a modest four-page xeroxed edition quarterly.

There was a good response to preparation for the consultation which was originally planned to take place in conjunction with WEF General Assembly (and other Commission meetings) at Minehead, Somerset, UK. This event, in turn, was to be part of the large Spring Harvest convention which took place there every year.

However, a major interruption to preparations occurred in late June 1995 when the WEF administration advised its constituency that it had encountered major financial problems because of the collapse of a pyramid type fund raising scheme in USA.⁵ Furthermore, the GCOWE conference in Seoul, Korea in May 1995 created divided loyalties amongst the constituency for a major world conference. There were also concerns about the cost and other arrangements at the venue in Minehead, UK. The WEF leadership therefore announced that it was postponing the Assembly to some other date and place. This had a major impact on the Commissions which were already well advanced in their planning. The TC decided to go ahead with its Consultation at the same time as originally planned, but at another site. Soon, arrangements were provisionally made to hold it at London Bible College, Northwood, London, 9-15 April, 1996.

By moving to London Bible College, the Theological Commission was

⁵ The collapse of the Foundation for New Era Philanthropy in May 1995 was reported in *Christianity Today* 19 June and 17 July, 1995.

returning to its roots at a crucial time in its history. The first consultation and full meeting ever conducted by the Commission was held at LBC in 1975. The new location and circumstances proved to be advantageous, and as preparations drew to a close early in 1996 and the review of TC administration was completed, there was mounting expectation of an outcome that would match the theme selected for the occasion, 'Faith and Hope for the Future'.

'Faith and Hope for the Future'

The Consultation was attended by about one hundred people from virtually every major area of the world. Many had long associations with the TC, but others were first timers, and a good number represented national Evangelical Fellowships. The aim of the conference was to prepare papers and a final consultation statement analysing contemporary trends in the light of the theme, 'Towards a Vital and Coherent Evangelical Theology for the 21st Century', identifying key issues for evangelical theology and proposing responses on a global basis across a range of topics.

Participants were divided into twelve work groups, one for each of the sub-topics of the theme; they covered the entire range of theology and touched on relevant contemporary issues in fields such as mission, ethics, contextualisation, ecology, discipleship and gender distinctions. It was intended that the findings would provide useful insights for the evangelical public and guidelines for future theo-

logical reflection. In particular, they would provide the essence of a program for the TC Study Units in the following triennium.

The consultation was an outstanding success, and the reports of the working groups produced statements which provided promising materials for future development. The group reports and plenary papers were published in *ERT*.⁶ Participants were encouraged to volunteer to take the process further by forming on-going groups that would continue to meet after the consultation with the intention of producing full sized reports. As it turned out, only one of the groups was able to reach the stage of publication.

With so little activity in the recent past, the main function of the general TC meeting was to plan for the future. The arrival of the outgoing chairman, Peter Kuzmič was delayed because of his involvement in activities related to the political situation in his homeland. It was hoped that the long run down in support for the Scholarship program, which was now virtually defunct, would be reversed by asking the ICAA to take responsibility for it, especially since the program was originally designed as a way of developing the faculty of theological institutions. However, a message from the ICAA which was meeting simultaneously at Moorlands Bible College, Sopley, Dorset, about 100 miles away, indicated that the scheme was not high on its priorities and it was unable to take

6 *ERT* Vol 20 No 4 (Oct 1996) and Vol 21 No 1 (Jan 1997) contained the papers and working group statements.

responsibility for it. So the program was suspended indefinitely, after a life of thirteen years.

A slate of new TC members was proposed, numbering about fifty with a good global coverage, in the pattern that had been established over the years. A new Executive was appointed,⁷ with Dr Rolf Hille of Germany as the chairman. Dr Hille had joined the Executive first in 1986 and had served on several study units. He had been on the faculty of Albrecht Bengel Haus, Tuebingen since 1995, and would soon be made rector of this strategic institution. He was Chairman of the German Evangelical Alliance, and was active in other national and regional theological and evangelical bodies, as well as being a respected member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Wuerttemberg (ELCW), which had long supported the work of WEF and the TC in particular.

Dr Bong Rin Ro concluded his term of service as Executive Director at this conference and was honoured for his work. Dr David Parker's role as Administrator also concluded. However, the Search Committee had not been able to bring forward a nomination for a new Executive Director, so until a new appointment could be made, Dr Hille became Executive Chairman, responsible for both the overall leadership and the day to day

administration of the TC. He soon appointed James Kautt of Tuebingen as his administrative assistant making it possible for him to carry out this demanding dual role as well as maintaining his other responsibilities, especially as head of Bengel Haus.

Other members of the Executive were also expected to share some of the work load. Dr Bruce Nicholls remained as editor of *ERT*, and Dr Hille took temporary responsibility for *TW*. A priority for the Executive was the search for a new Director, who, it was hoped, could be appointed at the next meeting due to be held in conjunction with the rescheduled WEF General Assembly a year later in Canada. A mini-consultation would also be held at that time.

Immediately following the Consultation, two other meetings took place which were intended to boost the work of the TC and its cooperation with the wider WEF family—a gathering of evangelical publishers with the aim of increasing cooperation, especially between western and third world organizations, and an informal joint meeting of Commission leaders. It was hoped that this latter meeting especially would capture some of the intentions behind the original plan of holding the Commission meetings together at Minehead.

During this session, representatives from the accrediting associations announced that ICAA had changed its name to The International Council for Evangelical Theological Education (ICETE—pronounced *eye-set*), which was a better indication of the new function towards which it had been working for several years. It was now officially an organization, operating under the

7 P. Kuzmič, E. Gbonigi, Bong Ho Son concluded their terms of service; R Hille (Germany), P. Arana (Peru), R Daidanso (Chad), and W. Gasque (Canada) continued, and were joined by Judith Gundry-Volf (USA), K. Gnanakan (India) and Bong R. Ro (the former Executive Director, Korea).

auspices of the WEF (not the TC), serving the entire needs of theological education, rather than accreditation alone—as its mission statement put it, ‘Strengthening evangelical theological education through international contact and cooperation’. This meant that ICETE would be free to pursue its own activities while maintaining loose links to WEF. Financially it was hoped that earlier experience would repeat itself when it received greater support as an independent body than when funding was channelled through WEF and TC.

During the consultation and other meetings, there had been many good ideas for the development of the TC, and it seemed as if there had been a genuine recovery of ‘faith and hope for the future’. But it would be a struggle with many setbacks and disappointments before the way forward seemed clear again. ICETE too had found a new vision, but its finances were poor and the General Secretary, Dr Roger Kemp, announced he would soon conclude his service. After he did so in May 1997, completing an eight year term, ICETE was not represented at TC Executive meetings as it had been from its inception. Hence the two organizations began to drift apart, which would once again raise the need for talks to reestablish a closer working relationship.

Revisioning

Pasadena 1996

There was little TC activity during the rest of the year—only one issue of *TN* was published, but new Executive member, Dr Judy Gundry-Volf, was

able to arrange for the Executive to meet in December at Pasadena, California. Ward Gasque, Ken Gnanakan, Judith Gundry-Volf, Bong Ro and Rolf Hille gathered at Fuller Theological Seminary; the WEF leadership was represented for some of the time by Dwight Gibson from the North American office, and Roger Kemp was present for ICETE. This strategic venue provided opportunity for interaction with some important theologians, including Dr Richard Mouw, President of the seminary and Dr William Dyrness; former TC Executive Secretary, Dr Sunand Sumithra who was visiting the seminary and shared details of his current research project.

During the business sessions there began to develop a new vision of the TC as a body networking with other theological associations and institutions, national evangelical fellowships and churches, as well as a group of individuals. The Study Units would be refocused with this new approach in mind. The membership was reviewed and the scholarship program was formally terminated with the hope that the gap might be filled by other organizations, a wish that was more than adequately realized in the rapid growth of the Langham Scholarship scheme.

Although there was little information available from the WEF office about the financial situation, the Executive pressed ahead with a new budget and creative plans for publications, involvement in the 1997 General Assembly program, joint meetings with the Interchurch Relief and Development Alliance (IRDA), and a ‘World Forum on Evangelical Theology’. The situation in Hong Kong after its re-unification with China in 1997 was also a

topic of concern. However, there was no definite progress on the most important question of all—the appointment of a new Executive Director—some general ideas were discussed and various names were suggested but the adoption of a job description would have to wait until the next meeting at the General Assembly in May.

Nevertheless, the ideas for a new vision ventilated at Pasadena were taken a step forward by chairman Dr Rolf Hille and vice-chairman Dr Ken Gnanakan, when they met at Tuebingen in two months later, February 1997. After a period of intense discussion, they drew up a seven-page position paper titled, 'A comprehensive vision for the Theological Commission of the WEF'. The vision centred on the TC being transformed from an established commission of about fifty members into a dynamic international network of theologians and institutions. The emphasis would change from large periodic consultations to flexible ongoing activities, aided by the growing availability of electronic mail and the internet. This paper became the major source of ideas for the next Executive meeting planned to be held just prior to the postponed WEF General Assembly, which was now set down for Abbotsford, near Vancouver, Canada in 6-9 May 1997. The general ideas in this document guided the development of the TC into the years ahead.

Abbotsford 1997

However, arrangements for the TC meeting at the Abbotsford Assembly were thrown into turmoil when the chairman, Dr Hille was struck with a family tragedy immediately prior to the

meeting and was unable to attend. In his absence, informal meetings were held, attended by the other Executive members and several visitors. During the 'think-tank' that this meeting became, the general ideas expressed at the Pasadena meeting and reflected in the 'Comprehensive Vision' paper were studied and supported in principle. It was realized that the TC should focus on its main calling of theological reflection, which meant that subsidiary activities such as theological education and scholarship funding could be left to other bodies, especially ICETE. This represented a considerable change of direction from the policies being considered earlier in the 1990s, in which the focus was more on the training of local church leaders.

Ken Gnanakan was given charge of the study unit program which needed to be refocused to fit in with the new approach. Only one of the groups from the 1996 Consultation was still active, and none of the previous Units was operative. So it was decided to set up a small coordinating group to develop this area of the work.

Arrangements for the TC publications, especially *ERT*, were a matter of considerable attention. It was hoped that with the expansion of the TC's role and changes in its mode of operation, *ERT* would take on added significance, perhaps even with non-English versions, and that an enlargement of its circulation could lead to better subscription pricing. Dr Bruce Nicholls called for urgent action to develop the publications work, but at the same time indicated that he was available as editor only for a further year.

Financial considerations were critical to the implementation of the new

vision, but prospects were not good. It was decided to approach the North American WEF Director for assistance, and consideration was given to introducing membership fees for individuals and institutions. There was still no possibility for the immediate appointment of an Executive Director, so the existing administrative arrangements were maintained.

In an effort to revive the study unit activity which had been so important earlier, Dr Ken Gnanakan met with Dr Paul Murdoch (Germany) and Dr Brian Edgar (Australia) at Wheaton in January 1998. They prepared a wide-ranging report which advocated a dynamic program of interaction between up to 500 theologians using electronic communication in a community atmosphere. They would produce papers and statements relating to immediate concerns facing the evangelical world, ongoing issues relative to local communities and reflecting on evangelical identity. These documents would be circulated in the most efficient means possible and be directed towards the WEF and its membership and constituency, as well as other publications and groups. The team identified five areas on which work could commence immediately under the leadership of TC-related personnel, including the team members themselves. If these plans eventuated, the TC would be well on the way to re-establishing itself with a new updated *modus operandi*.

The long awaited next phase of the WEF/Roman Catholic Church talks were held 12-19 October 1997 at Tan-tur Ecumenical Institute in Jerusalem on the theme, 'The nature and mission of the church'. Increasing mutual confidence between the two partners was

reflected in the fact that for the first time a communiqué about this meeting was published.⁸

Tuebingen 1998

By the time of the next Executive Committee meeting, held at Tuebingen, Germany 28 May to 2 June 1998,⁹ there was considerable expectation that the worst was behind the TC. Publication of *TW* had resumed under the leadership of Dr Ken Gnanakan with regular four-page issues appearing quarterly throughout 1997. Dr David Parker was appointed editor of *ERT* to replace Dr Bruce Nicholls who would retire at the end of the year. However, by this time, the need for a full time Executive Director was becoming urgent. Notices placed in *TW* and elsewhere resulted in several enquiries. Preliminary steps were being taken for another general consultation to be held in 1999.

The major business was the adoption of the new concept for the structure and work of the TC, and some of the ideas in the report of the Wheaton task force. This meant the TC would be seen as a large representative community of theologians endorsed by their

⁸ The communiqué and papers were published both in the *ERT* Vol 23 No 1 (Jan 1999) and *One in Christ*, Vol 35 No 1 (1999), pp. 11-92.

⁹ Present were Executive members R. Hille, K. Gnanakan, Bong Ro, Ward Gasque and Pedro Arana. There were also seven invited guests including B. J. Nicholls and D. Parker, and others who were potential TC members or contributors to its study program. D. Gibson, North American WEF Director represented the WEF International Director.

national fellowships which would work primarily through study groups and dynamic task forces. There would be a core group of about twenty-five representing a regional cross-section and able to network effectively in their own areas who would take responsibility and give time to specific aspects of the work. An executive of five plus the Executive Director and WEF International Director would supervise policy and business.

The Ecumenical Issues Task Force was the object of special attention due to news of a serious decline in the health of its long-time convenor, Dr Paul Schrotenboer. It was agreed that the momentum of previous activities be not lost. Accordingly, Dr George Vandervelde (Canada), who had been involved over a lengthy period, was appointed as the new convenor with approval to continue the talks later in the year. Only a few weeks later Dr. Paul Schrotenboer died. His deep commitment to the process was reflected in the fact that throughout the whole series of meetings he was struggling with his health and in the latter stages, physical disability.

However, despite these positive and forward-looking plans, the financial situation was still dismal. The appointment of a Director was critical to the success of efforts towards renewal, but there was no chance of paying a salary; it was hoped that this would not be necessary as all the previous appointees had been supported by outside sources.

New Director

Efforts prior to and also during the Executive meeting to find a suitable appointee were unsuccessful. But

some progress was made when it was realized that Dr James Stamoolis, who was about to conclude as Dean of Wheaton Graduate School, might be available. He was well known to some of the members already, and in addition, was a TC member and had been leading the Orthodox Task Force. Previously he had been Theological Student Fellowship Secretary for the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES), which gave him responsibility for assisting the national Christian student associations in more than a hundred countries. For several years prior to his IFES work, he had worked in mission appointments in theological education in South Africa. During this time he gained his doctorate from the University of Stellenbosch specializing in Eastern Orthodox missiology.

This background made him an attractive candidate, so negotiations were opened up with him, on the assurances of the North American office and himself that funds could be raised from new sources for his support and for the general TC budget. The TC Chairman welcomed the possibility of appointing Dr Stamoolis, but realistically offered only limited financial support from TC sources as a bridge until the new funding was found. According to WEF procedures, Jun Vencer as International Director then proceeded to make the appointment. The new Director took up his position in October 1998, thus ending a gap of more than three years since the last director had concluded his activities. Living in Wheaton, Stamoolis was able to relate closely to the North American WEF office, headed by Dwight Gibson, located at nearby Carol Stream.

Now it was expected that plans for the new core group, study units, networks and consultations that had been developed at meetings going back to Pasadena December 1996 would begin to materialise. Dr Hille could step back from the dual role of Chairman and Administrator. Using a system described by Dr Ken Gnanakan as 'Cyberlogue', it was hoped to make increased use of internet facilities for networking of theologians by expanding the TC web-site set up two years earlier by David Parker. Parker also took over as *ERT* editor from the January 1998 issue, with an increasing focus on the journal as a forum of the now flourishing global evangelical theological scholarship. However, it was more difficult to tackle the continuing problems of high subscription costs and lower circulation than desired—problems that Dr Stamoolis began to address.

The next opportunity to develop and focus the work was at the Executive meeting held in Jamaica in February 1999; it was held at this location to take advantage of the opportunity to network with members of the WEA leadership and also of the Caribbean Evangelical Association who would all be meeting there at the time. Although the meeting was poorly attended, the new Director was able to review in detail the work of the TC with the officers who were present. WEF officials who were attending other meetings at the same venue helped with an analysis of finances and related matters. Dr David Parker, attending as *ERT* Editor, was confirmed as editor since Dr Stamoolis was not intending to take over this aspect of the work; Dr Parker was also appointed to the Executive.

Dr Stamoolis took charge of the Study Units, in association with Dr Hille and Dr Gnanakan. One satisfying feature was the report that the eschatology group from the London consultation, led by Dr Jochen Eber (Switzerland) was close to publishing its book. There was also productive discussion about the talks proceeding with the Roman Catholic Church and preliminary ideas were aired about similar meetings with the Orthodox.

Wide ranging projects

The Jamaica meeting laid the groundwork for the continued development of the TC under an Executive Director who could give the program focus, purpose and continuity along the lines previously developed. During the subsequent months, Dr Stamoolis became involved in a number of other activities on behalf of the WEF. One of these was the Global Consultation on Evangelical Missiology organized by WEF Missions Commission at Iguassu, Brazil in October 1999. Another was an international leadership conference organized by WEF and held in Larnaca, Cyprus in 21-24 February 2000, in which, at the direction of the WEF leadership, he took a key role in planning and leadership.

Perhaps the most far reaching of these activities was the Conference of Itinerant Evangelists sponsored by Billy Graham, to be held in Amsterdam in August 2000, involving 10,000 participants. Dr Stamoolis believed that the theology track of this conference provided a strategic opportunity to advance the work of the TC in the area where it needed to be seen, the grass-roots level of the church worldwide.

Hence he was keen to see members of the TC involved as much as possible, and made strong representations along these lines to Dr Jim Packer who was responsible for this track.

In addition to this, Dr Stamoolis became involved in the preparation of a CD-ROM for distribution to participants to promote the ministry of WEF and as a useful ministry tool. There had been general discussion in the TC about the possibility of putting TC publications on CD for easy and cost-effective circulation. Due to the destruction of most of the early stock of *ERT* and other publications in the Paternoster fire in 1990, it was an attractive proposition to consider having this material available again in such a handy form. The WEF leadership also saw benefits in the CD-ROM, which eventually contained much more than TC material—a number of books from the WEF itself, some from the Missions Commission, a range of Bibles and other theological books and documents. Finally, 12,000 copies of the CD were distributed freely to all the participants, where it was a great success. To comply with licensing arrangements, a new, slightly different version was prepared for commercial release, and 2000 copies were produced for release later in the year. Funding of this very costly venture was to come from special appeals and revenue from sales, but a large deficit resulted, even though sales were brisk.

The serious financial and structural difficulties being encountered by the WEF organization at the time meant that the TC was obliged to carry this heavy load. This was exacerbated by the need for ongoing financial support for the Executive Director's salary due to the absence of the expected funding

from other sources. This left the TC in an even more difficult situation financially. Progress on the other areas of its work like Study Units, Core Group development, networking and consultations was limited, and there was no movement either on improved publication arrangements for *ERT*, despite considerable effort. Dr Stamoolis' vision for the TC was to make it a 'force to be recognized' globally, and he wanted to bring its operations closer to the life of the churches. This he believed would make it not only more attractive to funding agencies but also more effective in its role as a WEF commission. But these were long term goals which were not always well understood by others, and so far there was little tangible result from his efforts.

The third session of the WEF/Roman Catholic Church talks was held 7-13 November 1999; at the invitation of WEF they were held at Williams Bay, Wisconsin, USA. By this time it was agreed to proceed with these meetings on a regular basis. This session focused on the theme of the church as communion, and included papers on the important related issues of religious freedom, common witness and proselytism. An important development was the visits by all members of the group to evangelical institutions such as Wheaton College, the Billy Graham Centre and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School on the one hand, and a Roman Catholic seminary in Chicago on the other hand.

Consolidation and Vision at Vancouver 2000

The next time the Executive met to review progress was 29 June—1 July 2000 at Regent College, Vancouver, Canada.¹⁰ The Amsterdam conference was soon approaching, so much of Dr Stamoolis's attention was focused on this event, although apart from the CD-ROM project there would not be much opportunity for direct TC involvement. However, the general direction of the TC was consolidated through a review of a paper prepared by Dr Rolf Hille as chairman, 'The Fundamental Strategy of the TC in the future', which summarised existing thinking. Building on earlier statements, it presented a view of the unique niche into which the TC could fit, bearing in mind the many theological organizations already active at local, national and regional levels, and the limited resources of the TC. It also took account of the role of ICETE as a WEF-related organization devoted to the area of theological education.

This relationship was confirmed in talks between ICETE and the TC chairman, Dr Rolf Hille, in October 2001. This meeting, which was a resumption of formal discussions which had taken place from time to time over many years, issued a statement reaffirming that the two bodies saw themselves as 'distinct entities serving parallel functions within the WEA's objectives and mission' and that they recognized 'distinct but adjacent tasks and the benefit of partnering in specific ways'. It recommitted the TC and ICAA to

mutual cooperation and joint activity wherever possible. It also restored the idea of official representation at each other's executive meetings 'for ongoing liaison'. It was hoped that this statement would 'adequately address any concerns within WEA that some lingering confusion or tension has been operative between these two WEA bodies'.¹¹ The Vancouver TC meeting also heard Dr Stamoolis outline his understanding of his role and of his vision for the TC.

The immediate outcome of this review by the chairman and the Executive Director was the development of an agreed vision statement which consolidated ideas about the work of the TC itself that had been crystallising over recent meetings. This new statement summed up the main purpose of the TC in this slogan: '*to promote biblical truth by networking theologians to serve the church in obedience to Christ*'. It explained that the TC would achieve this goal by internationalizing theological frameworks, encouraging original theological reflection and research, defending and confirming the gospel, focusing discussion on practical and relevant themes in varied contexts, and by articulating biblical truth in forms accessible to all Christians.

The means used would be networking evangelical theological organizations and theologians worldwide, organizing theological reflection teams,

10 R. Hille attended, with K. Gnanakan, W. Gasque, and D. Parker.

11 Letter of agreement 2 Feb 2002 addressed to the chairman, WEA International Council, jointly signed by ICETE and TC; the document also addressed ICETE's relationship to WEA in that it did not fit easily into either the category of Commission or of Affiliate.

task forces, study groups, dialogue groups and other international gatherings, and disseminating theological reflection about biblical truth in clear and concise formats for use by the church at all levels.

In the process the TC would establish effective communicative networks of theologians, educators and church leaders; it would partner with regional and national Evangelical Fellowships of Theologians to sponsor joint conferences, plan joint publications and foster exchange of theological educators, and with other organizations that are involved in theological education, dissemination of literature and student scholarship programs. It would also form strategic alliances with organizations that share its goals and objectives, mobilize volunteers, part-time staff and recruit other full-time staff to work toward agreed goals, and engage in a vigorous program of research and publications of topics to apply biblical understanding to relevant problems facing the churches in their ministry. Despite this clear vision of its future ministry, there was still uncertainty about the organizational structures and accountability relationships between the TC, its Executive Director and the WEF leadership.

Throughout the Vancouver meetings, many useful suggestions were made for networking with evangelical bodies and theologians. The understanding was that the Executive Director would follow up with contacts and visits aimed at establishing good relationships and seeking out potential members of the TC and its Study Units.

In the meantime, the next year's program was decided. Of particular importance was the WEF General

Assembly to be held in Kuala Lumpur. It was hoped that many theologians expected to be present could be attracted to take an interest in the work of the TC. A mini-consultation was planned to precede the Assembly, and there would be joint sessions in the Assembly program with the Commission on Women's Concerns. The Study Unit program was again reviewed, with decisions made about further ecumenical talks, a project on environmental issues, a series of conferences on Church and Education, and the revision of the WEF statement of faith. Publications again received considerable attention. Dr David Parker was appointed to the additional post of editor of *Theological News*, with the task of re-establishing the journal which had not appeared for some time.¹²

The fourth meeting of the WEF/Roman Catholic talks took place at Mundelein, Illinois, 18-24 February, 2001. The evolution of this dialogue was reflected in the fact that for the first time it had before it an initial draft of a common text, namely, on the theme of *koinonia* (fellowship), developed by Avery Dulles in cooperation with Henry Blocher. Another text, prepared by Dr. Thomas Oden, gathered representative materials from previous dialogue documents on the themes of religious liberty and proselytism. This and a number of brief theses reflecting on this material, prepared by Rev. John Haughey, S.J., were discussed as well. The next meeting, the final one in the current series, would follow in a year's time

¹² Publication of *TN* resumed again in January 2001, as a 4-page xeroxed quarterly; only one issue had appeared since Dec 1998.

Ecclesiology at Kuala Lumpur 2001

The mini-consultation prior to the 2001 General Assembly arranged by the Executive Director was held May 2-3, 2001 on the subject of ecclesiology, to coincide with the Assembly theme. It was a loosely organized event, more in the nature of round-table with a flexible program than a normal consultation with plenary and group work arranged on a formal timetable. About 18 people attended various sessions, some of whom were new to the TC; their presence provided a fresh and hopeful dynamic, especially those who had connections with NEFs and other significant theological bodies in their home areas. Seven papers were presented, several of which were later published in *ERT*,¹³ and a valuable brain-storming session gathered ideas for TC work from participants at the consultation.

In addition to the mini-consultation, the TC conducted several sessions in the Assembly program. Two of them were joint sessions with the Commission on Women's Concerns, in which they launched books and papers and made a highly significant statement on the problem of the abuse of women.¹⁴

There were also two open sessions

conducted by the TC, the first explaining its work and seeking to attract interest from Assembly participants. Dr Ken Gnanakan spoke about his interest in environmental stewardship and announced details of a study project on the topic, which gained several responses. The other session was a seminar on globalisation led by Dr Donald Tinder. All four of these sessions were well attended and generated considerable sympathy and support for the TC.

Director concludes

The General Assembly signalled the end of a term for the TC and its Executive. However, there was no general meeting because the membership system was now defunct since it had not been followed up from the last general meeting in 1996. Only three of the seven members of the Executive appointed at that time were still active; they, with other invited guests, discussed business between consultation and other sessions.¹⁵

The starting point was the confirmation of the role and vision of the TC previously developed in Tuebingen in 1998, and finalised in Vancouver in 2000. This saw the TC as a global network with a central representative core group carrying the focus of the

¹³ Papers from the TC Consultation and the Assembly appeared in *ERT* Vol 25 No 4 (Oct 2001); Vol 26 No 1 (Jan 2002); Vol 26 No 2 (April 2002), and Vol 27 No 1 (Jan 2003).

¹⁴ These sessions featured Mrs Lynn Smith, Dr Catherine Clark Kroeger and Dr Nancy Nason-Clark for CWC and Dr T. Oden for the TC. The volume *No Place for Abuse* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001) by Kroeger and Nason-Clark was also launched.

¹⁵ Attended by the three official members, R. Hille (Chair), K. Gnanakan (Vice-Chair) and D. Parker (Editor) along with J. Stamooolis, Executive Director. An apology was received from W. Gasque whose involvement in the Executive concluded with this session. G. Vandervelde (convenor Ecumenical Issues), D. Hilborn (UK) and B.J. Nicholls were present as guests.

work, supported by specific study units, task forces and publications. The most serious business, however, was the financial situation which was now extremely critical due to the large expense associated with salary payments and the CD-ROM project.

It was obvious to all that the TC was in an extremely difficult position. After much consideration it was decided that Dr Stamoolis would conclude his service as Executive Director forthwith, after three years in the position. There were also implications in this situation for relationships between the TC and the WEF organization, but they were not resolved, not least because the WEF itself was entering on a period of organizational uncertainty at the same time. Of necessity, therefore, Dr Rolf Hille resumed his previous dual role of Executive Chair and various aspects of the work would be shared among the remaining members. Dr George Vandervelde (Canada, convenor of the Ecumenical Task Force) and Dr David Hilborn (Director of the UK EA Theological Commission) were added to the Executive, making five in all, with approaches to other potential members to be made as soon as possible.

One element of the program which was deliberately retained was the long running series of talks with the Roman Catholic Church which were now expected to come to a conclusion in sessions set for early in 2002. The Orthodox dialogue mooted for many years was now not likely to occur for the present time due to Dr Stamoolis' departure. The Environmental stewardship study initiated earlier by Dr Ken Gnanakan was also endorsed again.

Regrouping amidst setbacks

At the end of this decisive TC meeting, re-grouping was starting to take effect, providing good hope for future. Plans for the following year's program, a joint consultation with the Fellowship of European Evangelical Theologians (FEET), were endorsed and preliminary plans were laid for the program for the following year.

Later in 2001, Dr David Parker was scheduled to visit Korea to promote the work of the TC during participation in theological consultations there. He would also represent the TC at the General Assembly of the ATA when Dr Ken Gnanakan would conclude twenty years' leadership of that body. Dr Parker would also represent the TC at the biennial meeting of the South Pacific Association of Bible Colleges and discuss with them the proposal to hold a joint conference in 2003.

One other positive sign towards the end of the year was the publication of the book, *Hope Does Not Disappoint*, by the Eschatology Study Unit from the 1996 London consultation, headed by Dr Jochen Eber, then of Chrischona Seminary, Basel, Switzerland. This was conceived as a textbook on the model of the successful Carson Faith and Church Study Unit volumes, and accessible to a wide range of readers, especially students beginning their theological studies. It featured sixteen writers from all continents.¹⁶

In late 2001, as the constructive ini-

¹⁶ Jochen Eber (editor), *Hope Does Not Disappoint: Studies in Eschatology—Essays from different contexts* (Bangalore: TBT, 2001) and published in Germany by Verlag fuer Kultur und Wissenschaft.

tiatives from the Kuala Lumpur meeting were beginning to be implemented, the most serious problem of all occurred. The WEF was in the process of a radical restructuring following reports at its recent General Assembly of a critical financial situation and the end of Jun Vencer's term as International Director. Because of its deficit arising from the unexpected salary payments and the unrecouped costs of the CD-ROM project, TC finances were frozen by the WEA leadership, suspending most operations. Only generous special private funding by long term friends of the TC prevented a complete close down, including the publications.

In this unexpected and critical context it was even suggested by one senior WEA leader that the TC should change from being a WEA Commission to become an independent body with affiliate status. The idea of expanding into an international evangelical theological association in some form had been under consideration by the TC leadership already for some time, but it was finally concluded that any advantage such an arrangement might bring would be outweighed by the need for the WEA to support a theological commission and for the TC to serve the WEA constituency as it had done since its inception. However, this idea would soon come back onto the agenda.

After considerable discussion in the ensuing months, during which some misunderstandings were clarified, the suspension of TC finances was lifted in mid-2002, enabling its operations to resume. However, finances were still severely restricted requiring tight controls on all expenditure.

The WEF also made progress with its restructuring, appointing a Secre-

tary-General as the chief administrator. The appointee, who took up the position from July 2002, was Gary L. Edmonds, who had previously served with the development organization, Interdev; he had also been a pastor in USA and European director of Christian Associates International. He set up his office in Seattle, USA, and other offices in Singapore and Wheaton were closed. The name of the organization, now representing over one million local churches in 110 nations, was also changed to World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) to better represent its nature as a cooperative body.

The WEF/Roman Catholic talks, which had extended over almost a decade, were finalised at a session held at Swanwick, England, 17-26 February, 2002. Significant changes had taken place in both sponsoring bodies in the time between the previous meeting and this one. Three new participants on the WEA side attended for the first time: Dr. Rolf Hille, TC Chairman, Dr. David Hilborn, Theological Advisor to the Evangelical Alliance UK, and Rev. Carlos Rodríguez Mansur, *Fraternidad Teológica Latinoamericana* in Brazil. The Consultation had before it an integrated draft of a proposed common report, and aimed at bringing it to a completed form. The text achieved at the end of the week included two main parts. Part I focused on convergences between Catholics and Evangelicals on *koinonia*; and Part II on the relationship of *koinonia* to evangelization.

It was agreed that the completed report would be presented to the sponsoring bodies requesting approval for its publication as a 'study document' in the hope that 'it may be widely discussed'. It was stressed that it was

'not an authoritative declaration' of either of sponsoring bodies, both of which themselves would 'evaluate' it. The completion of this text brought a phase of conversations to a close. As they finalised the session, the participants expressed the hope that this consultation between the World Evangelical Alliance and the Catholic Church would continue.

Global perspective in Germany 2002

One strand in the TC's new strategy was to hold conferences in cooperation with other theological groups. The first of these was a joint conference with FEET at Woelmersen, Germany in 16-20 August 2002. About one hundred people, including the regular FEET participants and members of the TC, focused on the theme, 'European Theology in World Perspective,' featuring speakers from Europe and many areas of the developing world. Most of the papers from this highly successful venture were published in *ERT*¹⁷, and the positive experience confirmed the value of the strategy.

The value of the conference was further enhanced by the fact that ICETE also held its Executive meeting at the same site prior to the main conference and some participants stayed on to share in it. This allowed some consolidation of the relationships between the two bodies which had been re-affirmed at the October 2001 meeting. The TC agreed that its next cooperative conference would be with ICETE in 2003.

Moving on

The annual TC Executive meeting which took place 20-22 August 2002, following the TC/FEET conference, was of crucial importance. It presented the first opportunity to make a definite start to the process of rebuilding the TC in the new environment it faced, now that the financial and personnel crises which had dogged it so continuously in recent years were apparently in the past. However, the financial settlement with WEF left the TC in a difficult position, which made the organization even more grateful to the ELCW for its continued faithful support.

The Executive meeting was attended by the TC members plus several guests, but the WEF leadership was not represented. The new structure of a working core group was formally endorsed, thus officially ending the old arrangement of a larger membership panel, and terminating the uncertainty about the status of those who had been slated for membership in 1996. Dr Brian Edgar (Australia) and Dr Tom Oden (USA) were added to the new core group which now constituted the TC membership. Other names, especially from Africa, Latin America and Asia, would be added as soon as possible to complete the global perspective.

A program of activities was also adopted, contingent on finance and personnel, which included study units, publications, dialogues and a 'rapid response task force'. It was decided that large scale conferences should be held in conjunction with future WEA Assemblies.

One further area of development taken up was renewed cooperation

17 See *ERT* Vol 27 No 3 (Jul 2003); Vol 27 No 4 (Oct 2003).

with the Lausanne movement, especially in its Forum on World Evangelization planned for Pattya, Thailand in October 2004. Dr Hille had accepted an invitation to become co-chair of the LCWE's Theology Working Group in the spirit of the new vision for the TC which had been forged at its Vancouver meeting two years earlier, calling for it to make 'strategic alliances with organizations that share our goals and objectives'. The Executive made a number of suggestions about the Forum program and built official participation in the Forum into the TC program for 2004.

There was also endorsement of various initiatives in the area of TC publications, including *ERT*, *TN* and electronic publishing. Dr George Vandervelde was appointed as convenor of dialogues, a position which would include both the existing talks with the Roman Catholic Church (which were approaching a critical point in their progress) and others that were under consideration.

Although it was recognized that many of these initiatives were of a long-term nature and that the financial basis of TC was still critical, the meetings ended on a buoyant and positive note. As an act of faith, a process was even established for the appointment of a new Executive Director. Members felt that major steps had been taken to re-establish the TC, and that the future would soon see the fruit born of the years of difficulty. The next meeting was set to coincide with the ICETE consultation exactly a year ahead, in which TC members would also participate.

Less than a month after this decisive session, there was another signif-

icant development from the WEA. The International Council announced that it had appointed its Secretary-General, Gary Edmonds, as acting Executive Director of the TC. Although Edmonds already had an onerous and demanding responsibility in guiding the WEA as it restructured and re-financed itself, Dr Hille was hopeful that this new development would be advantageous for the work of TC and also ease the heavy administrative load which he carried in addition to his work as head of an important theological institution in Germany. He envisaged that the Secretary-General would be of great assistance in relations with the WEA, and especially in the crucial area of fundraising.

Dr Hille's own role now would be caring for the business sessions, coordinating the joint conferences, maintaining contact with theologians around the world (including the recruitment of additional participants in the TC program), and contributing to the publications. It was also hoped that individual members of the TC could take specific responsibility for various aspects of the program, perhaps on an honorarium basis. The details of the new arrangement would be worked out in discussions between Hille and Edmonds in ensuing months.

During the year further developments in the renewed growth of the TC took place. At the invitation of Dr Hille, Dr Wilson Chow (Hong Kong) re-joined the TC. Dr Hille travelled twice to Asia and Pacific, visiting seminaries and making contact with individuals and local evangelical fellowships to promote the work of the TC; he also shared in planning for the LCWE Pattya Forum 2004. Working with Dr Hilborn

there was also progress on the revision of the revision of the WEA statement of faith. As Director of Publications, Dr Parker continued with *ERT* and *TN*, and also arranged to bring the CD ROM (which had sold out) back into limited production, and to update its contents.

Expansion in 2003

Although there had been some uncertainty about the way the TC would operate in the light of the unexpected action of the WEF IC in appointing an acting Executive Director, expectations were high for the 2003 meeting of the TC to be held in conjunction with the ICETE consultation, 18-22 August. Originally planned for Kiev, Ukraine, the venue was changed to the Wycliffe Centre near High Wycombe, UK for practical reasons. It attracted a capacity crowd of more than 150, and featured a quality program, with some high profile international speakers; the theme centred on paradigm shifts in global tertiary education and their implications for theological education.¹⁸

Almost all of the TC members attended the Executive meeting held prior to the consultation. In addition, there were two theologians from the Korea Evangelical Theological Society in attendance by invitation with a view to the appointment of one of their nom-

inees to the TC. Subsequently, Dr Jae Sung Kim, of Hapdong Theological Seminary, was added to the TC membership, bringing the total to eight, with vacancies for representatives from Africa and Latin America to be filled as soon as possible.

For the first time in many years, the WEF leadership was represented at a TC meeting in the person of the Secretary General, Gary Edmonds, whose contribution facilitated discussion, especially on matters concerning relations between the TC and WEA. Being more familiar now with the work of the TC, he was happy to relinquish his role as interim Executive Director.

Concrete plans for the future were developed, focusing first on the involvement in the LCWE Pattya Forum in 2004, followed by a joint-consultation and meeting in Korea with the KETS in 2005, leading to a full scale consultation the following year.

There was a positive report on progress in Dr Ken Gnanakan's Environment Stewardship study project, which was authorised for publication. It was also decided to develop a unit, coordinated by Dr David Hilborn, to provide the WEF with brief statements on urgent theological issues facing the global evangelical constituency. Ken Gnanakan was also authorised to work with Gary Edmonds in developing ideas on large scale projects dealing with major theological and related issues such as HIV/AIDS, pluralism, family and gender, which would integrate with the activities of other WEF Commissions and agencies. Initial ideas for another task force on Jewish evangelism were also endorsed.

The possibility of further ecumenical talks were reviewed, although

¹⁸ ICETE adopted a new mission statement at these meetings: 'The mission of ICETE is to promote excellence and renewal in evangelical theological education worldwide by cultivating community and facilitating collaboration among its constituent associations and related entities.'

progress stalled on the publication of the final report of the talks with the Roman Catholic Church due to the uncertainties which arose at the May 2003 WEA International Council meeting. The papers were published later in two Roman Catholic periodicals.¹⁹

A major centre of attention was the involvement of TC members in a joint track with ICETE personnel during the subsequent Consultation on the theological basis for theological education. In a three day program, several present and former TC members helped create the groundwork for an ongoing task force of TC and ICETE members to develop one of the themes of the ICETE Manifesto which calls for a 'theological grounding' for theological education. Papers from this group were planned for publication in 2005 when they are to be distributed widely and used as the basis for further development of the evangelical theological education globally, especially through ICETE and TC networks.²⁰

On the organizational side, it was decided to appoint Dr David Parker as Director of Administration (in addition to his work with publications), thus relieving Dr Hille of much of the day to day work and making it easier for him to continue his role as Executive Chair.

A New Role after Thirty Years

Following the High Wycombe meeting, the rest of the year was spent implementing these forward-looking decisions, although poor finances limited the degree of progress quite severely. Ken Gnanakan continued to make progress with his environmental book and prepared submissions on the integrated study projects and a family project initiated by Gary Edmonds. David Hilborn and George Vandervelde worked on ecumenical issues, while initial ideas on the Jewish evangelism task force began to take shape. David Parker visited South Africa to represent the TC at an ACTEA conference on HIV/AIDS and took the opportunity to meet with key evangelical leaders there and in Singapore. In mid-2004, he carried out the same function in Seoul, Korea while attending other meetings. Several TC members became actively involved in preparation for the Lausanne Forum on World Evangelisation, and planning began for the joint-meeting with the Lausanne Theology Working Group to be held prior to the Forum.

However, the most important move of all came in February 2004 when the WEA Executive announced a plan that would carry forward the ongoing process of restructuring the organization to a further radical degree. One of the main elements of this plan was to do away with its commissions by changing them into independent bodies known as 'affiliates' that would not be integrated into the WEA structure as before. For the TC, this suddenly brought back into view the possibility of creating an 'international evangelical theological society' to link theo-

¹⁹ Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU) *Information Service*, N. 113 2003/II/III, pp. 85-101; *Origins* (Conference of Catholic Bishops in the U.S.) 16 Oct 2003 Vol. 33, No. 19, pp. 310-320.

²⁰ Dr B. Edgar, Dr D. Hilborn for the TC and Dr L. McKinney for ICETE were appointed to head this project.

gians and institutions around the world. This idea had been considered quite seriously a few years before, only to be rejected. However, in this new context it became a critical option with far-reaching implications, the full extent of which could only be imagined at the outset.

Whatever the ultimate outcome of this new move by the WEA, the work of revisioning the TC which had been so successfully taking place over the last few years would need to be revisited. It was clear that the organization would have to find significantly different ways of pursuing its original goal of helping its evangelical constituency 'discern the obedience of faith'. The task of 'defending, confirming and extending the gospel' on a global level was more complex in the early 21st century than it had been thirty years before when the TC was first established. However, there had been a rapid growth in the numbers of insightful theologians in all parts of the world who could contribute to the task. Furthermore, the advent of vastly improved communications, travel and publication methods provided new and effective means 'to advance biblical truth through networking of theologians'.

Although there were many theological institutions and initiatives at local and regional levels around the world, there was still the conviction that the global evangelical family represented in bodies like the WEA and the Lausanne movement needed a coordinated means of engaging in intense theologi-

cal reflection from an international perspective. Experience had shown that such a body could serve the worldwide evangelical movement by helping it develop sound theological foundations and by challenging it to grow in faith and understanding to meet the times of strategic opportunity that it faced.²¹

The Theological Commission of the World Evangelical Fellowship/Alliance

Theological Assistance Program (TAP)—established 1968
Theological Commission—established 1974

Chairmen of the Executive Committee

Dr Byang Kato 1975
Dr Arthur Clemenhagen 1975-1980
Dr David Gitari 1980-1986
Dr Peter Kuzmič 1986-1996
Dr. Rolf Hille 1996-

Executive Secretaries/Directors

Dr Bruce J. Nicholls 1969-1986
Dr Sunand Sumithra (1986-89)
Dr Bong Rin Ro 1990-1996 (acting 1989-90) on furlough 1995-96
Dr James J. Stamoolis 1998-2001

Administrators

Dr David Parker 1995-6, 2003-
Dr Rolf Hille 1996-98, 2001-3

²¹ See the TC web page for current activities <http://www.worldevangelical.org/theology.html>

Forty Years On: The Evolution Of Theological Education By Extension (TEE)

Patricia J. Harrison

KEYWORDS: *Ministry, seminary, Bible school, distance education, programmed instruction, field education, contextualisation*

Genesis

In the early 1960s the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Guatemala faced an enviable problem: their churches were growing too fast to provide adequate shepherding for their flocks.¹ The theological college simply could not keep up with the demand for trained pastors, so congregations often

had to make do with untrained leaders, *functional pastors*. Their problem was replicated in a number of Latin American Protestant Churches at the time. These pastors were usually mature men who could not leave their jobs and their families for years of training in a city seminary. Searching for creative solutions, the Presbyterians first decided to move their seminary from the capital to the village of San Felipe in a rural area nearer to many of their churches. However, they soon discovered that leaders in need of training could no more leave jobs and families to attend a seminary twenty miles away than one two hundred miles away.

Undeterred, the Seminary staff and faculty concluded that if the students could not come to the seminary, the seminary must go to the students. So in rural Guatemala in 1962, Theological

¹ I am reliant on memory for many of the historical references in this article and would appreciate correction of any factual errors. Too many people were involved in the development of TEE to name them all; I mention those best known to me and regret any important, unintentional omissions.

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Education by Extension (TEE) was born. In time, the number of extension students far outnumbered those in the residential program, and those being trained were primarily those who had demonstrated their commitment to ministry. Ralph Winter and James Emery designed and commenced the program; Ross Kinsler, Benjamin and Nelly Jacobs, Jose Carrera, Baudilio Recinos, Charles Ainley and others were soon to contribute much to its development. They never dreamed their model of theological education would reverberate around the world.

Exodus

The TEE model could not be long confined to one small country. Word spread quickly across Latin America through mission and denominational networks. Others wondered whether TEE might solve some of their problems. One of the earliest programs was in Bolivia, where Ray Morris of the then Andes Evangelical Mission was a prime mover. In 1967 the TEE concept caught the imagination of participants in a conference of theological educators in Armenia, Colombia, and similar programs soon sprang up across Central and South America. Innovative variations on the original model emerged, such as the Conservative Baptist program for marginally-literate peasant farmers involved in church planting in Honduras.

By the early 1970s the new extension model was spreading rapidly across Asia, Africa and the Pacific. The TEE concept was spread by word of mouth and print within missions and denominations, by papers and discussion at international conferences, and

by the many seminars and workshops staffed by international and regional organizations, notably the WEF (now WEA) Theological Commission and the EFMA/IFMA Committee to Assist Missionary Education Overseas (CAMEO—later, Committee to Assist Ministry Education Overseas). These were generally sponsored by local organizations, such as the Asia Theological Association, the Association of Evangelicals of Africa and Madagascar, and national Evangelical Alliances. Later the WCC Programme on Theological Education (now Ecumenical Theological Education) became involved, spreading the word among a different constituency.

The pioneers of TEE soon realized they were developing not just a method for training more people, but a radical new concept of theological education. However, the significance of this was not always grasped by those who adopted the model. TEE was sometimes adopted more as an emergency measure to cope with unprecedented church growth, or because it was seen as cheap leadership training. Limited goals and understanding accounted for some of the problems subsequently encountered.

Chronicles

In the 1970s and '80s the number of new TEE programs exploded as more and more churches and missions became involved. Initially, most were in the developing world and most were evangelical. Somewhat later, conciliar churches grasped the potential of TEE, particularly when Ross Kinsler served a term with the WCC Programme on Theological Education. TEE made lim-

ited appearances in Europe, North America and Australia. Courses were produced in many languages, and at all levels from basic literate to graduate. Hundreds of students became thousands. National TEE associations were formed and international conferences built new networks.

Help for new TEE providers came in the various forms, much of it provided by the WEF Theological Commission and CAMEO, in cooperation with national and regional associations, many of them affiliates of WEF. Several books and dissertations appeared, now mostly out-of-print.² There were economically produced newsletters, such as the *Extension Seminary Bulletin* from Guatemala, which appeared in Spanish and English, and a bulletin entitled *Programming News* (1969-1976) edited by Martin Dainton, a missionary to Indonesia. This newsletter made an important contribution at the time, when programmed instruction was then intimately connected with TEE. It subsequently broadened its coverage and became *Theological Education Today (TET)*, which I edited from 1976 to 1983. John Langlois of the Theological Commission did a ster-

ling job from Guernsey, arranging the art work, production and distribution. We sometimes struggled to recruit contributors; the best teachers were often too busy teaching to tell us how they did it, but there was always enough material to fill an eight-page quarterly!

Our primary target was national (and missionary) faculty teaching in developing countries at fairly basic levels in Bible schools and TEE, since it is at these levels that the vast majority of Third World pastors are trained. There was no charge to recipients, so the publication could circulate more readily in less affluent parts of the world. The emphasis was on practical help for teachers, rather than on academic articles about theological education, which could be found elsewhere; feedback was very positive. After several years, and pressure from one or two sources (but not from its readership) to make it a more academic publication, *TET* was reduced, mainly for financial reasons, to a page or two in WEF's *Theological News*, and then disappeared altogether. An anthology of articles, *The Best of TET*, was published by the TC in 1983. There is probably still a need for a publication of this type. In more recent years we have seen *The T.E.E. Journal*, based in South Africa, a useful publication of a different type.

A second important source of help for TEE workers came from regional seminars, and from the cooperative partnerships that often grew out of these. Those wishing to start TEE programs would generally attend a workshop. A number of these were sponsored by the WEF Theological Commission or by regional associations linked to WEF, such as Asia Theologi-

2 Early books on TEE included Ralph Winter's *Theological Education by Extension* (Wm Carey Library, 1969), Ted and Margaret Ward's *Programmed Instruction for Theological Education by Extension* (Lansing, MI, CAMEO, 1970), Fred Holland's *Teaching through TEE* (Kenya: Evangel Press, 1975), Ross Kinsler's *The Extension Movement in Theological Education* (Wm Carey Library, 1978, rev edn 1981), Kinsler (ed) *Ministry by the People* (WCC/Orbis) (a collection of case studies in TEE from around the world), and a number of others.

cal Association and the Association of Evangelicals of Africa and Madagascar. Workshops in many countries were run initially by Ralph Winter, Ross Kinsler, Ted Ward, Lois McKinney, Fred Holland, Ian McCleary, Peter Savage, myself and various others. Their expertise was variously derived from early experience of TEE, plus a background in cross-cultural theological and/or secular education, and familiarity with programmed instruction.

Because running a TEE program was quickly seen to be a daunting task, most providers sooner or later sought some level of cooperation with others, at least in the development of home-study materials. TEE workshops did much to facilitate such cooperation, often bringing together people from surprisingly diverse denominational backgrounds.

Various models of cooperation were explored and continue to be used. One model is a single, integrated, interdenominational program, like TAFTEE in India. Programs of this type could be run from an existing campus, like the Christian Leaders' Training College in Papua New Guinea, or simply from a central office. Another model is the national or regional association of extension programs. Such associations may cooperate in sponsoring workshops, producing study materials, sharing ideas and insights, etc. Variations in the degree of central policy formation and control are possible. Examples of regional associations are PAFTEE in the Philippines, AETTE in Brazil, and TEEAC in Cambodia.

Cooperative course design developed, and to varying degrees continued, from the first *Intertext* project in

Latin America to the *Text Africa* project from Evangel Publishing House in Kenya, and *SEAN* courses, originally developed by Anglicans in Argentina and now distributed to many parts of the world from the UK. Ambitious projects sometimes floundered as busy people failed to find time to produce the courses they had agreed to write, but over time, a good number of courses did appear.

TAFTEE produced courses for India. AETTE brought together study materials from various denominations in Brazil. PAFTEE gave its imprimatur to materials that met its standards in the Philippines. The Christian Leaders' Training College in Papua New Guinea produced the first of its TEE courses. Cooperative ecumenical text production also began, and the Programme on Theological Education (formerly the Theological Education Fund) gave prominence to TEE in its quarterly, *Ministerial Formation*. TEE seemed unstoppable!

Numbers

At this point we should pause and consider exactly what we mean by TEE. Definitions of *extension education* and *TEE* are many and various, often vague enough to include evening school, correspondence courses or today, online learning. It is not particularly helpful to label such a wide variety of delivery methods '*TEE*'; there are already enough generic terms like *distance education*, *continuing education*, *external studies*, and *flexible delivery* in various languages. Imprecise labelling has sometimes caused genuine TEE to be disregarded ('*we've tried that*') or brought into disrepute. It is better to

promote a more specific definition, based on the original Guatemalan model, but allowing for some variation.

Components of TEE

As developed in Guatemala, TEE has three specific components: *self-study materials*, *regular seminars* and *life experience and ministry* in the students' own context. It was intended that these be closely intertwined. None of these components was unique or new in the sixties. It was the particular *combination and inter-relationship* of these elements that was distinctive. TEE is not a correspondence course, it is not a part-time night school and it is not a series of short seminars.

Self-Instructional Materials.

If theological education is to *extend* geographically, it must break away from dependence on lectures to deliver content. But mere provision of 'notes' is an inadequate substitute for a good teacher, especially when students have had limited education. The architects of TEE believed that study materials must be genuinely self-instructional. They do not replace a teacher, since regular seminars are still a critical part of the process; they do replace most of the teacher's *lecturing* function.

There is a crucial difference between TEE and a part-time lecture course with homework. When students work through self-instructional materials in TEE they are not simply doing 'homework'. Rather, *the bulk of the course content—the informational input—is provided by these materials*. This dispenses with the need for a subject-matter-expert to visit all the cen-

tres to deliver lectures. Hence the materials make it possible to *extend* training far more widely than is possible with, say, an evening lecture class.

In the sixties and seventies, programmed instruction materials (PIM) were popular in some educational circles. They could help students study more actively. Working through a good programmed lesson was the next best thing to having a tutor alongside, prompting one to think, respond and review, and providing immediate feedback. It seemed an ideal, affordable method to use in designing home-study materials.

Some experimentation with computer-assisted learning was emerging at the time, but this was of little interest to TEE leaders. Computers were not too common, and were expensive and bulky. TEE centres were, and often still are, in poor or remote villages with no electricity. So Programmed Instruction ('PI') did not involve software; it was produced in books or in a more affordable stencilled format.

Thus programmed instruction, introduced at the outset, soon became so widely associated with TEE that many believed it to be an indispensable component. Those of us who led TEE writers' workshops around the world had studied PI and sought to pass on what we had learned. I also took private tutoring in California from an expert in the field. Strangely, I was soon to find myself engaged in a campaign to dissociate TEE from programmed instruction.

Tutorials/Seminars

Regular meetings of students and tutors were an essential component of

TEE from the outset. In communal societies the value of regular, face-to-face classes is particularly important. But the use of home-study materials alters the purpose of these meetings. With no need for lectures, class time is freed up for clarification, discussion, reinforcement, enrichment, testing, practical exercises—indeed for anything that cannot be adequately taught in the printed materials. The tutorials are intended to be highly participatory learning experiences, and to include an important element of bonding through worship, sharing and mutual pastoral care.

This dramatically alters the role of the tutor, who need not be the author of the materials nor even a subject matter expert. What is essential is to have a good overall grasp of the subject, to have prepared adequately, and to be willing and able to serve as a facilitator of learning rather than as a lecturer. For some, this can be a difficult transition.

Life and Ministry Experience

Over recent decades theological educators have learned much from Clinical Pastoral Education and from field education in the secular helping professions. This has helped shape the move from the earlier, often *unsupervised field work* to the more focused concept of *supervised field education*.

TEE students have plenty of life experience, and most are engaged in practical ministry in their churches. Adequate extension training must help them connect their studies with everyday life and ministry. In traditional seminaries, most students are extracted from their home contexts, so

field education placements have to be engineered. Such placements may provide new and challenging learning experiences; at other times placements can become somewhat artificial, or at worst, boring.

TEE may be less able to provide *new* field education experiences, but it is ideally placed to help students connect new learning with ongoing ministry in their own contexts. All programs involve participants in discussions intended to apply what they have learned, but sufficiently strong connections between theory and practice have not always been made.

Extension

Another dimension in an adequate definition of TEE is its capacity to *extend* theological education in various ways.

First, TEE *extends geographical coverage* well beyond the environs of the seminary. It trains students in their own contexts instead of extracting them for long periods, and so is positioned near the *extension* end of an *extraction-extension* continuum in education. This helps to ensure that rural parishes have a continuing supply of pastors, as (unlike the graduates of many urban seminaries) most TEE graduates remain in their own areas and continue to serve churches there. The structure of TEE enables it to extend training across a wide area while retaining regular personal contact among teachers and students. Correspondence courses, by contrast, can only cover a wide area by reducing personal contact to zero, while lecture-based courses are much more limited geographically.

Second, TEE greatly *extends the*

potential student body. Traditionally, theological education has been offered mainly in fulltime residential colleges in the cities. To access such training in a poor country, students must have money or be heavily subsidised, usually from abroad. It is too expensive for colleges to house and feed many families, so the majority of students are single. In practice, Bible colleges in less affluent countries cater mainly for *promising young men*, who, it is hoped, might one day make good pastors.

Each of these three words conceals a limitation. There are relatively few places or scholarships for *women* students, particularly in higher-level Evangelical seminaries. While *older*, married students may be welcome in principle, it is usually financially impractical to leave work and move to the city for several years. The gifts and calling of most young students, while perhaps *promising*, are unproven. Few have even served on church committees or held the office of deacon or elder. Proven, experienced leaders and functional pastors are largely excluded from traditional forms of theological education, though they may sorely need and greatly desire it.

TEE does not turn the young away, but it opens training opportunities to many more besides. Some see TEE as part of wider move from fulltime training for a small elite towards a greater *democratisation* of theological education. Ideally, it is said, if all the people of God should be able to 'do theology', then so far as possible, all should have access to the tools for the task.

There are important policy questions about whether a TEE program should take over the adult Christian education function of the local church

or whether it should concentrate on training leaders who themselves can 'teach others also', an approach more in the spirit of 2 Timothy 2:2. On the other hand, where lay believers seek serious theological education at a higher level, there is room for more innovative thought in developing curricula for lay people; their learning needs differ significantly from those of clergy.

It sometimes happens that seminaries whose main goal is to train pastors find themselves inadvertently training mainly lay workers. In some developing countries Bible colleges attract school leavers, some with little real interest in the ministry. They enrol after failing to gain admission to a preferred institution such as university or teachers' college. Such students will often seek secular employment after graduation, or become reluctant pastors. Christian training doubtless benefits these lay graduates and their churches, but an expensive residential program is not a cost-efficient way to train them, especially if at the same time, the college cannot produce enough pastors.

Judges

There appears to be an idea in some circles that TEE has had its day. In fact reports of the death of TEE have been greatly exaggerated! Admittedly, for a variety of reasons, some extension programs have disappeared or have been replaced by other forms of training. Not all have functioned well.

Nevertheless numerous programs, many fairly recent, continue to operate today in Africa, Asia, South America, the Pacific, and the former USSR, as

well as among Native Americans and Australian Aborigines. TEE also exists in some more affluent western settings, where it has now generally introduced online and other computer-based components. In some cases, changes are such that these programs may no longer meet our definition of TEE.

As examples of flourishing extension programs, I mention two with which I have had recent connections. The TEE Association of Cambodia (TEEAC) has brought together workers from a variety of churches, missions and NGOs, to produce and deliver courses to several hundred pastors and other church leaders across the nation—an impressive accomplishment, given the recent history of that country. While member organizations, and TEEAC itself, run their own programs, virtually all policy issues, standards, etc., are centrally determined by TEEAC. The high degree of cooperation and fellowship has done much to strengthen and expand the overall impact of TEE on the churches.

Another example is the flourishing interdenominational TEE program run (alongside a residential program) by CLTC in Papua New Guinea. This program peaked in the year 2000 with some 5000 students across the young nation. Unrest in parts of the country and the tripling of postage rates have reduced numbers somewhat since then, but enrolments remain strong, and include some high school students, whose Religious Education teachers have chosen to use TEE materials. New courses have continually been developed, both in English (the language of education) and in Tok Pisin (the Pidgin lingua franca of much of the country).

TEE has its critics, and sometimes I am asked whether it ‘works’. This is an impossible question to answer *in vacuo*. One could as well ask whether Bible College or Sunday School works. TEE is not a single program. It is one *vehicle* for delivering training. Aside from general comparisons of delivery systems, questions about efficacy can most usefully be asked of a *particular* TEE program: Is TEE the best training choice in *this* situation? Are quality materials being used, and are these properly matched to students’ educational levels? Is there a sound theological base? How well contextualised are the materials, and do they lend themselves to real-life application? Are the seminars run properly, and how well trained are the tutors? How effective is the overall administration?

Particularly in its early days, sweeping claims were sometimes made for TEE, and its presumed superiority over traditional Bible colleges. An unnecessary competitive aspect was introduced, and expectations were raised that could not always be fulfilled. Such situations sometimes led to judgmental remarks.

However, criticisms of TEE frequently turn out to be criticisms of one or two aspects of a particular program. Sometimes the critic’s problem is really with the ethos or theological position of a program, or with poor materials or inexpert tutors s/he has encountered. Sometimes the sticking point is that programmed instruction is seen as a domesticating form of instruction—as *poor* PI (or what sometimes passes for PI) can indeed be, especially when written at a basic level. But these days PI should no longer be seen as an indispensable

component of TEE.

It must be recognized that, despite some undoubted failings, TEE has made a major contribution to theological education in many countries, and has brought biblical knowledge and practical training to thousands who could otherwise never have had access to it. This is a tremendous achievement. As with any other type of training, there is a continuum of quality. TEE programs can be excellent, mediocre, or by any criteria, quite poor.

Objective evaluation of educational programs can be difficult where there is no benchmark and nothing in the region with which to compare it. Students in poor-quality programs, whether delivered in college or by extension, often have no idea what they are *not* learning. When keen Christians who previously had no access to theological education are provided with TEE courses, they are often lavish in their praise. The courses may or may not merit such admiration, but something is almost always better—much better—than nothing!

Any educational system is prone to particular strengths and weaknesses, and TEE is no exception. I have enumerated below some factors I believe are important in developing an effective TEE program. The list is not meant to be exhaustive, and emphasizes the situation in developing countries, where TEE is most used. My comments necessarily reflects my own biases and experience. Some of the same factors are also critical to good seminary or Bible college training.

Proverbs

In my experience, a high quality TEE program in a developing country typically has all or most of the following features:

The sponsoring organization recognizes the importance of leadership training overall, and of the TEE program specifically. It therefore accords TEE high priority in funding and provision of personnel. Too often, in practice if not explicitly, TEE is viewed as secondary or inferior to the traditional residential school and is resourced accordingly, virtually guaranteeing inferior quality. Allocation of resources is generally a good guide to true priorities. One is sometimes tempted to ask, *'What are all these other things that are so much more important than the training of national Christian leaders?'*

Too often, missionaries and Bible College teachers, already overworked, are asked to take on the design and teaching of TEE courses as an 'extra' task, with little if any reduction in existing duties. They simply do not have time to do this properly. *A Church or a theological college cannot expect to plan and implement a quality TEE program without employing extra staff.* It should also be noted that the successful addition of any major program to the work of an existing organization would benefit greatly from some understanding of change dynamics.

The key stakeholders in the TEE program understand it, are convinced of its value, and are keen to implement and promote it. This includes national church leaders. Too often TEE is initiated more because of its presumed economy than because of

its inherent value as a form of theological education. Expecting people to staff a program they do not really understand or believe in quickly leads to discontent and perfunctory performance. The philosophy of TEE needs to be carefully explained to all.

One reason some TEE programs have struggled has been that they have never really been 'owned' by the national churches. TEE was sometimes initiated by keen missionaries who failed to consult sufficiently with local church leaders. Such programs are vulnerable, especially in an unstable political situation. If the mission has to withdraw, the TEE program will soon run down or close.

Church leaders may want a college like those of other churches. Pastors who were themselves trained in a residential college may feel this is the only 'real' theological education; they suspect the missionaries are offering them a cheap, 'second-best' alternative. Some pastors feel threatened at the prospect of members of their congregation embarking on serious theological studies. They may then believe it is in their interests to emphasize the superiority of their own seminary training. For such reasons, as well as for their knowledge of their people and culture, it is important to include local leaders in planning, administration and teaching. A senior pastor without teaching or administrative skills might play a valuable role as chaplain to the students. A small pilot program in a situation where pastors will not feel threatened can be one way to help them understand the value of TEE.

All TEE workers receive appropriate training for the tasks they will perform, and attend periodic in-service

seminars to review basics, study principles of adult education, and maintain motivation. Curriculum designers, course writers, translators, area coordinators and tutors are given detailed training by persons with appropriate educational knowledge and TEE experience. Experience suggests that a workshop of at least two weeks is minimal for training course designers, with a longer duration preferred. If courses are actually to be written within a reasonable time, the best approach is usually to schedule a series of production workshops with a trained facilitator. Promises by busy people to write courses in their 'spare time' usually result in long delays or no new courses!

A common failing is that once initial training has been provided, no ongoing provision is made for training *new* tutors or course writers, or for in-service refresher seminars for continuing workers. After a few years with gradual turnover of personnel, there is hardly a trained tutor or course writer to be found. There were never enough new workers *at one time* to justify another workshop, so it is assumed newcomers can just 'pick it up', or perhaps learn enough by reading a tutors' booklet. *Such gradual attrition of trained leaders, tutors and course writers can dramatically reduce the effectiveness of a program.* Definite plans are required to train new workers, even if they arrive in ones and twos. It is easier to provide ongoing training in the context of a broader consortium.

The TEE program has clear objectives and caters appropriately for a well-defined target group. Leaders decide at what educational level the program will function, making sure

they do not raise the entrance standards so high that they exclude most of the students! They decide whether they will target mainly leaders, or laity. It can be great to have large numbers of students, but TEE is not essentially 'a numbers game'. Some centres in the original Guatemalan program have had only one or two students. *What is important is training the key people.* TEE programs are usually designed primarily for pastors and leaders, who are then encouraged to develop their own gifts in reteaching some of the material to others at a simpler level, probably with little requirement of home study. *Careful thought should be given to the social and cultural implications of placing an untrained pastor in the same classroom as members of his or her congregation.*

It is very important that TEE students be selected partly on the basis of strong motivation. Without this, they will not persevere long enough to complete their studies. Acceptance into the program should not be automatic, and high standards of home study and attendance should be required. Otherwise some will soon become slack and complain of 'too much homework'. They will come to class unprepared. Once this happens, an essential component of TEE is lost. Diligent students also suffer as standards drop, and as there are few others to form serious discussion groups; TEE does not provide for auditors. Once we succumb to such pressures, the whole program will plummet in quality and depth, and in time, accreditation may lapse.

Some see extension training as appropriate only for basic training, and fail to see its potential for ministerial formation at higher levels. Such situations as that just described feed that

perception and make it harder for TEE to be accepted as a serious training model.

In addition to the value of TEE for training church leaders, there are exciting possibilities for developing curricula for educated lay people. These studies could relate theological understanding to certain professional areas, such as business, law, medicine, education, economics, politics and government. As Christian professionals learn to apply theological understanding and Christian ethics to their vocations, they can make a significant contribution to national life and culture.

At the other end of the educational spectrum are the many TEE students with limited educational backgrounds. It is not sufficient to provide materials in the mother tongue; a TEE program can still easily fail if it makes unrealistic demands on the literacy levels of students. I have often suggested that most Bible Colleges and TEE programs would benefit from having at least one faculty member with specialized training in relevant aspects of language teaching and remedial reading. Such training might be acquired at graduate level as part of a sabbatical or furlough study program, in lieu perhaps of writing one more thesis on a well-worn theological topic.

TEE has been conducted among marginal literates, but many adaptations and special expertise are needed to achieve success. Some of my own workshops over the years have dealt with training illiterates and semi-literates, but it should be remembered that TEE is not suitable for every situation.

The administration is well organized, fits the local context, functions with integrity, and is ade-

quately funded. There need to be sufficient structures for the program to operate relatively smoothly and accountably, but without unnecessary administrative layers or red tape. National requirements for registration of educational programs, accreditation, etc., will need to be met. Adequate student services and pastoral care should be provided and the program needs checks and balances to ensure ongoing integrity, especially in moral and financial matters. Example speaks louder than preaching!

A carefully crafted and contextualised curriculum is followed, and periodic workshops are held for curriculum updating and review. Most TEE curricula include essential foundational subjects and ample biblical content, though often, modern processes of curriculum design have not been followed, so the curriculum simply reflects a slightly adapted western course of studies.

A major problem is that many programs have been insufficiently contextualised. Real needs in the churches and community are inadequately and often only incidentally addressed. The same problem exists in many Bible colleges, but can be more acute in TEE for reasons noted below. I am convinced that the importance of *deep contextualisation* is often gravely underestimated. Without this, much of our teaching is destined to be little more than transient head knowledge that fails to inform or transform life and work.

Quality self-instructional materials are used, with all or most designed for the context. A major reason for poor contextualisation in much TEE is the propensity for 'borrowing' courses from other countries. This is

different from importing textbooks for use with a teacher in a traditional classroom, because in TEE the self-instructional materials themselves play a kind of 'teacher' role. Furthermore, TEE tutors frequently have less training than Bible college teachers and may find it harder to help students contextualise what they read.

Since many TEE programs are under-resourced it is hardly surprising if they fail to develop courses that really meet the needs of their own constituencies. Recognizing that the design of good self-instructional materials requires expertise, time and money they do not have, they prefer to buy translation rights from others.

The old idea, still current in some circles, that TEE should be written in programmed instructional format must also have deterred some would-be writers. PI looks deceptively easy to write, but is in fact quite difficult, especially if the writer wants to produce an interesting, varied course. Much that passes for PI is not PI! After leading a number of programming workshops in the early days of TEE, we realized that few participants actually went on to write any PI. Those lessons that were produced were often dull and repetitive, and used a lot of paper. Since that time I have generally taught writers how to design workbooks, with better results.

Some early TEE programs imported courses on almost anything from almost anywhere, a practice that too easily resulted in patchwork curricula with little cohesion. The imported courses were designed for a variety of educational levels and were of different lengths. Some set one lesson a week, others four or five. Quality and

style varied greatly. Courses sometimes overlapped, while there was no assurance that everything students needed to know would be included somewhere. If students in a centre had completed the existing courses, it was felt that they could not be kept waiting. There followed a rush to obtain more courses. So materials written for one situation were translated, adapted (often in token ways), and recycled in vastly different situations.

In more recent times, a high percentage of new TEE programs have begun to source their materials from just several international suppliers. These suppliers generally provide coherent curricula and self-study materials of quite good quality. Commendably, they encourage users not just to translate, but also to adapt their material. Their courses have enabled a number of TEE programs to attain an acceptable standard. They have perhaps also spared us some much poorer courses that might otherwise have been written in a rush by people denied training and resource for the task.

But there is a downside. The availability of high-profile overseas courses has tended to stifle the design of new courses and innovative curricula. Careful contextualisation is accorded lower priority than it deserves; it is sometimes forgotten that at times it may require as much work to translate and adapt a course well as to write one's own.

To understand the need for serious contextualisation is to recognize that there is no substitute for quality materials designed to meet real, local needs. But this is not to suggest that every individual TEE provider should design a new set of courses! So long as

they are well integrated into the curriculum, some overseas courses may be translated and adapted. Other imported materials may with permission be mined for ideas, illustrative anecdotes, biblical exegesis, and so on. But at least some subjects need to be designed in our own context to meet our own needs. *Context* may be defined broadly enough to suit a given cultural and/or geographic area. For example, good African courses are readily adaptable for use in most of sub-Saharan Africa, and some may, with more adaptation, be usable in tribal societies elsewhere. They are unlikely to work well in a modern European industrial society unless the program is targeting African immigrants.

Creative, facilitative teaching methods are used in the TEE tutorials, with special attention given to the development of thinking and problem-solving skills, and to the transfer of classroom learning to life and ministry. However good the home study materials, TEE will fail in much of its purpose if tutors cannot do their job well. Some tutors try to lecture or spend most of the time providing 'the right answers' to questions in the workbooks. Many do their best to stimulate discussion, but find it hard to compose good 'thought' questions that help students relate the discussion to real life. Tutorials rightly emphasize discussion, but should also provide time for *reinforcement* and *enrichment* of learning, using various approaches and simple media. Cultural and individual learning styles should be taken into account, along with some understanding of adult education.

Some criticisms of TEE centre on concerns that indoctrination may replace education, and piety, critical

thinking. Such concerns may be justified, especially in countries where the whole education system is essentially domesticating. But the problem is hardly confined to TEE; it is just as real in many Bible schools. The difference is that printed TEE courses are more visible to outsiders than what is taught orally within the four walls of a college. Sound theological education needs to help students develop discernment, thinking and problem-solving skills, and ability to draw upon the biblical text and theological understanding in relating faith to life. Pastors who lack such skills typically resort to legalism. But it is no small demand to achieve these ideals, especially at basic educational levels.

For all these reasons, adequate tutor training and support are essential. In addition to training seminars and a general tutors' handbook, *there should be a tutors' guide for each course*, with guidelines and suggestions for every tutorial, including a list of suitable discussion questions. An analogy is the Sunday School teachers' quarterly: it provides detailed lesson plans precisely because most teachers are untrained.

The Vision Remains

Clearly, not all extension programs meet these criteria, or others that could be added. In addition to personnel and resources, vision, imagination, patience, perseverance and hard work are needed to build quality theological

education of any kind.

The situations in which TEE is developed are often far from ideal; there is always a myriad of constraints. Overworked, under-funded staff do the best they can, and succeed in providing training where previously none existed. Often that training is of high quality. Communication and the sharing of ideas and resources among theological educators around the world have played a critical role in the development of TEE, and of theological education in general. A major contribution at this global level has been made by the Theological Commission, along with regional affiliates of WEF (now WEA). Subsequently, the ICAA did much to consolidate accreditation, and today, under its current name (ICETE) it still continues to make an important international contribution to evangelical theological education.

In conclusion, it is important to affirm the validity and desirability of *choices* in modes of training. There are many things a residential college can do that TEE cannot, and vice versa. Correspondence, radio or online courses may be the only way to reach isolated students. Short seminars can meet particular and immediate goals. Non-formal theological education can contribute a great deal to continuing education of pastors and to lay training. In short, the various modes of delivery all have a role. Some work better in one situation than in another. They should never be seen as mutually exclusive.

Towards Excellence in Theological Education?

Roger Kemp

KEYWORDS: *Accreditation, TEE, outcomes, relevance, process, renewal*

When I became secretary of the International Council of Accrediting Agencies (ICAA) in 1989 I was immediately lobbied by people staking their claim for what they thought was a forgotten method of theological education. They believed the association had ignored their pleas for recognition of TEE—*theological education by extension*. In their enthusiasm for such a method, they assumed ICAA was interested only in institutional theological education. In this paper I am not going to debate the rights and wrongs of that particular situation. I am glad to say that nothing was taken too personally, and all involved remain friends. The debate is about what is considered to be good theological education—or in a word—*excellence*. What I want to do is reflect on what I have found to be the key issues in this debate, from my involvement in evangelical theological

education for the past twenty five years.

I begin by reflecting on a conference in 1993 sponsored by ICAA. The theme of the conference was ‘*Affirming the Spectrum—Doing Theological Education Together*’. I have re-read the paper I gave at the beginning of the conference and, while it sounds a little naïve (which could well have been true), it does sum up the thinking of the evangelical leaders with which I had contact at the time. I quote some of my paper to show the thinking of the time....

One of the most strategic but also one of the most misunderstood areas of ministry in the church today is theological education.... I may be wrong but I believe this would be the first time at an international level (at least in evangelical circles) such a variety of expressions of theological education are represented in one conference.... I trust we do not let the

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moment pass without taking the opportunity made available to each of us to step outside our particular area and take a good look at the wider scene of theological education.... Affirming—to see that theological education is a single business with many facets, rather than many businesses each doing their own thing... We have many things to learn from each other so let's be teachable....

It is obvious there was a danger of people taking 'sides' and ignoring the benefits of other approaches to theological education. One of the biggest issues which made it difficult for closer coordination was the fear that accreditation supported institutional-type theological education and yet had nothing to offer the extension-type programmes. This of course was denied at the conference and has been on numerous occasions since. Indeed, accrediting agencies have endeavoured to show as much by providing accreditation standards for extension programmes. At the Bangkok conference it seemed nothing was going to indeed 'affirm' the spectrum. In some ways the delegates went away from the conference even more cynical of theological education done in ways other than those of which they were advocates. It was a shame but that was the situation then. My honest belief is that there were (and may still be) those who, for whatever reason, had their own agendas and that is what prevented any closer appreciation or cooperation with people of different views.

Having said that, there were some good papers presented at that conference and I still refer to them from time

to time in my teaching. One in particular stands out, because it highlighted the issues very clearly. It had to do with the basics of theological education. The paper was presented by Bob Ferris, who described what he thought was 'quality' theological education. He put aside what he called the 'general' approach which for him was to (wrongly) equate quality purely with the reputation of specific institutions. He proposed a different way. 'A more useful approach to defining quality in education entails examining issues of philosophy and theology on which educational programs are built.'¹ He was saying that it is all too common for theological educators to concentrate on the *methods* of teaching, rather than the *outcomes* or *foundations* of theological education. For his part, Bob Ferris was strongly advocating recognition for extension theological education (TEE) as being just as viable a means of theological education as institutional type training. He went on to advocate an accrediting process which reflected the context in which the training was done, while at the same time it maintained biblical standards. He wanted to steer clear of proposing standards which were 'imposed' from abroad (viz. the western institutional standards) onto training programmes elsewhere.

So the debate had several facets, including the merits or otherwise of institutional theological education as against some other means, but also the

1 R. Ferris, 'Strategic Flexibility in Accreditation Programs'. A paper presented to the 1993 conference of International Council of Accrediting Agencies in Bangkok, July 1993

need to recognize the fundamental right of local training programmes to establish their own approach.

But what is the real issue in regard to excellence in theological education? To me it centres on several important issues.

Relevance

By this I mean matching theory with practice—making sure that theological education is balanced. Some things never change. I remember the hue and cry which we made as students doing theological training in the late 60s and early 70s, to those who ran the college—most commonly to the principal. It was all about what we thought was the irrelevance of what we were learning. For example: ‘We are never going to use this in pastoral ministry—why should we study Hebrew?’ Although we were given good explanations at the time, I am sure we weren’t convinced. We were crying out for more subjects to do with counselling or pastoral care, because that is where we were hurting at the time. Of course students still make similar comments today. The issue remains at least in part one of relevance. And regularly I still read articles or hear someone at a conference speak on the issue. I cite several to indicate that it has never been too far below the surface in the thinking of theological educators generally.

Post and rail: The ‘post and rail’ approach describes theological education as being like a fence. There are several interpretations of this model. I interpret it this way: the posts refer to the method of theological training, while the rails represent the theory and practice. The posts (methods) link

together the theory and practice. It is this which makes for good theological education. The fence would be very lopsided at best and totally inadequate at worst, if there was only one rail. Theological education which ignores either the theory or practice of the curriculum is in a similar state. Of course the ‘posts’ can be made of anything. That isn’t the important issue. What is important is that the top and bottom rails are somehow linked. So whether it be institutional or extension methodology which is used—the theological education fence is useful only when the linkage is made.

Jim Plueddemann has had a profound effect on evangelical theological education in one way or another. In a paper on this model, Jim talks about ‘top-rail’ and ‘bottom-rail’ theology.² Top-rail theology is that which emphasizes the ideal while the bottom-rail emphasizes realism. The paper eloquently goes on to describe various implications of the model for theological education. There is one statement which illustrates the point I am endeavouring to make. ‘In order to promote excellence in theological education, teaching methods must do three things: they must teach important knowledge, stimulate quality experience and compel critical interaction between knowledge and experience’.

Outcomes

Winning the war: At the Bangkok conference in 1993 Mike Henderson pre-

2. J. Plueddemann, ‘The Challenge of Excellence in Theological Education’. A paper presented for ICAA in Kenya in 1987

sented a paper which I still find useful. He described the way that General McArthur operated in World War II. When asked why he was so successful in his military campaigns, General McArthur said that he was about 'winning the war' not simply 'training soldiers'.

What Mike was getting at in his paper, was the importance of focusing on the end product (what we would call 'outcomes' today), rather than methodology. In other words he was saying there was value and significance in all the methods—as long as they were *actually achieving a previously accepted goal!* The implication was that most of us were concentrating too much on 'our *method*' rather than a commonly accepted goal. It is a pity that at the time we didn't take more notice of what Mike was saying. If we had listened more closely to what he said we (those in ICAA) could have led evangelical theological education to greater things. Unfortunately there are still too many theological educators today who are happy to 'train soldiers' rather than 'win the war'. Perhaps it is because they do not know what war they are in, so they simply go through the motions of teaching the same subjects year after year with little or no relevance to actual ministry or context.

I have come across some such programmes. Yes, there are training programmes operating which teach the same subjects today that they did twenty to thirty years ago, and there is very little, if any, difference in the way they are taught. One wonders if they are achieving anything beyond giving out pieces of paper to students after three or four years of training.

At a conference of the European

Evangelical Accreditation Association (EEAA) in St Léger in November 2003, Derek Tidball of London Bible College touched on this issue when he challenged theological educators present to 're-engineer' their programmes. This involves asking some basic but significant questions such as 'who am I trying to teach?', 'what am I trying to teach them?', 'why am I teaching them?', 'how can I measure the effectiveness of my teaching?'. In other words we ought never to assume that the way we have taught in the past is sufficient for teaching today.

A gracious revolution: Jim Plueddemann gave the annual lecture for the Centre for Evangelism and Global Mission of Morling College, Sydney, Australia, in 2000AD. He entitled his paper 'Agenda for a Gracious Revolution'³. He was talking mainly about the approach to missions in the 21st century, but he included in the paper outlines of several models of theological education which have relevance to the point here.

First there is the *factory* model, which sees theological education as a processing plant. There is a cartoon which depicts this well. In the middle there is a drawing of a factory, and on the left side there are a number of individuals in line, entering the factory. Each one is different. On the right hand side of the factory there is another line of people coming out—all exactly the same. The factory of course represents

3 J. Plueddemann, 'Agenda for a Gracious Revolution', address given at the annual lecture of Centre for Evangelism and Global Mission, Morling College, Sydney Australia, June 2000.

the theological training programme. It is as if the programme is cloning each student to a model which it sees as *the* ultimate in theological training. 'It places high value on precision, quantitative goals, predictability, efficiency and control. It causes planners to set goals that can easily be measured. They want to know exactly what the final result will look like, when it will be accomplished and how much money it will cost.' Other wags talk derogatorily about the 'sausage machine' model—as if theological education was somehow like making sausages! Plueddemann reminds us of the dialectic in the debate by stating that to focus on this method is to ignore the more important goals of character, discipleship and holiness.

There are those who would defend such a system, because they see theological education as almost entirely a matter of gathering knowledge—bits and pieces gathered along a production line—so equipping a person for ministry.

Then there is the *wild flower* model. This is an approach to training which has come virtually as a reaction against the factory model. It emphasizes the intuitive aspect of learning. Personal experience, emotions, signs and wonders, spiritual warfare, inner healing and demon mapping are all part of the process. In other words the training is centred on the experiential rather than the cognitive aspect of learning. Little is planned or organized. Time limits are vague as are measurable outcomes. Like wild flowers, those involved flourish for a time, but because there is little solid foundation upon which training is based, wither quite quickly.

Finally, and most appropriate, is the *pilgrim* model. Theological education here is seen as a journey. There is a goal which is aimed for, and, along with others, the path is taken to reach it, sometimes having knowledge imparted and at other times experiencing growth with others.

Process

Plueddemann's last point raises a further issue—that theological education is more a process than an event. This, it seems, is where the emphasis is focused at this time. In February 2000, Mike Wicker presented a paper at a global conference on theological education at Oxford. The paper was entitled 'Transformational Learning Theory in Leadership Development and Training'. The paper focuses on various styles of leadership, and how best to train people with those styles. Wicker says transformational leadership 'occurs when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality'.⁴ He goes on to describe transformational leadership process. It consists of four phases.

The first phase is awareness-analysis, during which questions such as 'what are my assumptions about leadership?' and 'what am I trying to accomplish with my leadership approach?' are asked. In other words this is where the real context is

4 M. Wicker, 'Transformational Learning Theory in Leadership Development and Training', a paper presented at a Global Consultation at Oxford Centre for Mission Studies, England, February 2000.

analysed. The next phase—alternatives—looks at various approaches to leading. The third phase is decision-transition phase, in which decisions are made as to possibilities of change. Because ‘transition is the heart of the transformation process’, this is crucial. It is where leaders begin to change attitudes, values and ideas—what we would otherwise call education. It involves an integration of knowledge and emotions—trying to meet a balance between the two, not unlike Plueddemann’s pilgrim model. The final phase is action—where new ideas are put into practice. This is the outcome of the transformation which a person has undergone.

What Wicker is implying is that this model ought to be considered in theological education. ‘An analysis of effective life-changing leadership development is needed in order to connect the constructivist theories of transformational learning and leadership.’ It seems to me that this is yet another way of answering the basic questions about excellence in theological education. And that brings me to my conclusion.

Renewal

In the late 80s there was a kind of paradigm shift in theological education, under the banner of ‘renewal’. It was a recognition that it was time for theological educators to re-think the way theological education was accomplished. There is no doubt that the changes in missionary theory and practice resulting from the contextualization debate of the 1970s was influential in this. It was a period of changing ideas, and The International Council of Accrediting Agencies (ICAA)—now

called the International Council for Evangelical Theological Education (ICETE)—led the way in applying these new ideas to theological education. In 1990 it published the ‘Manifesto on the Renewal of Evangelical Theological Education. I have a vested interest in this document, having been part of the editorial board which produced it, but nevertheless I believe it still contains the essential issues which I have mentioned above.

The manifesto consists of twelve issues which ICETE recognizes as being of vital importance for the renewal of theological education. They range from contextualization, churchward orientation, community life and strategic flexibility in areas of leadership roles, academic levels and education method through theological grounding, equipping for growth, and the development of a Christian mind and servant spirit to cooperation and integration of programs, instructional variety and continuous assessment.

Without going into detail of these issues, it is clear that taken as a whole, the Manifesto addresses the matter of ‘good’ or ‘excellent’ theological education. Indeed whether the discussion is about relevance, outcomes or processes, the manifesto addresses them in one way or another. I sometimes say to people—albeit with tongue firmly in my cheek—that all we need in theological education is the Manifesto and the Bible. By heeding both we are assured of excellence in theological education.

However, it is interesting to note that the Manifesto is still regarded as a significant reference point for discussions on theological education. In practice, it means that ‘renewed’ theologi-

cal education focuses on the person rather than the programme. As theological educators, we are preparing people for particular ministries, not simply fulfilling the academic requirements consisting of class hours, assessment details and reading lists. I have heard several times at college graduations that 'even if a student has gained distinctions in academic work, unless we (the college) have brought that student closer to God, and developed his/her spiritual life, then we have failed in our task'. It sounds very pious and worthy. But it is true. In my cynical moments I think we sometimes say it because it sounds good, and it is difficult to refute, but deep down we know that the piece of paper presented is probably going to be more use than all the well-meaning piety on the evening.

But that is to miss the point. The piece of paper ought not to be given *unless there is evidence of a growing relationship with God* indicated by various factors such as a deepening of spiritual understanding and effectiveness in dealing with people. That is what renewal is all about. And in reality most worthy training programmes have changed significantly in recent years to reflect such attitudes. And it works at any academic level. I will mention just two examples with which I am familiar.

Zambia

The first is in Zambia at a place called Malambanyama, some 110kms north-east of Lusaka. Under the auspices of the Northern Baptist Association of Zambia (NBAZ) a training programme has been set up to reflect the church context. The area was evangelized

over twenty years ago and today there are over 75 village churches in the area—amongst the Lenje people group. With such growth a training programme was needed to guarantee continued leadership. In 1999 the Malambanyama Biblical Leaders Training Centre (MBLTC) was established. The programme takes potential leaders from the village churches and provides an integrative balance between theory and practice. A series of intensive courses is run each year whereby the students come to a central location (Malambanyama) for four to six weeks at a time—three times each year. The times are spaced so that there is no interruption of the work in the fields in their villages. An 'academic' foundation is the basis, but each subject is taught by a practitioner and with the local church in mind. The vernacular is used and everything is related to the context. The students bring their own food and live in conditions which are the same as the village. Between the intensive 'block' courses, the students return to their village churches and practise what they have learned. In addition, the MBLTC superintendent travels around the churches to provide encouragement and further input to the students. The students graduate after a certain number of courses have been taken, and an assessment is made of the spiritual growth of the student over the two-years of training.

The programme is not accredited—because there is no need. The most important thing is that the students are prepared for ministry in the churches—that is the only accreditation required. One of the great things about the programme is that all the

students are well known by the local churches. So much so that when they graduate, the students are almost guaranteed to find a church in which to serve either full time or, most likely, part time. The training was established to meet the need of the churches—not some set of regulations set down from outside the area. And the needs are being met.

Australia

The other example is the development which has taken place in theological training within institutions in Australia in the last fifteen years or so. In that time there have been some huge changes to the content and method of accredited theological education. The accreditation agency with which I am most familiar is the Australian College of Theology. However, the changes have generally not come ‘from above’ through the ACT leaders, but ‘from below’—the colleges themselves. One of the big changes was the introduction of the Bachelor of Ministry degree in the early 1990s. Its focus is ministry, not intellectual theory (which the Bachelor of Theology tends to do). Subjects are semesterised and more electives—almost all in the pastoral/ practical area—are available. Experienced-based learning is part of the degree whereby students can reflect on their spiritual journey in the context of small groups. Mentors are appointed to become involved in the personal development of the students.

The best colleges appoint lecturers who are practitioners of their field as well as having an academic knowledge of the material. The emphasis is on outcomes rather than programmes. What

is more—the lecturers are made aware that students learn more from them as Christians than they do as professional teachers. To that end various opportunities are given for personal interaction between the lecturer and students, through small groups, informal meetings and social gatherings, as well as in churches. It is now a familiar comment by graduating students that what they appreciated most about their time at college has been the interaction with lectures, rather than the content of the subjects.

I am not saying that either of the above programmes is perfect, nor that they are the only ones involved in renewal. Obviously not. But I make the point that there is no excuse these days for theological education to be done badly. There are plenty of resources and examples to guide those involved in developing excellent training programmes, so that the church of God will have servants who are prepared both adequately and appropriately for the ministry in which they are involved.

Conclusion

The debate as to what is ‘good’ or ‘excellent’ theological education will no doubt continue. I have had the privilege of being part of it for a number of years. The point I want to make is that the ingredients for good theological education are with us—and have been for some time. Other documents discuss these matters, but the Manifesto probably brings them together better than any other document I know. What we as evangelicals need to do is simply practise the principles enunciated. In the words of the Manifesto... ‘this we must accomplish, by God’s grace’.

Scripture and Hermeneutics: Reflections over 30 years

James Stamoolis

KEYWORDS: *Inerrancy, women in ministry, authority, homosexuality, megachurch, Orthodoxy, paradigms*

Introduction

It is a challenge to reflect on the developments of the past thirty years as we celebrate this milestone in the life of the WEA Theological Commission. So much has happened in the world, so much has happened in the church, that these last years have been explosive in terms of change. To survey the entire world would require several volumes! These are personal impressions of the scene in North America.

Scripture and Hermeneutics

When I was in seminary the big issue was the inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible. Books were written on the topic defending the full authority of an inerrant Bible. Other books were written on the impossibility of such a position and the need to speak of the authority of the Bible in a restricted

sense. One example will suffice to explain the intensity of the debate. In an apparent error of judgment by the school that issued the invitation and also by the speaker who chose his topic, a well-known evangelical seminary which held strongly to inerrancy too late learned their commencement speaker was from 'the other side'. He used the occasion to chastise his hosts and the graduating class for their foolish adherence to the position of an inerrant Bible. While like most commencement speeches this one has no doubt been long forgotten, the story serves to indicate the theological climate at the time.

Of course, our friends in Europe were not fighting this battle; they were busy fighting other challenges to the faith. In subsequent conversations with European theologians, I found they seemed genuinely intrigued and perhaps a little puzzled by the American preoccupation with inerrancy and infallibility. There were notable exceptions among the European evangeli-

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cals who followed the battles, but for most part this was an American war.

Theologians from the developing churches also were above the fray because they had no inherent difficulty with a holy book. Some international students returning to their home countries developed the themes of inerrancy learned during their graduate studies in North America. Back home they found themselves answering questions their people had never thought to ask. Unfortunately their training did not always equip them to answer the real questions in their society, such as ancestor worship.

In the midst of the debate in America, when it was ranging the hottest, a wise professor from whom I learned much warned us that the future debate would not be over inerrancy but over hermeneutics. How correct his prophecy has proven to be. Without referring to inerrancy or infallibility, we hear theologians citing Scripture as their authority to justify any number of departures from generally accepted norms. The justification of openly gay clergy and hierarchy is done on the basis of Biblical texts, interpreted according to their hermeneutic.

Recent battles within the Evangelical Theological Society, which has a strong statement on the authority of Scripture,¹ have revolved around

hermeneutic considerations. At their last annual meeting (November 2003), the ETS debated whether those holding to the 'openness of God' theology had violated the doctrinal basis.²

These conflicts should not surprise us since we have in Luke 4 and Matthew 4, an example of different hermeneutical approaches to the Biblical text. While the phrase, 'the devil can quote the scriptures for his own purposes' does not appear in the Bible, certainly the sentiment of that expression does. In the deconstructionist reading of a text, the author's intent is not as important as what the text 'says' to the reader.

There is, however, a corresponding Scylla to the Charybdis of hermeneutic interpretation. If we posit that there is only one correct understanding of a text, whose understanding do we accept? The early church's understanding? The Reformation understanding? Western Christianity (however defined) against the insights of the emerging churches? Francis Schaeffer's concept of a circle helps us here as we perhaps can agree on a circle of hermeneutical interpretation rather than a defined point.

The problem of selecting the correct interpretation of a text will not go away. Theologians must assist the church in understanding the range of possible meanings, especially as the text relates to the changing environment the church finds herself in. The hermeneutical challenge to the church will only increase in the coming years.

¹ The Statement of Faith of the Evangelical Theological Society to which all members must yearly sign their agreement to is: 'The Bible alone, and the Bible in its entirety, is the Word of God written and is therefore inerrant in the autographs. God is a Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, each an uncreated person, one in essence, equal in power and glory.'

² 'Evangelical Theological Society Moves Against Open Theists' www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2002/145/54.0.html

There is, however, a bright side to this as the focus has returned again to the Scriptures as an authority to be considered.

Women in ministry

Thirty years ago women in evangelical seminaries faced some discrimination if they chose to pursue pastoral ministries. On the whole women were welcomed to study biblical and theological subjects with the implicit understanding that they would not seek ordination nor would they, in denominational traditions that restricted it, teach men. A woman's place teaching other women and children was never questioned. Of course, seminaries with a broader understanding of the Bible or a different view on certain texts were admitting women to pastoral studies. And some denominations were ordaining women to pastoral ministry.

It is only in the last thirty years that the Anglican Communion has ordained women to the priesthood. Along that note, it is interesting to read Michael Harper's reasons for leaving the Anglican Communion.³ While Harper defends his earlier decision to remain Anglican, in spite of some Anglican bishops denying basic tenets of the faith such as the Incarnation and the Resurrection, he could not agree to the ordination of women. His argument is

that the opinions of bishops, however heretical, are just that opinions. But as a clergyman, he was compelled to agree to the ordination of women.

Some readers of this article will no doubt feel sympathetic to Harper's conviction, while others might find the denial of basic tenets of the faith by those sworn to uphold it more troubling. The point here is not to argue for the validity of women's ordination, but to demonstrate the hardening of opinion in the last thirty years. When I was Graduate Dean at Wheaton College, one of my highly esteemed colleagues was Dr. Lois McKinney. She had been a church worker and then missionary to Brazil before returning to the USA to teach. Lois's comment to me was that when she graduated from seminary, she was allowed to do more as a woman in ministry than women entering her denomination would be allowed to do today. What was not a watershed issue in terms of ministry then, has become a defining one today.

Again, I would say this controversy is over hermeneutics, rather than authority. Both those who favour women in all aspects of ministry and those who would limit women to certain restricted roles appeal to the authority of Scripture to prove their point. It will be certainly be interesting to observe thirty years from now where evangelical churches stand on these issues.

Worth noting is that even in denominations which are heavily male-dominated, women missionaries carried on pastoral functions that they would never have been permitted to undertake in the churches that sent them out. This phenomena, well documented in any standard history of mission,

³ The acceptance of women's ordination by the Anglican Church is the reason Michael Harper gives for leaving and converting to Eastern Orthodoxy. See his *A Faith Fulfilled: Why Are Christians across Great Britain Embracing Orthodoxy?* (Ben Lomond, CA: Conciliar Press, 1998).

demonstrates there has been a disconnect between what are perceived to be the clear instructions of Scripture in the sending country versus the actual needs of the mission field. Some of this disconnect can be attributed to racial prejudice, the nationals on the field being seen as 'children' in need of instruction and not men and women capable of leadership. But regardless, the position of teaching and authority that women carried out most capably is the reason (on the human level) for the church existing in many places today. The women got the job done.

Another side note is the issue of giftedness, both natural and spiritual. Many churches have been capably led by women. In particular, churches in the Pentecostal and Holiness traditions have been served well by women. A capable woman, General Eva Burrows, has led the Salvation Army in this generation, as was done in past generations.⁴ The hermeneutical issue of what the Scriptures actually mean about women in ministry will continue to provide employment for writers, editors, publishers and printers for at least another generation.

Homosexuality

While this issue would seem to fall outside the hermeneutical debate, with the Bible speaking clearly on the subject in several places (e.g. Lev. 18:22, Rom. 1:26-27), yet the proponents who

allow homosexual behaviour also use Scripture to buttress their position.

The consecration of the first openly homosexual bishop of the Episcopal Church sparked no small controversy. Parishes spoke of withdrawing and actively withdrew to form another Episcopal denomination. Bishops in Africa threatened to sever relationships with the Episcopal Church USA and possibly the Anglican Communion.⁵ Yet New Hampshire's Bishop Vicki Gene Robinson, the bishop at the heart of the controversy, was shown on national television citing Scripture as justification for allowing his consecration to proceed. No doubt the last chapter has yet to be written on this conflict. At the time of this writing, the donations to the Episcopal Church USA are down by \$3 million. It is generally assumed this is the result of local dioceses withholding or redirecting contributions to protest against the church's first openly homosexual bishop.⁶

My purpose here is not to argue this point; others have done so in numerous places. Rather, I am attempting to demonstrate that the issues that marked the battlefield thirty years ago have shifted from the question of authority to the question of interpretation. This is a great change and the significance of this dramatic shift cannot be lost on the church. The battleground has changed and the call for biblical literacy and a historical understanding of the wisdom of the church in 2000 years

⁴ Henry Garipey, *General of God's Army: the Authorized Biography of General Eva Burrows* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1993). One is reminded of the often-repeated quote of the Salvation Army's founder, William Booth: 'Some of my best men are women.'

⁵ See <http://www.americananglican.org/>

⁶ 'ECUSA's Financial Shortfall Suggests Member Disapproval' by Jim Brown <http://www.crosswalk.com/news/religiontoday/1247592.html>

has intensified. We must not, however, quote the Fathers, neither of the Early Church nor of the Reformation, without understanding the context and questions they were facing. Just as we need to use a historical, grammatical, exegetical (and some would add, theological) approach to Scripture, so we need an approach to history that understands the context of history. May God raise up interpreters of his Word and his work, through the Holy Spirit providing living and historical understanding, which can reveal to the church God's specific and whole truth found in Scripture.

Growth of megachurches

Thirty years ago, there were a handful of large churches built around charismatic personalities. One is tempted to think that like the growth of megacities in the last thirty years there is a direct link to the proliferation of megachurches. Certainly, megachurches can only exist in population centers. But it is not the appearance of megachurches that interests me as much as the impact these churches have on the face of Christianity in the United States.⁷ The average size of a church in the USA is under 150 members. What does the phenomena of megachurches mean for religious life? In some sense these large churches become a standard of comparison for

how church should be. The bigger the church, the larger a staff it can afford to serve the attendees. It is a fact noted by Lyle E. Schaller, guru of American church life, that there are fewer volunteers proportionately in the larger churches. There is a greater reliance on paid staff and reluctance on the part of laity to assume roles for which they are not as qualified as the professionals on the staff. The level of commitment to the fellowship is also less because there is not the corresponding investment in working in the church.

In smaller churches, there is more involvement and investment because the members see themselves as the permanent element in the church. 'A large church is not simply a small church with more people. It is, as Schaller says, an entirely different kind of animal. He suggests that one of the greatest sources of frustration for denominational leaders, pastors and church members is their failure to recognize these qualitative differences. Ministers who have successfully led a small church often fail in a large church because they try to repeat the strategies that were successful in the small church.'⁸

This factor needs to be taken into consideration in the preparation of students for ministry. While thirty years ago, seminarians could expect to serve a church much like that which they grew up in, today's students and the

7 I am well aware that the biggest churches are not in the USA. Reputedly the biggest church in the world is Paul Yonggi Cho in Seoul, Korea which has over 700,000 members with another 700,000 in regional churches.

8 Daniel V. A. Olson, 'Learning from Lyle Schaller: Social Aspects of Congregations', *The Christian Century*, January 27, 1993, pp. 83-84. This article is available online at http://www.religion-online.org/cgi-bin/researchd.dll/showarticle?item_id=323

churches they serve have different expectations. It is not clear, however, that theological education has kept up with the expectations. Overall, the theological curriculum has been slow to change and incorporate new paradigms for training. In the past seminaries fought hard to be accepted by the academy and in most places the professors have achieved recognition in their fields.

The question that needs to be asked is whether the seminaries are adequately preparing students to be pastors. There is the imitation factor at play, which leads students to model themselves after their professors, striving to be scholars.⁹ Those who cannot attain this standard are content to accept the credentials the seminary hands them at graduation, which permits them to occupy a pulpit. Seminary becomes the way to get a 'union card' to be admitted to the trade. Formal learning stops at the last exam.

There is another dimension to the phenomena of the megachurch, which is the effect these churches are having on expectations of church life. The programming seen in megachurches is viewed as a standard for church life, even in smaller churches without adequate resources, both human and financial. The desire to have more creates a consumer mentality where a family will shop around for the best children's program, the best youth program, and the best worship experience,

sometimes settling on multiple churches that provide these services.

The megachurches are service oriented and since theological education in most seminaries generally has a more traditional focus, the megachurches train their own staff. Because, seminary training is seen to be irrelevant, in a greater or lesser measure, megachurches create educational opportunities for their own staff. This of course has economic consequences for traditional seminaries as they see their student enrolment decline.

It is not my purpose, nor should the reader suppose, that I am critical of megachurches or the trends in church development. It is my conviction that the Holy Spirit has blown and continues to blow throughout church history, raising up movements that he is able to work through for the purpose of human redemption. After all, that is what God desires. He 'wants everyone to be saved and to come to know the truth' (1 Tim. 2:4).

We need to be like the men of Issachar who understood the times and knew what to do (1 Chronicles 12:32). What are the signs of the times?

Defining new paradigms

It is difficult to condense the last thirty years of theological development into one relatively short article. There has been so much that has happened and at the same time there is a sense of *déjà vu*. I had experience of that the other day when I opened my mail and saw an advertisement for a reissue of Barth's *Church Dogmatics* in quality paperback format. When I was a theological student, I worked hard to find a set of

⁹ See my article on leadership training in which I give suggestions on how to improve what we are doing. James J. Stamooolis, 'How are We Doing at Training National Leaders?' *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, Vol. 37, no. 4: 488-495 (October 2001).

Church Dogmatics. Over the years, there did not seem to be as much demand or interest in Barth; other thinkers such as Moltmann and Panenberg commanded more attention from evangelicals.

The same seems to be true of trends in the churches. Thirty years ago we were given some recordings of Roman Catholic groups singing new worship songs, departures from traditional hymnody, both Catholic and Protestant. It is interesting to see how worship songs and hymns have come to be shared by both Protestants and Catholics.

Not everyone, however, likes new music. Here in North America we seem to be in the midst of worship wars or at least worship skirmishes in many of our congregations. The battle is not a simple divide between traditionalists and those who favour contemporary music. The younger generation, defined by an attitude toward post-modernism, rather than chronological age, is starting to favour traditional forms and set liturgies. Many congregations have all three groups present: traditional non-liturgical types, contemporary praise song types, and the new traditionalists who are returning to set types of worship. The common theme is that Christians are seeking a meaningful experience of worship. But this is precisely where we were thirty years when new hymnody revived the experience of worship for many of us. What we are seeing is a hunger and thirst for reality. Where that reality is found seems to be different for different people. One size no longer fits all.

This longing to return to ancient ways may in part explain another trend I have noticed, an interest in the East-

ern Orthodox Church. Having grown up in the Orthodox Church and become an evangelical because of a conversion experience during my university days, I knew a lot about the Eastern churches and researched them during my theological studies. But thirty years ago these churches were not on the radar screens of many evangelicals. Knowledge of the Eastern Orthodox was spotty and most tended to lump them in with Roman Catholics with whom they appeared to share many similarities. Not many were interested in my research.

Yet in recent years there has been a rush toward conversion to the Orthodox Church. A group of former Campus Crusade Staff workers embarked on a search for the true form of the Christian faith. Their search led them to develop the Evangelical Orthodox Church. As the name sounds, they adopted the forms and theological content of the Eastern Orthodox Church while maintaining an 'evangelical fervor'. Having been denied admission into The Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas (SCOBA)¹⁰ as a regular

¹⁰ 'The Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas (SCOBA) established in 1960, brings together the canonical hierarchs of the Orthodox jurisdictions in America. The purpose of the Conference is to make the ties of unity among the canonical Orthodox Churches and their administrations stronger and more visible.' http://www.oca.org/pages/orth_chri/Orthodox-Churches/scoba/index.html This is necessary because in traditional Orthodox countries there is only one 'national' Orthodox Church. However the Orthodox Diaspora has produced ethnic churches instead of a national church.

Orthodox Church, the Evangelical Orthodox Church eventually became a part of the Antiochian Orthodox Church. There are active converts witnessing to the truth of Orthodoxy on several Christian college campuses. Many students, drawn by what I described above as return to liturgical worship, are joining various Orthodox churches. Not only individuals, but also often an entire congregation will convert with their pastor. There are several cases of entire Episcopal parishes turning Orthodox.

Whether or not there is actual conversion, a tremendous interest in the forms of worship of the Eastern Orthodoxy and a corresponding interest in the theology of the early Fathers has

become apparent. I have lectured on Orthodox spirituality in several settings. Some of those in attendance seemed hungry for a more meaningful worship experience, even while remaining in their own churches.

The challenges before us as theologians are great, but the resources that God provides are inexhaustible. May the next thirty years see a great awakening in nominal Christian lands and great turning to Christ in lands where other systems hold people captive to false ideologies. Thanks be to God who has given us the Living Word, the Lord Jesus, the written Word, the Scriptures, and the source of life and teacher, the Holy Spirit so that we can be witnesses to the truth of God.



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Why Trust a Cross? Reflections on Romans 3:21-26

Donald A. Carson

KEYWORDS: *Salvation, wrath, righteousness, law, faith, justification, atonement*

ROMANS 3:21-26 has for a long time been a focal text for debate about the atonement. With the rise of the 'new perspective' on Paul, some of the parameters of these debates have shifted. Within the constraints of this essay, I cannot attempt the full-blown interaction that the subject demands. My aim is more modest. I intend to discuss ten of the turning-points in the text that affect the outcome of one's exegesis, and briefly indicate at least some of the reasons why I read the text as I do.

The Significance of the Preceding Passage 1:18-3:20

Disputants are unlikely to agree on the solution to a problem if they cannot agree on the nature of the problem.

Today's disputes focus on whether or not the situation envisaged in 2:5-16 is real or hypothetical; the extent to which 2:17-28 focuses on the failure of the nation of Israel rather than on the individual; the extent to which Paul's theology, which on the face of it runs from plight to solution, betrays his own experience, which was (it is argued) from solution to plight; the nature and focus of his rhetoric; the extent to which covenant categories control this section; and much more. Each of these topics could call forth a very lengthy chapter.¹

¹ Apart from the major commentaries, see the admirable treatment by Andrew T. Lincoln, 'From Wrath to Justification: Tradition, Gospel, and Audience in the Theology of Romans 1:18-4:25', in *Pauline Theology. Volume III: Romans*, ed. David M. Hay and E. Elizabeth Johnson (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), pp. 130-159.

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However such matters are resolved, the framework must not be forgotten. The section opens with the wrath of God being revealed from heaven ‘against all the godlessness and wickedness of men’², and ends with a catena of texts to prove that no one is righteous, not even one.³ Jews and Gentiles are alike condemned. Nor will it do to make the failure exclusively national (though it is not less than national): if it is true to say that Jews and Gentiles collectively are alike under sin, Paul carefully goes farther and specifies that they ‘alike are *all* under sin’.⁴ Indeed, *every* mouth is to be silenced on the last day, and there is *no one* righteous.⁵

What these observations establish, then, is the nature of the problem that Rom 3:21-26 sets out to resolve. The problem is not first and foremost the failure of Israel (national or otherwise), or inappropriate use of the law, or the urgency of linking Jews and Gentiles (all genuine themes in these chapters), but the wrath of God, directed against every human being, Jew and Gentile alike—a wrath elicited by universal human wickedness. This is not saying that human beings are incapable of any good. Clearly, even those without the law may do things about which their consciences rightly defend them.⁶ But the flow of argument that takes us from 1:18-32 to 3:9-20 leaves us no escape: individually and collec-

tively, Jew and Gentile alike, we stand under the just wrath of God, because of our sin.⁷

Moreover, the closing verses of this section establish two other points that support this analysis, and help to prepare for 3:21-26. *First*, the second half of v.19 paints a picture that is unavoidably forensic; and *second*, the slight modification of Ps 143:2 (LXX 142:2) in Rom 3:20, by the addition of the phrase ‘by the works of the law’, establishes (a) that although the indictment of 1:18-3:20 embraces all of humanity, there is special reference to Jews, precisely because to them were given the oracles of God;⁸ (b) that in the light of the forensic catastrophe summarized in the preceding verse the expression ‘works of the law’ cannot easily be reduced, in this context, to boundary markers such as laws relating to circumcision, kosher food, and Sabbath, for in fact these ‘works of the law’ by which one cannot be justified must be tied to the judgment according to works⁹, to the unyielding principle of

2 Romans 1:18.

3 Romans 3:9-20.

4 Romans 3:9.

5 Romans 3:19, 20.

6 Romans 2:15.

7 Surprisingly, B. W. Longenecker, *Eschatology and Covenant: A Comparison of 4 Ezra and Romans 1-11* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 175-81, argues that Paul’s indictment, especially in 1:18-32, is rhetorical polemic typical of the technique of ethical denunciation, but without any empirical correspondence. Not only does this argument presuppose that polemic cannot have pedagogical purpose, it presupposes that rhetoric cannot be deployed to make points about empirical reality. That would cut the ground out from Paul’s conclusion in 3:9-20.

8 As Romans 9 puts it.

9 Romans 2:8.

performance (2:13);¹⁰ and (c) that therefore the law itself was not given, according to Paul, to effect righteousness, for even 'if the deeds by which one hopes to be justified are deeds laid down in the law, this fails to alter the universal indictment that no one passes the judgment, no one is righteous'.¹¹ This does not mean the law is intrinsically evil, of course¹²; it does mean that Paul adopts a certain salvation-historical reading of the law's role, and according to that reading the law (by which he here means the law-covenant), while it enabled human beings to become conscious of sin and doubtless performed other functions described elsewhere, could not, in the nature of the case, justify anyone.¹³

Νυνὶ δὲ ('But now'), 3:21

Although this expression can signal a logical connection, here it is almost

certainly temporal¹⁴, indeed salvation-historical. But granted the contrast between the old era of sin's dominion and the new era of salvation, or between the old era of the law covenant and the new era that Jesus Christ has introduced (these most basic of contrasts in Paul's eschatology), what is the precise nature of the temporal contrast here? If 3:21-26 is contrasted with all of 1:18-3:20, then it is possible, with Moo, to say, 'As the "wrath of God" dominated the old era (1:18), so "the righteousness of God" dominates the new.'¹⁵ But perhaps that is not quite Paul's focus. In general terms, the New Testament writers, including Paul, do not encourage us to think that God presents himself in the old covenant as a God of wrath, and in the new as a God of grace (justifying grace?). Although the point cannot be defended here, it would be truer to say that, just as the portrait of God as a God of justifying grace is ratcheted up as one moves from the old covenant to the new, so the portrait of God as a God of holy wrath is ratcheted up as one moves from the old covenant to the new. Moreover, in this very paragraph, the *earlier* period is characterized as the time of God's 'forbearance'.¹⁶

A closer contrast lays at hand, one that nevertheless presupposes the shift from the old era to the new. On this reading, 3:21-26 is tied more tightly to the immediately preceding verses. If in the nature of the case the law covenant could not effect right-

10 For the narrower view that connects 'works of the law' to ethnic boundary markers, see, inter alios, B. W. Longenecker, *Eschatology*, pp. 200-202, 206-207; and James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, WBC no. 38a (Dallas: Word, 1988), pp. 153-5. For the broader view espoused here, see, e.g., Ulrich Wilckens, 'Was heisst bei Paulus: "Aus Werken des Gesetzes wird kein Mensch gerecht"?' in *Rechtfertigung als Freiheit: Paulusstudien* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1974), pp. 77-109; idem, *Der Brief an die Römer*, EKKNT vol. 6 (Zürich: Benziger Verlag, 1978) 1.130-31, 145-6, 175-6; and especially Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), pp. 204-217.

11 Andrew T. Lincoln, 'From Wrath to Justification,' p. 146.

12 Romans 7:12.

13 Romans 3:20b.

14 Its customary meaning, e.g. Romans 6:22; 7:6.

15 Douglas J. Moo, *Romans*, p. 222.

16 Romans 3:26 in the Greek text; v. 25 in the NIV.

eousness or ensure that anyone be declared righteous—I leave the expression open for the moment—then, granted the universality of human sin, under the new era what is needed is righteousness that is manifested apart from the law.

Χωρὶς νόμου ('apart from law'), 3:21

Should this phrase be read with *δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ* ('But now a righteousness from God apart from law, has been made known') or with *πεφανερωται* ('But now a righteousness from God has been made known apart from law')? The matter cannot be decided by mere syntactical proximity; it is not uncommon in Greek for a prepositional phrase to modify a verb from which it is somewhat removed. The question must be resolved by appealing to context. If the first interpretation were correct, 'a righteousness from God apart from law', the phrase 'apart from law' would most likely mean 'apart from doing the law' or the like, or perhaps 'apart from the works of the law', referring back to 3:20.

But despite the popularity of this view,¹⁷ by itself it is not quite adequate.

It is quite correct to observe that God's righteousness is attained without any contribution from the 'works of the law.' But to say that it is *now* obtained without any contribution from the 'works of the law' would be to imply that it was *once* obtained with (at least some) contribution from the 'works of the law'—and that is precisely what Paul has ruled out in the previous verses. So if the temporal contrast embedded in 'But now' is taken seriously, then it is contextually inadequate to think that 'apart from law' is really a short-hand for 'apart from the works of the law' or 'apart from doing the law' or the like. After all, as Paul himself will point out in Rom 4, justification has always been by faith and apart from law.

In fact, if, as most sides agree, the prepositional phrase is connected with the verb *πεφανερωται*, then another reading is possible: 'a righteousness from God has been made known apart from law' focuses attention not on the *reception* of righteousness, it is received by faith, but on the *disclosure* of this righteousness, it has been made known apart from law. In that case the expression 'apart from law' most probably means something like 'apart from the law-covenant'. The issue is not whether or not people can do it, the previous verses have insisted that they cannot adequately keep it: all are sinners, but 'law' as a system: this side of the coming and death and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah, God has acted to vindicate his people 'apart from the law', apart from the law as an entire system which played its crucial role in

17 E.g. Anders Nygren, *Commentary on Romans* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1949), p. 148; C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975-79) 1.201 (though he finds this meaning present even while holding, rightly, that the prepositional phrase modifies the verb); Brendan Byrne, *Romans*, Sacra Pagina (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1996), p. 129; Thomas R. Schreinder, *Romans*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1998), p. 180.

redemptive history.¹⁸

But this does not mean that what has been inaugurated in Christ is utterly independent from what has preceded; Paul is not 'antinomian'. Far from it: he insists that this newly disclosed righteousness is that 'to which the Law and the Prophets testify'.¹⁹ In other words, according to Paul God gave the law not only to regulate the conduct of his people and, more importantly, to reveal their sin until the fulfillment of the promises in Christ²⁰, but also because the law has a prophetic function, a witness function: it pointed in the right direction, it bore witness to the righteousness that is *now* being revealed. It is not simply that the national identity markers are now obsolete; there is a sense in which the entire law-covenant is 'obsolete'²¹—or, more precisely, its ongoing validity is precisely in that to which it bears witness, which has *now* dawned.²² There is a dramatic shift in salvation history.

δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ
(‘righteousness from God’)
and cognates, 3:21

This expression clearly dominates the

passage. It occurs four times²³, the cognate adjective ‘just’ (*δίκαιος*) occurs once²⁴ and the cognate verb ‘to justify’ (*δικαιόω*) twice.²⁵ Probably no New Testament word-group has elicited more discussion during the past century than this one. Few doubt that the noun and adjective cover a range of meanings in the New Testament, so that any particular usage is largely determined by context. Arguably, Paul always uses the verb in the forensic sense, ‘to justify.’

Granted the complexity of the discussion, I shall venture only a few observations and claims, with minimal argumentation. In part, the force of the expressions in this passage must be teased out in conjunction with the delineation of the flow of the argument.

(a) The preceding section²⁶ has established the need for this righteousness. That need is bound up with human sin, and the inevitability of universal human guilt before God. That already constitutes some support for the view that this ‘righteousness from God’ is God’s eschatological justifying or vindicating activity.

(b) Despite the extraordinary popularity of the view that the expression actually means something like ‘God’s covenant faithfulness’ or the like, recent research is making such a view harder and harder to sustain. The history of the interpretation is itself suggestive; more important yet is the fact that in the Hebrew Bible the terms

18 In fact, since *νόρου* is anarthrous, there may be a hint not only of the Mosaic law-covenant, but of the ‘law’ known even to Gentiles (2:13-16): the entire demand structure could not justify men and women in the past, and now God has acted to justify men and women ‘apart from’ it.

19 Romans 3:21.

20 Cf. Romans 4:13-15; 5:20; Galatians 3:15-4:7.

21 To use the language of Hebrews 8:13.

22 This is, as I have elsewhere argued, the argument of Jesus himself in Matthew 5:17-20.

23 Romans 3:21, 22, 25, 26—though the last two are ‘his righteousness’.

24 Romans 3:26.

25 Romans 3:24, 26.

26 Romans 1:18-3:20.

διαθήκη ('covenant') and δικαιοσύνη ('righteousness'), despite their very high frequency, almost never occur in close proximity.²⁷ In general,

one does not 'act righteously or unrighteously' with respect to a covenant. Rather, one 'keeps,' 'remembers,' 'establishes' a covenant, or the like. Or, conversely, one 'breaks,' 'transgresses,' 'forsakes,' 'despises,' 'forgets,' or 'profanes' it.²⁸

Righteousness language is commonly found in parallel with terms for rightness or rectitude over against evil. The attempt to link 'being righteous' with 'being in the covenant' or with Israel's 'covenant status,' especially in Qumran and rabbinic literature, does not fare very well either.

(c) Even at the level of philology, the δικ- words are so commonly connected with righteousness/justice that attempts to loosen the connection must be judged astonishing.

(d) Not least in this paragraph, but also elsewhere, there is a dual concern that God be vindicated and that his people be vindicted.²⁹ So also here at the

beginning of the passage: this is a righteousness 'from God,' i.e. it is first and foremost God's righteousness³⁰, but it is precisely *this* righteousness from God which comes to all who believe (v. 22).³¹

διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ
(‘through faith in Jesus
Christ’), 3:22

Traditionally, this phrase has been understood to establish Jesus Christ as the object of faith, the objective genitive reading. More recently, influential voices have argued for either a possessive genitive, 'through the faith of Jesus Christ,' or, more commonly, a subjective genitive, taking πίστις to mean 'faithfulness', 'through the faith-

³⁰ Romans 3:2.

³¹ Romans 3:22. Pace N. T. Wright, 'Romans and the Theology of Paul,' in *Pauline Theology. Volume III: Romans*, ed. David M. Hay and E. Elizabeth Johnson (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), pp. 38-9, who claims that 'righteousness' means 'covenant faithfulness', and therefore that this 'righteousness' is 'not a quality or substance that can be passed or transferred from the judge to the defendant' (p. 39). The righteousness of the judge is simply the judge's 'own character, status, and activity' (p. 39), demonstrated in doing various things; the 'righteousness' of the defendants is their status when the court has acquitted them—and obviously this righteousness must not be confused with the latter. 'When we translate these forensic categories back into their theological context, that of the covenant, the point remains fundamental: the divine covenant faithfulness is not the same as human covenant membership' (p. 39). Wright's errors here can be traced first of all to a misunderstanding of δικαιοσύνη, and, second (as we shall see) to a less plausible reading of the passage at hand.

²⁷ On both points, see the excellent discussion by Mark A. Seifrid, 'Righteousness Language in the Hebrew Scriptures and Early Judaism', in *Justification and Variegated Nomism. Volume 1: The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism*, ed. D. A. Carson, Peter T. O'Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2001), pp. 415-442. See further Douglas J. Moo, *Romans*, pp. 70-90; and, more briefly, Peter Stuhlmacher, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Commentary*, trans. Scott J. Hafemann (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), pp. 61-65.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 424.

²⁹ Romans 3:26; see below.

fulness of Jesus Christ'.³² Even if the subjective genitive were to prevail, the traditional interpretation of the paragraph as a whole remains plausible: after all, some New Testament writers make much of the obedience, and thus the faithfulness, of Jesus Christ in accomplishing his Father's will, especially John and Hebrews. But the subjective genitive reading can be used to support a 'new perspective' interpretation of this passage, in a way that the objective genitive cannot: the 'covenant faithfulness', 'righteousness', on this reading, of God is revealed through the faithfulness of Jesus the Messiah for the benefit of all. Indeed, N. T. Wright goes so far as to say that 'the success of this way of reading this passage is the best argument in favor of the subjective genitive (faith "of" Christ) in some at least of the key passages'.³³

The linguistic arguments, though complex, are far from conclusive.³⁴ Per-

haps the one exegetical argument that carries an initial weight against the objective genitive is something that is lost in English, viz. the apparent tautology generated by the objective genitive in Greek: διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰς πιστεύοντας ('through trust in Jesus Christ to all who exercise trust' or 'through faith in Jesus Christ to all who have faith'³⁵). The apparent tautology is lost in most of our English translations because of the difference in root behind our noun 'faith' and our verb 'believe' ('through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe'³⁶). Yet closer inspection discloses that there is a profound reason for this repetition, viz. the prepositional phrase 'for all'. The point may be demonstrated by the somewhat paraphrastic rendering, 'This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ—to all who have faith in him'.³⁷

The advantages of this explanation of the repetition are many.

(a) It takes the crucial expressions, including 'righteousness' and 'faith', in their most natural ways. For instance, πίστις almost always means 'faith' in Paul; it takes strong contextual support to permit 'faithfulness', and such support is lacking here.

(b) Moreover, although, as we have seen, other New Testament writers develop the theme of Christ's obedience or faithfulness, this is not, demonstrably, a theme that Paul develops, even, as in Romans 4, where he might

32 E.g. Luke T. Johnson, 'Rom 3:21-26 and the Faith of Jesus', *CBQ* 44 (1982), pp. 77-90; Bruce W. Longenecker, *Eschatology*, pp. 149-50; G. Howard, 'The Faith of Christ', *ExpT* 85 (1973-74), pp. 212-214; D. W. B. Robinson, "'Faith of Jesus Christ"—A New Testament Debate', *RTR* 29 (1970), pp. 71-81; Richard B. Hays, 'PISTIS and Pauline Christology: What Is at Stake', in *Society of Biblical Literature 1991 Seminar Papers*, ed. E. H. Lovering, Jr. (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), pp. 714-29.

33 N. T. Wright, 'Romans and the Theology of Paul', p. 37 n.9.

34 Among the better treatments, see Douglas J. Moo, *Romans*, pp. 226-8; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, pp. 181-7; James D. G. Dunn, *Romans* 1.166-7; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, AB no. 33 (New York: Doubleday, 1993), pp. 345-6; and the literature cited in these works.

35 Italics added.

36 Italics added.

37 Similar arguments can be mounted in other passages where a charge of tautology is levelled, e.g. Galatians 2:16; Philippians 3:19.

have had an excuse for doing so.³⁸

(c) More importantly, this reading ties the passage to the preceding section. Romans 1:18-3:20 demonstrates that *all*, Jews and Gentiles alike, are guilty before God; but now, Paul argues, a righteousness from God has appeared that is available to *all* without distinction, but on condition of faith. The connection is explicit in the text, highlighted by the repetition of the word ‘all’ and by two logical connectors. We might continue our rendering: ‘This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ—to *all* who have faith in him. For [γάρ] there is no difference, for [γάρ] *all* [πάντες] have sinned³⁹ and come short of the glory of God.’

(d) This reading also prepares us for the last clause of 3:26, and for Paul’s argument in 3:27-31, with its massive emphasis on faith.

To summarize the argument so far: Paul has established that all are condemned, Jew and Gentile alike, apart from the cross of Christ; all stand under his judicial condemnation and face his wrath. But now, he says, a new righteousness has appeared in the history of redemption to deal with this. Paul first relates this righteousness to Old Testament revelation.⁴⁰ Then he establishes the availability of this righteousness to all human beings without racial distinction, but solely on condition of faith. He now turns to the source of this righteousness from God.

It is nothing other than the gracious provision of Jesus Christ as the propitiatory sacrifice for our sin.

διὰ τῆς ἀπολυτρώσεως
(‘through the redemption’),
3:24

Paul says that the ‘all’ who have faith are ‘justified’⁴¹ freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Jesus Christ, whom God presented as a propitiation.⁴² Thus three images are deployed, and these three correspond to the different ways that sin itself may be viewed.

First, justification, grounded in the imagery of the law court, continues. Lincoln writes:

God’s righteousness is the power by which those unable to be justified on the criterion of works are set right with him and being set in a right relationship with God involves his judicial verdict of pardon. It is not that people are deemed innocent of the charges in the indictment against them. Their unrighteousness has been clearly depicted in Paul’s argument. But he believes the righteous judge has acted ahead of time in history and in his grace has pronounced a pardon on those who have faith in Christ, so that their guilt can no longer be cited against them.⁴³

38 A point shrewdly made by James D. G. Dunn, *Romans* 1.167.

39 I would here prefer to see what traditional grammarians would call a ‘global aorist’, i.e. ‘for all sin’—but that is another issue.

40 Romans 3:21.

41 Gk. *δικαιούμενοι*, the participle of the verb: there is no reason to doubt the verb’s forensic force.

42 Where the English translation departs from the NIV, it is mine.

43 Andrew T. Lincoln, ‘From Wrath to Justification’, p. 148.

This language, then, answers to the controlling theme of 1:18-3:20: all human beings stand under God's judicial condemnation; all are guilty; all deserve his wrath. And this is God's provision for our plight.

Second, God's justification of sinners is 'through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus'. One might say the *origin* of this justification is God's grace, *δωρεάν τῇ αὐτοῦ χάριτι*, 'by his grace as a gift'; the *historical basis* of this gift is 'the redemption that came by Christ Jesus'. All sides recognize that this imagery is tied, both in the Greco-Roman world and in the Jewish world, if we may indulge in the distinction, to freedom from slavery. But there are also roots in Scripture beyond the world of the slave market: God liberated his people from slavery in Egypt and from exile in Assyria and Babylon.⁴⁴ So also here: sin, Paul has already said, has not only made all human beings judicially guilty before God, but it has enslaved them. It has unleashed God's 'giving them over' to the chaining degradations of the human heart; all are imprisoned 'under sin'.⁴⁵ To meet this need, we must have redemption—emancipation from slavery.

The *third* imagery is drawn from the cultic world, but that will be taken up in the next section. But before turning to it, we should remind ourselves that the redemption (*ἀπολύτρωσις*) that is effected is accomplished by the payment of a price or a ransom (*λύτρον*). Leon Morris argued decades ago that 'the LXX usage is such as to leave us in no doubt that *lytron* and its cognates

are properly applied to redemption by payment of a price'.⁴⁶ More recent writers have tended to confirm that conclusion.⁴⁷ In the passage at hand, the price in view is Jesus' death⁴⁸, which frees us from death that is nothing other than sin's penalty.⁴⁹ 'With his redemptive act in Christ, God has acted to free us from the penalty he himself imposed.'⁵⁰

ἱλαστήριον ('propitiation,' NIV 'sacrifice of atonement'), 3:25

Here the imagery is drawn from the cultus. Yet before we briefly unpack this expression, we should observe that the three images are not parallel metaphors that one may cherry-pick according to personal preference. Each is essential if the paragraph is to be understood, and if a full-orbed Pauline theology of the cross is to be sustained; more importantly, they are not strictly parallel. The historical basis of the justification, we have seen, is 'the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.' Now Paul unfolds the *means* inherent in this redemption: this redemption comes about by the will of God the Father, who 'presented' Christ—i.e. he set forth or publicly displayed⁵¹

46 *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (Leicester: IVP, 1965), p. 27.

47 E.g. James D. G. Dunn, *Romans* 1.169, pp. 179-80.

48 Cf. Romans 3:24-25.

49 Romans 5:12; cf. 6:23.

50 David Peterson, 'Atonement in the New Testament,' in *Where Wrath and Mercy Meet: Proclaiming the Atonement Today*, ed. David Peterson (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2001), p. 41.

51 This is the most likely meaning of *προέθετο* in this context.

44 Cf. Deuteronomy 7:8 and Isaiah 51:11.

45 Romans 3:9.

Christ—as a *ἰλαστήριον*. What does this mean?⁵²

There is rising recognition that the Old Testament background is the ‘mercy seat,’ the cover of the ark of the covenant over which Yahweh appeared on the Day of Atonement and on which sacrificial blood was poured. The one other New Testament occurrence of the word certainly refers to the mercy seat⁵³, and so do 21 of the 27 occurrences in the LXX.⁵⁴ It follows, then, that Paul is presenting Jesus as the ultimate ‘mercy seat’, the ultimate place of atonement, and, derivatively, the ultimate sacrifice. What was under the old covenant bound up with the slaughter of animals, and whose most crucial moment was hidden behind a veil, and whose repetition almost invited reflection on the limitations of such a system to ‘cover’ sin,⁵⁵ is now transcended by a human sacrifice, in

public, once for all—and placarded by God himself.

Granted this background, one must still ask what Jesus’ antitypical sacrifice accomplishes. As is well known, in 1931 C. H. Dodd set off a lengthy debate on this subject by arguing that ‘means of atonement’ is an ‘expiatory sacrifice’ or an ‘expiation,’ i.e. that its object is to cancel sin.⁵⁶ The notion of ‘propitiation’, where the object is not sin but God, is too pagan to be appropriate: there, human beings offer sacrifices to their gods in order to make them ‘propitious,’ favorable, and the sacrifices are propitiations. But how can one think that the God of the Bible must be made propitious, when he himself is the One who sends forth his Son and publicly displays him as the needed sacrifice? He has demonstrated his love toward us precisely in this, that while we were still enemies Christ died for us.⁵⁷

Today it is widely recognized that in his central contentions Dodd was wrong. Certainly the Old Testament commonly connects the ‘covering’ or forgiving of sins with the setting aside

52 For a good history of interpretation, see Arland Hultgren, *Paul's Gospel and Mission* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), pp. 47-72; and especially Daniel P. Bailey, ‘Jesus as the Mercy Seat: The Semantics and Theology of Paul’s use of *Hilasterion* in Romans 3:25’ (Ph.D. dissertation, Cambridge University, 1999).

53 Hebrews 9:5.

54 For a detailed defense of this view, see, in addition to the major commentaries, the references to Hultgren and Bailey in the previous note, and such works as those by T. W. Manson, ‘*ἰλαστήριον*,’ *JTS* 46 (1945), pp. 1-10; L. Sabourin and S. Lyonnet, *Sin, Redemption and Sacrifice: A Biblical and Patristic Study* AnBib no. 48 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1970), pp. 157-66.

55 The reference, of course, is to the verb *ἰλάσκειν*, with which *ἰλαστήριον*, “mercy seat,” is cognate.

56 C. H. Dodd, ‘*ἰλαστήριον*, Its Cognates, Derivatives and Synonyms in the Septuagint,’ *JTS* 32 (1931), 352-60; reprinted in idem, *The Bible and the Greeks* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1935), pp. 82-95.

57 Romans 5:8.

of God's wrath.⁵⁸ Certainly when Josephus uses ἱλαστήριον and cognates, propitiation is bound up with his meaning.⁵⁹ None of this denies that it is simultaneously true that sin is expiated, indeed must be expiated. It simply means that ἱλαστήριον includes the notion of propitiation.

Certainly that makes sense in the context of Romans 3:25. For the preceding section, as we have seen, sets the problem up in terms of the wrath of God. Now God has taken action to turn that wrath away. To put it this way, of course, simultaneously succeeds in doing two things. *First*, it distinguishes this notion of propitiation from pagan notions of propitiation. In the latter, human beings are the subject of the action, the ones who are offering the propitiating sacrifice, while the gods

receive the action, and are propitiated. All sides agree, however, that God is the subject of the action here. Certainly human beings are not turning aside God's wrath by something they offer. Nor is it right to imagine in this context that Christ is well-disposed toward guilty sinners while his Father is simply at enmity with them, until Christ intervenes and by his own sacrifice makes his Father favourable, propitious. In this passage, God himself is the subject.⁶⁰ But that raises the *second* point: Is this manner of speaking, in which God is both the subject and the object of propitiation, coherent?

Many do not think so. How can God be simultaneously loving toward us and wrathful against us? Dodd himself put forward a solution: he depersonalized God's wrath, arguing that 'wrath' terminology applied to God is merely a colourful way of speaking about the inevitable outcome of sin's nastiness. Travis argues that God's wrath must be understood in a non-retributive sense,⁶¹ which surely makes little sense in the light of Romans 2:5-9: on the last day, the day of God's wrath, God himself personally 'gives to each person according to what he has done'.⁶²

One suspects that part of the problem is the failure to perceive that the Bible can speak of the love of God in diverse ways,⁶³ with the result that love

58 The honoree of this volume [Roger Nicole] presented much of the evidence half a century ago: see Roger R. Nicole, 'C. H. Dodd and the Doctrine of Propitiation,' *WTJ* 17 (1954-55), pp. 117-57; cf. Leon Morris, *Apostolic Preaching*, pp. 136-56. Although the meaning of ἱλάσκομαι is disputed, a solid case can be made for the view that the notion of propitiation is bound up with the verb when the cultus is the matrix where it is used: see P. Garnet, 'Atonement Constructions in the Old Testament and the Qumran Scrolls,' *EQ* 46 (1974), pp. 131-63, who argues that the verb in such contexts is tied to the removal of guilt or the punishment of sin, and that this inevitably brings with it a change in God's attitude toward the sinner—or, otherwise put, propitiation. See further Bernd Janowski, *Sühne als Heilsgeschehen: Studien zur Sühnetheologie der Priesterschrift und zur Wurzel KPR im Alten Orient und im Alten Testament*, WMANT no. 55 (Neukirchen/Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1982), pp. 15-102.

59 E.g. *B.J.* 5.385; *Ant.* 6.124; 8.112; 10.59.

60 Romans 3:25: προέθετο ὁ θεός.

61 Stephen Travis, 'Christ as Bearer of Divine Judgement in Paul's Thought about the Atonement,' in *Atonement Today*, ed. John Goldingay (London: SPCK, 1995), p. 29.

62 Romans 2:6.

63 Cf. D. A. Carson, *The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2000).

and wrath are set over against each other improperly. If love is understood in an abstract and fairly impersonal way, then it becomes pretty difficult to see how, in the same God, such love can co-exist with wrath. But the Scriptures treat God's love in more dynamic ways, in diverse ways that reflect the varieties of relationships into which God enters. Thus the Bible can speak of God's providential love, his yearning and inviting love, his sovereign and elective love, his love conditioned by covenant stipulations, and more. Moreover, the same Scriptures that teach us that God is love insist no less strongly that God is holy—and in Scripture, God's wrath is nothing other than his holiness when it confronts the rebellion of his creatures. It is far from clear that any biblical writer thinks God's love is personal while his wrath is impersonal.

We may usefully approach this matter another way. Holding that the Hebrew law court establishes the framework of what 'forensic' means, Wright points out that in such a law court

the judge does not give, bestow, impute, or impart *his own* 'righteousness' to the defendant. That would imply that the *defendant* was deemed to have conducted the case impartially, in accordance with the law, to have punished sin and upheld the defenseless innocent ones. 'Justification,' of course, means nothing like that. 'Righteousness' is not a quality or substance that can thus be passed or transferred from the judge to the defendant.⁶⁴

This argument reminds me of the inappropriateness of the illustration used by some zealous evangelists: the judge passes sentence, steps down from the bench, and then pays the fine, or goes to prison, in the place of the criminal.

But neither Wright's argument nor the evangelist's illustration is convincing, and for the same reason: in certain crucial ways, human law courts, whether contemporary or ancient Hebrew courts, are merely analogical models, and cannot highlight one or two crucial distinctions that are necessarily operative when the judge is God. In particular, both the contemporary judge and the judge of the Hebrew law court is an administrator of a system. To take the contemporary court: in no sense has the criminal legally offended against the judge, indeed, if the crime has been against the judge, the judge must rescue himself or herself; the crime has been 'against the state' or 'against the people' or 'against the laws of the land'. In such a system, for the administrator of the system, the judge, to take the criminal's place would be profoundly unjust; it would be a perversion of the justice required by the system, of which the judge is the sworn administrator.

But when God is the judge, the offence is always and necessarily against him.⁶⁵ He is never the administrator of a system external to himself; he is the offended party, as well as the impartial judge. To force the categories of merely human courts onto these uniquely divine realities is bound to lead to distortion. And this, of course,

64 N. T. Wright, 'Romans and the Theology of Paul,' p. 39.

65 Recall Psalm 51:4.

is precisely why idolatry is so central in the Scriptures: it is, as it were, the root sin, the de-godding of God, which is, of course, Paul's point in Romans 1:18-25. This in turn is why God's 'wrath' is personal: the offense is against him. Righteous Judge he doubtless is, but *never* a distanced or dispassionate judge serving a system greater than he is.

Precisely because God is holy, it would be no mark of moral greatness in him if he were dispassionate or distant or uncaring when his creatures rebel against him, offend him, and cast slurs on his glory. Because he is holy, God does more than give sinners over⁶⁶ to their own deserts, a kind of pedagogical demonstration that the people he created, silly little things, have taken some unfortunate paths: this abandonment of them is judicial, a function of his wrath⁶⁷, an anticipation of the great assize.⁶⁸ But because he is love, God provides a 'redemption' that simultaneously wipes out the sin of those who offend, and keeps his own 'justice' intact. This, as we shall see, is the most plausible reading of Romans 3:25b-26. God does not act whimsically, sometimes in holy wrath and sometimes in love. He always acts according to the perfections of his own character. As Peterson nicely puts it, 'A properly formulated view of penal substitution will speak of retribution being experienced by Christ because that is our due. Moreover, the penalty inflicted by God's justice and holiness is also a penalty inflicted by God's love

and mercy, for salvation and new life.'⁶⁹

Nor is this the only Pauline passage where such themes come together. Space limitations forbid even a survey of 2 Corinthians 5:14-6:2,⁷⁰ but it is important to see the place of 2 Corinthians 5:21 in the argument. Strangely, Travis writes, 'But God's wrath is not mentioned in the context, and the focus is in fact on Christ's death absorbing or neutralizing the effects of sin. And that does not involve notions of retribution.'⁷¹ Yet already at 5:10, Paul has established that all must appear before the judgment seat of Christ to receive recompense for what has been done in the body.

Certainly in a parallel passage that treats the theme of reconciliation⁷², wrath is not absent. The fact of the matter is that in Christ's reconciling work, God was 'not counting men's sins against them'.⁷³ Why not? Because he simply wiped them out, in the sense that he treated them as if they did not matter? No, far from it: 'God made [Christ] who had no sin to be sin⁷⁴ for us.'⁷⁵ It is the *unjust* punishment of the Servant in Isaiah 53 that is so remarkable. Forgiveness, restoration, salva-

66 This is mentioned five times in 1:18ff.

67 Romans 1:18.

68 Romans 2:5ff.; 3:19.

69 David Peterson, 'Atonement,' p. 38.

70 On which see, in addition to the major commentaries, David Peterson, 'Atonement,' p. 36-39.

71 Stephen Travis, 'Christ as Bearer of Divine Judgement,' p. 27.

72 Cf. Romans 5:1-11.

73 2 Corinthians 5:19.

74 Even if one decides to render this 'sin' by the periphrastic 'sin offering', the idea of penal substitution remains inescapable. See ch. 7, Richard Gaffin, "The Scandal of the Cross": The Atonement in the Pauline Corpus.'

75 Romans 5:21.

tion, reconciliation—all are possible, not because sins have somehow been cancelled as if they never were, but because another bore them, *unjustly*.

But by this adverb ‘unjustly’ I mean that the person who bore them was just, and did not deserve the punishment, not that some moral ‘system’ that God was administering was thereby distorted. Rather, the God against whom the offences were done pronounced sentence, and sent his Son to bear the sentence⁷⁶; he made him who had no sin to be sin for us.⁷⁷ And the purpose of this substitution was that ‘in him we might become the righteousness of God’.⁷⁸ In this context, ‘righteousness’ cannot call to mind ‘covenant faithfulness’ or the like, for its obverse is sin.⁷⁹ ‘The logic of 2 Corinthians 5 is that God condemns our sin in the death of his sin-

less Son so that we might be justified and reconciled to him (cf. Rom. 8:1-4,10). This “great exchange” is a reality for all who are “in him”, that is, united to Christ by faith.⁸⁰

In some such frame as this, then, it is entirely coherent to think of God as both the subject and the object of propitiation. Indeed, it is the glory of the gospel of God. But let Paul have the last word:

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been *justified* by his blood, how much more shall we be saved *from God's wrath* through

⁷⁶ Romans 5:8.

⁷⁷ 2 Corinthians 5:21a.

⁷⁸ δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ, 2 Corinthians 5:21b.

⁷⁹ Part of the contemporary (and frequently sterile) debate over whether or not Paul teaches ‘imputation,’ it seems to me, turns on a failure to recognize distinct domains of discourse. Strictly speaking, Paul never uses the verb λογίζομαι to say, explicitly, that Christ’s righteousness is imputed to the sinner or that the sinner’s righteousness is imputed to Christ. So if one remains in the domain of narrow exegesis, one can say that Paul does not explicitly teach ‘imputation’, except to say slightly different things (e.g. that Abraham’s faith was ‘imputed’ to him for righteousness). But if one extends the discussion into the domain of constructive theology, and observes that *the Pauline texts themselves* (despite the critics’ contentions) teach penal substitution, then ‘imputation’ is merely another way of saying much the same thing. To take a related example: As Paul uses ‘reconciliation’ terminology, the move-

ment in reconciliation is always of the sinner to God. God is never said to be reconciled to us; we must be reconciled to him. At the level of exegesis, those are the mere facts. On the other hand, because the same exegesis also demands that we take the wrath of God seriously, and the texts insist that God takes decisive action in Christ to deal with our sin so that his wrath is averted, *in that sense* we may speak of God being ‘reconciled to us’: Wesley was not wrong to teach us to sing ‘My God is reconciled’, provided it is recognized that his language is drawn from the domain of constructive theology, and not from the narrower domain of explicit exegesis (although, we insist equally, the constructive theology is itself grounded in themes that are exegetically mandated). On the theme of penal substitution, it is still worth reflecting at length on J. I. Packer, ‘What Did the Cross Achieve? The Logic of Penal Substitution’, *Tyndale Bulletin* 25 (1974), pp. 3-45.

⁸⁰ David Peterson, ‘Atonement,’ p. 38.

him! For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!⁸¹

Or, in terms of Lincoln's summary of Rom 3:21-25 thus far:

Corresponding to the universal situation of guilt, bondage to sin, and condemnation under the wrath of God is a gospel of the righteousness of God, which is available universally to faith and which through Christ's death offers a free and undeserved pardon, liberates into a new life where the tyranny of sin is broken and righteous behavior becomes possible, and provides sat-

isfaction of God's righteous wrath.⁸²

ἐν τῷ αὐτοῦ αἵματι ('in his blood'), 3:25

Several prepositional phrases are piled up in this verse, of which two draw our attention here. The first, 'through faith' (διὰ [τῆς] πίστεως), probably does not modify the verb 'presented' or 'publicly displayed' (προέθετο), since faith was certainly not the instrument through which God publicly displayed Christ as propitiation. Rather, this phrase must modify ἰλαστήριον ('propitiation'). It signals the means by which people appropriate the benefits of the sacrifice. Moreover, the similarity between this expression and the fuller expression in 3:22, 'through faith in Jesus Christ', favours the reading of the objective genitive there: Paul is still talking about the faith of the believer, not the faithfulness of Jesus Christ.

What the phrase 'through his blood' modifies is harder to establish. The options are three:

(a) It is the object of faith, i.e. 'through faith in his blood'.⁸³ This is possible, if we understand 'his blood' to refer to Christ's life violently and sacrificially ended, and thus a rhetorical equivalent to Christ's death, or Christ's cross. But Paul never elsewhere makes 'blood' the object of faith, so this option remains unlikely.

(b) It modifies the verb 'presented' or 'publicly displayed': 'through his

81 Romans 5:6-10; emphasis mine. Ralph P. Martin, 'Reconciliation: Romans 5:1-11,' in *Romans and the People of God*, ed. Sven K. Soderlund and N. T. Wright (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), p. 47, proposes, without any convincing exegetical evidence, that Paul moves from a focus on justification in Rom 1-4 to a focus on reconciliation in Rom 5 because he is dissatisfied with 'the forensic-cultic idiom that limited soteriology to covenant renewal for the Jewish nation'. Martin thus limits and misunderstands the nature of justification in Rom 1-4, and then depreciates his misunderstanding, all in support of his preferred term 'reconciliation'. That sort of contrast introduces a further error of judgment: Martin is treating Paul's soteriological terms as if they are disjunctive options which one may pick and choose, or from which one might have preferences, being dissatisfied with this one in order to advance that one. In fact, even in this passage Paul interweaves several terms. As Rom. 3 attests, Paul's rich and diverse atonement imagery is, in his own mind, profoundly interlocked. We cannot legitimately cherry-pick his 'models' or his 'images'.

82 Andrew T. Lincoln, 'From Wrath to Justification', p. 149.

83 KJV.

blood God has publicly displayed him' or the like. But the expressions are a long way apart, and so the third option is marginally to be preferred.

(c) It modifies *ἱλαστήριον* ('propitiation'): 'God has publicly displayed Christ as a propitiation in his [Christ's] blood.' Paul means to say that Christ's blood, i.e. his sacrificial death, is 'the means by which God's wrath is propitiated. As in several other texts where Christ's blood is the means through which salvation is secured⁸⁴, the purpose is to designate Christ's death as a sacrifice.'⁸⁵

εἰς ἔνδειξιν κτλ. ('to demonstrate etc.'), 3:25b-26

All sides recognize that this phrase introduces the purpose for which Christ set forth Christ as a propitiation. But the precise meaning turns in no small measure on how one understands *δικαιοσύνη* ('justice'). At the risk of oversimplification, there are two principal views, with many refinements that need not be explored here.

(a) If God's 'justice' or 'righteousness' refers to his character, in particular to his covenant faithfulness, then the meaning is something like this: 'in order to demonstrate God's saving, covenant faithfulness through his forgiving of sins committed before, in the time of his forbearance'. But as popular as this view is today, it falters on three exegetical obstacles. *First*, it finds a meaning in *δικαιοσύνη*, 'covenant faithfulness', that we have

already found to be insufficiently warranted. *Second*, it understands the phrase *διὰ τὴν προγεγονότων ἁμαρτημάτων* to mean 'through his forgiving of sins committed before', and this is an unlikely rendering. The word *πάρσεις* means 'overlooking' or 'suspension' or 'remission [of punishment]' or 'postponement [of punishment]', especially in reference to sins or to legal charges; it does not mean 'forgiveness'. *Third*, it is difficult to justify rendering the preposition *διὰ* plus the accusative as 'through'.⁸⁶ In short, the rendering 'through his forgiving of sins committed before' depends on too many philological or syntactical improbabilities. But if that rendering is rejected, there is little left to support 'covenant faithfulness' as the appropriate translation of *δικαιοσύνη* in this context.

(b) If *δικαιοσύνη* designates God's righteousness or justice, whether his impartiality or his fairness or all that is in accordance with his own character, then the entire phrase might be paraphrased as follows: 'in order to demonstrate that God is just, [which demonstration was necessary] because he had passed over sins committed before'. Here the previous disabilities are turned into strengths: *δικαιοσύνη* is read more naturally, *πάρσεις* is now rendered 'passed over,' and *διὰ* plus the accusative is translated 'because.' The expression 'sins committed before' is explained in 3:26. The phrase

⁸⁴ Romans 5:9; Ephesians 1:7; 2:13; Colossians 1:20.

⁸⁵ Douglas J. Moo, *Romans*, p. 237.

⁸⁶ In fairness, this usage is not unknown in Hellenistic Greek. But it is very rare, and therefore convincing reasons must be adduced for adopting this reading, if a more common one is available.

‘in his forbearance’⁸⁷ must be connected with the ‘passed over’: it refers to the period before the cross.⁸⁸ In other words, the sins committed beforehand are not those committed by an individual before his or her conversion, but those committed by the human race before the cross.

This brings us back to the profoundly salvation-historical categories already manifest in 3:21. As Moo nicely says,

This does not mean that God failed to punish or ‘overlooked’ sins committed before Christ; nor does it mean that God did not really ‘forgive’ sins under the Old Covenant. Paul’s meaning is rather that God ‘postponed’ the full penalty due sins in the Old Covenant, allowing sinners to stand before him without their having provided an adequate ‘satisfaction’ of the demands of his holy justice (cf. Heb. 10:4).⁸⁹

And this in turn means that God’s ‘righteousness’ or ‘justice’ must refer to some aspect of his character which, apart from the sacrifice of Christ, might have been viewed with suspicion had sinners in the past been permitted to slip by without facing the full severity of condemnation for sin. God’s ‘righteousness’ has been upheld by his provision of Christ as the propitiation in his blood.

This means, of course, that God’s ‘righteousness’ in 3:25-26 does not

mean exactly what it means in 3:21. There, it refers to God’s ‘justifying’ of his sinful people; here, it refers to something intrinsic to God’s character, whether his consistency or his determination to act in accordance with his glory or his punitive justice: these and other suggestions have been made. And this is in line with the broader observation that for Paul, justification is bound up not only with the vindication of sinners, but even more profoundly with the vindication of God.⁹⁰

In short, 3:25-26 make a glorious contribution to Christian understanding of the ‘internal’ mechanism of the atonement. It explains the need for Christ’s propitiating sacrifice in terms of the just requirements of God’s holy character. This reading not only follows the exegesis carefully, it brings the whole of the argument from 1:18 on into gentle cohesion.

The Significance of the Succeeding Passages, 3:27-31; 4:1ff.

Ideally, the bearing of this treatment of Romans 3:21-26 on the rest of Paul’s argument in Romans should now be teased out. But here I must restrict myself to some cursory observations on the immediately succeeding verses.

Even a superficial glance at Romans 3:27-31 shows that the emphasis now falls on faith. In other words, these verses unpack emphases already made in 3:22 and 26, while developing the argument farther by showing that

⁸⁷ Lit. ‘in the forbearance of God’, which in the Greek text occurs in 3:26, not 3:25 as in NIV.

⁸⁸ Note Paul’s other use of ‘forbearance’ in 2:4; cf. Acts 14:16; 17:30.

⁸⁹ Douglas J. Moo, *Romans*, p. 240.

⁹⁰ See, above all, Mark A. Seifrid, *Christ Our Righteousness: Paul’s Theology of Justification*, NSBT (Leicester: IVP, 2000).

when faith is properly understood, it simultaneously reinforces grace⁹¹ and provides the mechanism by which Jews and Gentiles alike may be justified. Several scholars have also noted that the themes Paul sketches in 3:27-30 are developed in various ways in chapter 4. In particular, Paul establishes three points in 3:27-30, all of them paralleled in 4:1ff. (a) Faith excludes boasting,⁹² a principle already observed in the life of Abraham.⁹³ (b) Faith is necessary, apart from the works of the law, to preserve grace⁹⁴, once again observed in the life of Abraham.⁹⁵ (c) Such faith is necessary if Jews and Gentiles alike are to be justified.⁹⁶ And this point, too, finds a curious warrant in the life of Abraham, in that it is said

of him that his faith was credited to him as righteousness *before* he had received the sign of circumcision.⁹⁷

Paul's closing verse, 'Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law,' (3:31), should not be taken to mean that the apostle still wants to maintain the Mosaic covenant in full force after all, or to uphold νόμος ('law') as *lex*, as ongoing legal demand. Rather, 3:31 is the unpacking of the last clause of 3:21: the law and the prophets testify to this new 'righteousness from God' that has come in Christ Jesus, and thus their valid continuity is sustained in that to which they point. If Paul's reading of the Old Testament, and of the Mosaic covenant in particular, is correct, then that ancient revelation continues in that for which it prepared the way, in that to which it pointed, in that which fulfilled it. The law is upheld, precisely because the redemptive-historical purposes and anticipations of the law are upheld.

91 cf. Romans 3:24.

92 Romans 3:27.

93 Romans 4:1-2.

94 Romans 3:28.

95 Romans 4:3-8.

96 Romans 3:29-30. On these two verses, see especially Jan Lambrecht, 'Paul's Logic in Romans 3:29-30,' *JBL* 119 (2000) pp. 526-8.

97 Romans 4:9ff.

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Doing Theology through the Gates of Heaven

A Bible Study on Ephesians 1:3-14

John Lewis

KEYWORDS: *Worship, salvation, election, atonement, church.*

THEOLOGY today seeks to exist within the framework of new world views and understandings of reality. The temptation is to abandon the finer details of theology. What seems to be preferred is any concept of church that can satisfy the many demands of our new post-modern world. However, in recent times culture based solutions armed with all their research, statistics and testimonials have not always proved themselves to be the 'heroes of the hour' they were once crowned. We have become servants to their demands, rather than *they* servants of the Word. It is evident that as we advance deeper into Post-modernism, the dictums that were once taken as certainties will increasingly become unknown and unheard amid the voices of subjectivity and abstraction.

What is required in these days of change is for the church to re-emphasize a theology of the Word of God that

asserts a biblical and confessional faith, addresses our current human condition, and speaks with depth to our emotional and spiritual needs. It is the Word that holds the key to a contemporary theology that is alive and resonant to minds and hearts of today. It is in the Word that one finds theology uttered with passion as it speaks of God, existence, spirituality, the demands and needs of community, and the hope of Jesus Christ. In Ephesians 1:3-14 one encounters a dynamic passage that expresses theology in the context of worship. In an outpouring of praise, important aspects of soteriology are discussed with poignancy and relevance.

1. A Theology in Worship

The passage begins with an outpouring of praise 'to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ'. This is praise in response to the gracious work of God and his loving decree that has bought about the possibility of 'every spiritual

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blessing' for those who are found in Jesus Christ. This is a benediction, an 'exclamation of praise and prayer', and 'resounds with the praise of God's glory'.¹ It is a statement of thanksgiving that the Father has chosen to elect a people in the Son he loves. Because the Father loves the Son he loves those who are in the Son. In this praise there is a description of a new relational existence that has been bought about by God's love, 'that he has lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding'. In the context of this outpouring of praise the ensuing theology unfolds. This is theology in the context of worship; the doing of the theology as one enters through the gates of heaven and into the presence of God.

2. The Meaning of Election

In verse 4 Christians are drawn to consider what it means to be chosen in Jesus Christ. Here is the reason for praise and thanksgiving. The powerful Christological orientation of this existence is immediately apparent. The one who has just been praised is the instrument of election. The Christians are in praise because it has been made known to them that they are loved by God, united with him, and constitute a fellowship defined by its corporate existence in Jesus Christ. Indeed, Markus Barth has pointed out that this passage is to be noted for its frequent use of the preposition 'in'. Eleven times 'in Christ', or its equivalent, is used.² As

Andrew Lincoln has stated, God's design for his people 'has been effected in and through Jesus Christ'.³ There are two aspects to this. The first is the election of Jesus Christ and the second is the election of God's people through Christ.

In the Old Testament Israel is said to be God's elect. They were his chosen people. What the New Testament affirms, and on which Ephesians 1 rests, is that Jesus Christ is now the elect of God and that the Christian's election can be spoken of only as being election *in him*. Robert Shank, in his *Elect in the Son*, follows this theme when he states that the 'first step toward a correct understanding of the Biblical doctrine of election is the recognition that the election of men is comprehended only in Christ'.⁴ He finds historical support for his argument by turning to the Canons of Dort, which affirms 'that election is in Christ, "whom [God] from eternity appointed the Mediator and Head of the elect and the foundation to salvation."⁵ Shank further states that 'election is first of *Christ* and then of men *in Him*'.

In declaring this Shank finds support from Clement, first-century bishop at Rome, who wrote in his First Epistle

¹ Markus Barth, *Ephesians 1-3: The Anchor Bible* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974), pp. 97-98.

² Markus Barth, *Ephesians*, p. 100.

³ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Word Biblical Commentary: Ephesians* (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), p. 23. According to Lincoln this verse explicitly links the notion of election to being 'in Christ'. Lincoln further observes that in Galatians 3 Paul treats Christ as the one who has fulfilled Israel's election.

⁴ Robert T. Shank, *Elect in the Son: A Study of the Doctrine of Election* (Springfield, Missouri: Westcott, 1971), p. 27.

⁵ Shank, *Elect in the Son*, p. 28.

to the Corinthians: 'God... chose out the Lord Jesus Christ, and us through him for "a peculiar people" (64:1)'⁶ Here Christians come to the realization that they are part of God's grand design to call a people his very own. However, this is not a statement of straight determinism, but an outpouring of praise that one may be found in a loving relationship with the Father *in* and *through* Christ. Here God does not choose to elect individuals, but has chosen to elect Christ and those who are found in him. For this reason this passage presents a theology of election in the context of *corporate* worship, and with a clear pastoral note that affirms Christians as loved and chosen by God.

3. The Decision of Faith

Because this passage states that there is a particular group of people who are elect in Christ, it implies that there are certain restrictions. It clearly points to a condition that must be met. Verse 13 stipulates that those who are included in Christ are those who have heard and believed. The decision and will of God to act in grace stands clearly as the means by which any might come to faith. The faithful preaching of the gospel is the vehicle by which people hear and on hearing the gospel the individual is enabled, by God's grace, to freely make a decision as to whether or not they will embrace Christ as Lord and Saviour.

The initiative of God and the responsibility of the individual are clearly spelled out here. Dale Moody spoke of the two sides of salvation, 'God's grace

and man's faith'.⁷ But it is not election that is to be thought of in individualistic terms. God wills that all come to faith, but has also decreed that only those who do will be counted among the elect. As Shank has stated, the 'saving purpose of God in election has been fixed from eternity and cannot be altered. But the election is corporate rather than particular'.⁸

Therefore, the need for the individual to make a response to God's grace is still evident. This is possible because God in his grace calls out and enables the individual to decide. As F.L. Forlines has stated, there 'must be a move toward man on God's part before there will be any response on man's part...The Holy Spirit must take the Word of God and work in the human heart and mind to prepare the heart and mind before there can be the response of faith from a sinner'.⁹ Forlines is helpful when he writes that the 'Holy Spirit creates a framework of possibilities in which a person can respond in faith to Jesus Christ. The response of faith is not guaranteed, but it is made possible. The person can say either yes or no'.¹⁰ The fact that such a situation is possible is further reason to enter into praise, prayer and thanksgiving. However, this grace is not irresistible.

7 Dale Moody, *The Word of Truth: A Summary of Christian Doctrine Based on Biblical Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), p. 309.

8 Shank, *Elect in the Son*, p 131.

9 F.L. Forlines, *Biblical Systematics: A Study of the Christian System of Life and Thought* (Nashville, Tennessee: Randall House, 1975), p. 204.

10 Forlines, *Biblical Systematics*, p. 204.

6 Shank, *Elect in the Son*, p. 31.

The Ephesians were described as those 'having believed' (1:13). There is no suggestion in this passage that they were chosen to believe. As we have already argued, the text refers to a corporate election in Christ, the elect Son of God. The Christians of Ephesus believed because they were free to believe and did. This is the condition of election with which they had successfully complied. This means that God's grace is resistible but also available to all. Shank refers to passages that point to the resistibility of grace. "To the Galatians (2:21), Paul wrote, "I do not frustrate the grace of God" (by seeking righteousness through the works of the law rather than through faith in Christ). To the Corinthians he wrote (2 Cor. 6:1), "We then, as workers together with God, beseech you also that you receive not the grace of God in vein" (by failing to go on with God in the unfolding of His redemptive purpose for them)."¹¹

However, the point of praise in this passage is that God's grace is available to all. In his earlier *Life in the Son* Shank asserts that God's sovereign will is to save them that believe since he is pleased with the faith of those who seek him. Indeed, God 'wills to have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4), not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9).'¹² The task of the Christian community also comes to light here. The elect church is clearly called to

mission as well as worship. The ministry of the elect is to proclaim the message of Jesus and see others come to share in the Father's rich blessings in Christ. This passage calls upon the church to focus its attention on its true calling as it considers its vision, mission, purpose and goals.

One of the issues related to conditional salvation is that it demands that a person is competent enough to fulfil this condition. This is a significant pastoral note that reflects again on the grace and love of God that leads to praise. The conditional election alluded to in this passage rules out the need for infants to be baptized in order to be saved. It also means that when an infant (or other person not capable of making a decision of faith) dies they are not condemned in their sin, but stand in God's grace. Shank has proposed that on the basis of the words of Jesus (Mt. 18:10; 19:14) it is evident that children are always in a state of grace.¹³ Forlines has further argued that since Christ died for our personal sins one becomes guilty of sin only when one has the capacity to decide to commit one.¹⁴ Consequently people must be able to repent and profess faith to be held accountable for their sins. This is further reason for thanksgiving. The elect community is a corporate

¹¹ Shank, *Elect in the Son*, p. 101.

¹¹ Shank, *Elect in the Son*, pp 131-32.

¹² Robert Shank *Life in the Son: A Study in the Doctrine of Perseverance* (Springfield, Missouri: Westcott, 1961), p. 344.

¹³ Forlines, *Biblical Systematics*, p. 172. John Smyth, in his 'Short Confession of Faith' stated: 'That there is no original sin, but all sin is actual and voluntary, viz., a word, a deed, or a design against the law of God; and therefore, infants are without sin (5).' William L. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1969), p. 100.

entity and community that embraces all. The whole Christian community is included in this benediction of praise.

4. The Meaning of Atonement

As Markus Barth has observed, verse 7 marks a sudden change in direction from election to a specific event—that is, Christ’s death on the cross.¹⁵ Shank believes in a theology of the atonement in which Christ ‘voluntarily concurred in the elective purpose of God and gave to that purpose its eternal realization’.¹⁶ In this verse the redeemed are brought to the gates of God’s presence through the blood of Jesus Christ.

This passage begins in a celebration of praise. In verse 7 one finds worship is made possible only through the shed blood of Christ. We are directed by this to the meaning and purpose of the atonement. Christ did not die in our place under the hand of a wrathful God who seeks to kill us all in our sin. Stanley Grenz has noted that the atonement is primarily directed to human sin, rather than God’s wrath.

The sacrifice of Christ leads to the possibility of forgiveness of sins and results in a restored relationship.¹⁷ On God’s part the motive is love, not the expression of wrath, and the result is reconciliation and worship.¹⁸ The sacrifice of Christ was a sacrificial offering

that was paid to satisfy God’s justice, turn away his wrath, make atonement for the sins of the world, secure forgiveness, and open up, for the purified elect, the way into God’s holy presence. There in the heavenly sanctuary, in a state of pure righteousness, the elect gather in Christ to give God his due.

The atonement’s purpose is to ensure that there is a reconciled and forgiven people acceptable to enter into worship (Heb. 10:19-25). Vincent Taylor has argued well that the sacrifice of Christ is the means by which a person may ‘approach God and find reconciliation with Him’.¹⁹ Taylor further contends that Christ can be said to be our representative in his sacrifice ‘because in His self-offering He performs a work necessary to our approach to God’.²⁰ Christ having made oblation for our sins, humanity may now repent of sin, believe in Christ, and *in* Christ, our faithful high priest, enter into the heavenly places in praise and worship of our creator and Lord. Taylor declares that the atonement has accomplished for humanity the means for one to have sins atoned for and on that basis, to be qualified to approach God in worship and prayer.²¹

Consequently, the theology of atonement expressed in this passage leads to a theology of worship that encompasses the whole being. The burden of our day is that worship often becomes the church’s primary tool of

¹⁵ Markus Barth, *Ephesians*, p. 83.

¹⁶ Shank, *Elect in the Son*, p. 98.

¹⁷ Stanley Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), p. 347.

¹⁸ Walter Conner, *Christian Doctrine* (Nashville: Broadman, 1937), p. 174.

¹⁹ Vincent Taylor, *Jesus and His Sacrifice* (London: Macmillan, 1948), p. 304.

²⁰ Vincent Taylor, *Jesus and His Sacrifice*, p. 306.

²¹ Vincent Taylor, *Jesus and His Sacrifice*, pp. 312-324.

appeasing the cultural sensitivities of our age. However, worship is not about appeasing the demands of our culture, less so wanting to be liked by it. This does not mean that we neglect our culture or ignore the church's need to engage missiologically with its environment. But we must do so fully aware that worship is not anyone's right. It is only by God's grace and in his love that through the costly shedding of Christ's blood a people may enter into the presence of God. It is only through our costly repentance and commitment of faith that this privilege is bestowed.

Conclusion

Theology in Worship

This passage in Ephesians is a theological statement composed in the context of a worshipping community. There is an outline of Christian truth that emerges out of the narrative of the Ephesian fellowship in worship. It is a proclamation in response to the work of God that has led to an outpouring of thanksgiving and praise. Here one finds theology being done in the con-

text of praise, a situation that gives meaning to the theology it seeks to express. One has access into the hearts and minds of Christians and the nature of their existence in Jesus Christ. It is part of the Christian story that must be told, heard and entered into. Consequently there is a challenge to consider theology in the context of lives touched by God and lead into praise.

A Theological Statement

The theology of this passage is a statement of the true nature of Christian worship, the message of Christian salvation, and the church's mission in the world. Christians are called to worship because they have been elected in the elect, Jesus Christ. There is worship because the call to election is extended to all. However, it is only those who respond to God's grace that enter into this new reconciled existence. Consequently, their songs of praise must be heard to the ends of the earth and through time. It is only through Christ and his atoning sacrifice for sins that a people gather in praise. God's motivation is his love and his means is the shed blood of his Son. The result is God's people doing theology through the gates of heaven.

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**God and the Generations; Youth,
Age and the Church Today
A Report by the Evangelical
Alliance (UK) Commissions on
Unity and Truth among
Evangelicals**
**David Hilborn and Matt Bird
(editors)**

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*Reviewed by Ross Farley, Scripture Union
and TEAR Australia, Brisbane, Queensland*

Many books have already been written for
Christian pastors and workers on the sub-

ject of 'generations'. This book is not only
an addition but also a critique of the
Christian inquiry into this subject. The
authors state that 'evangelicals in partic-
ular have failed sufficiently to address the
cultural and philosophical assumptions
underlying the generational models they
have borrowed'. Furthermore 'they have
not adequately placed these models in
hermeneutical and theological perspec-
tive. Having highlighted these gaps, we
seek to bridge them by (i) offering a more
detailed biblical account of generational
structures, (ii) relating this account to
contemporary social science thinking on
generations, and (iii) applying insights
gained through (i) and (ii) to key issues in
family life, church organisation, Christian
mission and the providence of God.' As

for the problems with existing responses, 'the authors of this report were struck with how readily "secular" sociological, cultural and anthropological accounts of such issues were accepted, virtually without question, and how seldom critique or revision of them was offered from a biblical or doctrinal perspective'. This may not be such a problem 'if any concept of "generation" were alien to the biblical narrative', but 'the word "generation" and its variants occur frequently in Scripture'.

Christians need to be careful because 'generation' is a complex concept in the Bible. Genealogical, natal, periodical, epochal, eventual, attitudinal, affectual, behavioural and functional definitions of generations are identified in the scriptures and explained. The strengths and weaknesses of the core concepts in writings about generations are also analysed, exposing a number of fallacies. This includes an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the Howe-Strauss Cycle, which the authors believe to be useful but upon which Christian writers have become 'overly dependent'. Contemporary generations are explored and five chapters are devoted to analysing the generations of people that are alive today, describing their times, characteristics and implications for the church. These generations are labelled the World War generation, builders, boomers, Xers and millennials.

The authors conclude, 'British churches in particular cannot afford to ignore the alarming decline in the proportion of young people engaged in their life and activities.' However, they express caution about how this is to be addressed.

Generation specific ministries can be another expression of the Homogeneous Unit Principle (HUP). While this has pragmatic advantages, the scriptures affirm diversity and inclusion. They clear-

ly teach that the generations should worship and serve together and care for and learn from each other. Generation specific ministry should be seen as a means to an end, not an end in itself. The authors 'affirm that intentional, distinct "youth congregations" may in some contexts offer the best hope of introducing young people to the Gospel, and, in time, to a wider, multi-generational experience of church life. Ideally, we would expect such youth congregations to be linked with more demographically diverse churches - partly for reasons of accountability, but also so that their members have somewhere to move on to as they themselves grow older.'

A considerable section is devoted to leadership succession, describing healthy and unhealthy ways for Christian leadership to be passed on from one generation to another, and suggesting reasons why the faith sometimes is not passed on at all. Mentoring of the younger generation is recommended as one successful strategy for securing leadership succession. The mentoring strategies of a number of biblical characters are examined with applications for today.

This book contains a thorough treatment of the topic and therefore begins quite methodically and slowly. The foundation of the early chapters though, will reward the reader with valuable insights. Highly recommended.

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**Politics and Public Policy: A
Christian Response: Crucial
Considerations for Governing Life**

**Timothy J. Demy & Gary P.
Stewart (editors)**

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Pp 351 Index.

*Reviewed by Gordon Preece, Macquarie
Christian Studies Institute, Sydney,
Australia*

Though written before the epochal evil event of September 11, 2001, this book is timely, given the US and the world's present precarious position. It displays a growing Evangelical independence and maturity of thought about political engagement that has increasingly come under threat post 11/9 when dissent from a bellicose defensiveness or at times aggressiveness has been deemed unpatriotic.

The editors commissioned twenty two essays, a third of which they culled from elsewhere. The book is clearly an Evangelical collection, though the contributors range from Reformed e.g. James Skillen to Anabaptist, e.g. Dennis Hollinger to Dispensational e.g. Darrell L. Bock, the orientation of the two editors. The only one who sticks out is the excellent Roman Catholic political theorist Jean Bethke Elshtain, but her piece is on Bonhoeffer.

The book is clearly structured consisting of four parts consecutively engaging Theological, Historical, Contemporary and International perspectives on Politics and Public Policy. The authors represent a mix of biblical scholars (though not enough for a sufficiently thorough biblical grounding), theologians, ethicists, politi-

cal and military theorists and chaplains (the editors), lawyers, politicians, public servants and a doctor. The line-up has an overwhelmingly US caste to it which perhaps limits some of its applicability to other contexts.

The editors could have enhanced the cohesion of the volume by writing a more expansive overall introduction (only 2 pages) and/or introductions to each part and a conclusion. They do however provide synopses at the beginning of each chapter. They rightly recognize two failures of Evangelical engagement with politics in the 20th century: the early Evangelical retreat into privatised faith and the later, coercive re-entry of the Moral Majority and Christian Coalition. They, and most of the contributors seek to 'graciously reengage our culture', pursuing gradual change, and not resting on the laurels of their Christian heritage (p. 18).

Launching Part 1, Dennis Hollinger provides a helpful theological alternative to Enlightenment views of the purpose of government, combining direct biblical texts and a more indirect biblical theological approach. He draws out three interdependent basic roles for government—order, freedom, and justice. Eugene Merrill traces these three themes and more back to their OT roots through the various stages of Israel's political history. He extracts a series of principles for government: its divine origin; it should reflect heavenly government; it exists for divine glory and human good; it exists in spheres of responsibility in the home, clan, nation and theocracy; the ideal is monarchical rule by humankind but fallen reality falls short. Carl Henry, the doyen of US Evangelicals, similarly traces evangelical 'timidity and confusion' and captivity to 'special interests' and ideologies to lack of a Christian world view based on

the creation mandate (p. 56). Without this 'when relativities are changed into absolutes, absolutes are more easily perceived as relativities' (p. 60). However, his ringing endorsement of Mrs Thatcher as a Christian politician is more ideological than biblical (p. 64).

One of the most perceptive chapters is James Skillen's Reformed advocacy of both structural and confessional pluralism. The former refers in Reformed fashion to government's role to do justice within a wide range of human responsibilities or spheres. Confessional pluralism reflects the eschatological 'not yet' when Christ reigns supreme for all to see and therefore the importance of respect for a range of beliefs and not putting the sword into the church's hand. In a helpful reminder to the US, democracy, though good, is not God—'Justice for all, not majoritarianism, is our first principle' (p. 76). 'Both majorities and minorities can exercise unjust governance' (p. 78). Policy consequences such as charitable choice and voucher systems for parental choice of public or private schools flow from these pluralistic principles.

Part Two's Historical perspective begins with Joseph Gatis' demonstration that Calvin, contrary to contemporary liberalism, supported separation of church and state, not religion and state. Religion is no post-Enlightenment separate sphere but literally what binds life. This is a vital insight when Islam challenges this divorce today. Calvin is neither an Erastian as in Henry VIII's Supremacy Act nor ecclesiocentric 'because both schemes deny reciprocity' (p. 98). A more contemporary and Lutheran affirmation of the sovereignty of God over against its migration to the papacy and then the sovereign self, king and nation (pp. 115-8) is the inspiring case of Bonhoeffer as expounded by the Catholic Elshtain in one

of the book's best essays.

Stephen Hoffmann argues for the need for Evangelical churches, colleges (especially) and parachurches to work harder and more cooperatively to nurture an 'attentive public' among their people. This emphasis on the church, or better, people of God (including scattered as well as gathered dimensions), as an alternative polis could have been developed more in the book if people like Hauerwas, Wallis and Sider had been included.

In the contemporary Part 3, Don Eberly rightly argues that the fragmentation of society and its 'disordered liberty' are a threat to liberalism itself (p. 206). 'True conservatism ... views politics as "downstream" from culture, *more reflecting it than shaping it*' (p. 208). This reflects the debate stimulated by Paul Weyrich, Cal Thomas and Ed Dobson upon the decline of the Christian Coalition's coercive focus upon legislation. I am reminded of the person who said better to teach one song than to change one law. Wilberforce reformed manners for thirty years before he legislatively abolished the slave trade (p. 210). Likewise, before we tackle the law we need to first look at challenging the debased language of public life, particularly on human life issues, which Harold O.J. Brown notes.

It is good, however, to move beyond the conservative Evangelical tendency towards a single issue politics of abortion, and single means, of legislation, for all its significance, to an emphasis on the local racial politics of reconciliation in the church as displayed in his own Dallas context by Darrell Bock. He rightly regards this as perhaps the best political witness the church can provide, particularly as Sunday morning is the most segregated hour of the week in the US.

While smaller, Part 4 is full of substance. Paul Marshall's expertise on human

rights and religious freedom is displayed in accessible form. He advocates making 'religious freedom the core element of "human rights"' (p. 295). Fortunately the US Congress heeded him and others in its International Religious Freedom Act in 1998. Lawrence Adams' Foundations for Post-Cold War International Justice' provides a helpful grid for evaluating the changes to the previously dominant Westphalian system of national sovereignty in global trends towards economic, security, environmental interdependence. He examines global polyarchy, a structured pluralism like Skillen's nation-scale Reformed version, with global governance but highly diffused and differentiated. This belatedly (for the first time in the volume) draws on Catholic social principles such as subsidiarity (where groups are governed at the lowest possible level) (p. 302)—part of the basis of the European Union. This was a particularly suggestive chapter.

Alberto Coll's last chapter is on principles of Christian statesmanship. Helpfully, for ethicists like me, he reminds us that ethics and power need each other. Power without ethical earthing is dangerous; ethics without power to implement in practice can be an excuse for the arm-chair critic. He draws on the Christian and Aristotelian virtue of prudence and provides general counsels about the conduct of foreign affairs, e.g. to be 'on guard against the perpetual expansion of "vital interests" to which all great powers sooner or later succumb'. One prays world leaders might ponder these at this perilous moment.

The final essays take us beyond the sometimes parochial focus of some essays to more global concerns. This is a step forward for Evangelical political ethics for which the editors are to be commended. But more steps, particularly in concert

with Christians from other nations are necessary.

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A Scandalous Prophet: The Way of Mission after Newbigin

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Reviewed by John Roxborough, Presbyterian School of Ministry, Knox College, Dunedin, New Zealand.

Scandalous Prophet is the report of an extraordinarily intense two-day consultation on mission after Newbigin held in November 1998, and is a major bibliographical resource. (The bibliography is available on the web on <http://www.newbigin.net>) It may be compared with Willem Saayman and Klippies Kritzinger's compilation of articles on the legacy of David Bosch published as *Mission in Bold Humility* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996). Although there is huge overlap in the constituencies of these outstanding personalities, and both share a Reformed heritage, significant cross-cultural missionary experience, ecumenical values and an international stage, yet their approaches, and those of their critics, differ.

Neither is kind to visual learners, but Bosch was more analytical and synthetic, and frankly, more of a teacher, scholar and researcher. His *Transforming Mission* remains the standard text of missiology more than ten years after publication. Criticism levelled at Bosch about his theology being from above more than below

seems to me to apply more justly to Newbigin. Yet while hardly 'scandalous' outside some parts of the western world, Newbigin's voice is fairly called prophetic, addressing key issues arising out of his experience of the church in India and Britain, and from his involvement in countless international forums during his long life. His *Open Secret* also remains a standard missiological text that is standing the test of time.

David Bosch addressed the themes of particularity and the historical in Christian mission, and explored the elements of an emerging paradigm for a post-enlightenment age. Lesslie Newbigin, also concerned for the dangers of western intellectual traditions for Christian faith, argued from central theological premises—particularly a Trinitarian basis for mission—for perspectives that need to be maintained in any era of the church. He focused on the issues he believed mattered most; he was not concerned to survey the field of possibilities. It is perhaps this that makes Newbigin more than Bosch stand in danger of generating the sort of loyalty that makes criticism difficult. It is important to learn from each of them, and to dialogue with other Christian traditions whose methodology and questions are different again. The challenge from Bosch is to learn from each other and from history. The challenge from Newbigin is to keep the faith. It is no accident that the base cultures of each embodied the risks these challenges address—a fragmented church mirroring the divisions of apartheid, and an ecumenical movement needing to be reminded of its roots.

The papers in *Scandalous Prophet* are stronger at addressing Newbigin's theological legacy than exposing the understandable gaps of a busy life. That his Trinitarian missiology did not address all

the missiological differences of our generation is unsurprising, but the rejoinder implying religious studies is the enemy and that phenomenological perspectives are irrelevant is not acceptable. That Newbigin was weak in his detailed appreciation of other faiths is consistent with his Barthian orientation. What may be more important is that his theology of religion and culture enabled him and others to engage with courtesy and without fear. Newbigin's theology is about restoring the nerve and defending the integrity of Christian faith more than about the dialogues that need to result.

The debates from this conference are important indications of the directions Newbigin's legacy is taking, particularly the Gospel and Culture movements, and further work on the significance of Trinitarian theology for mission. These projects deserve serious evangelical engagement.

Of the editors, George Hunsberger is Professor of Missiology at Western Theological Seminary, Holland, MI, USA and the author of study of Newbigin's 'Theology of Cultural Plurality' while the other three are linked closely with the University of Birmingham where Newbigin taught after he 'retired' from his work in India.

ERT (2004) 28:4, 375-376

**Evangelical Experiences: A study
in the Spirituality of English
Evangelicalism 1918-1939**

Ian M. Randall

Carlisle: Paternoster, 1999

ISBN 0-85364-919-7

Pb 309pp bibliog. index

*Reviewed by David Parker, Editor,
Evangelical Review of Theology*

In *Evangelical Experiences*, Ian Randall from Spurgeon's College, London, has presented a meticulously detailed history of evangelical spirituality in inter-war England that is valuable but hard reading for students of the period. Starting with the most important and influential example, the Keswick convention and its teaching of 'holiness by faith', he works through a series of six other prominent movements, starting with Keswick's 'liberal mirror image' (the Anglican Evangelical Group Movement), followed by two contrasting Wesleyan holiness groups, then another pair, separatist spirituality and orthodox dissent, and lastly, Pentecostalism and the Oxford Group movement. An opening chapter (setting the historical scene including a discussion of the study of spirituality), and a summarising conclusion (with reflections on later trends in evangelicalism), complete a study which is densely packed with a bewildering array of information about people, movements, meetings and publications.

Randall uses Bebbington's well known fourfold definition of evangelicalism (biblicist, crucicentric, conversionist, activist) to identify and analyse the groups selected for study. He interprets these criteria somewhat generously in an investigation that is an exercise in 'historical delin-

ation' rather than a theological or spiritual study. As the author makes clear in the introduction, 'It has been common to study church history through the lens of developments in doctrine or changes in ecclesiastical institutions. The procedure adopted here seeks to give weight to experience and how it interacts with theology and practice.'

In the introduction, there is a brief discussion of the ways in which spirituality has been studied (the author adopts a view of the spirituality as 'the conjunction of theology, communion with God and practical Christianity'), which serves chiefly to justify the approach taken in the book and the range of topics and perspectives covered. This includes an emphasis on such matters as community and ecclesiology which are often considered to fall outside the interest of evangelical spirituality and its focus on the invisible church and individual piety.

However, the vast number of examples of different types and varied instances of spirituality that appear in this work—sometimes giving the appearance of a mere catalogue or smorgasbord rather than a coherent movement with substantive content—presents a challenge of categorisation. Although the structure (from Keswick onwards, in opposites and variations) provides a useful analytical scheme which the author exploits fully, there are many instances where exceptions, anomalies, tensions and paradoxes are noted, suggesting that the data is perhaps more complex than the author's theoretical framework allows. Furthermore, Bebbington's quadrilateral, a key factor in the analysis, may not be a sharp enough instrument to handle what is certainly revealed to be a 'kaleidoscopic' phenomenon.

There are few secondary studies for the period to match the comprehensiveness of

Randall's work. Thus, his extremely detailed portrayal unquestionably succeeds in putting evangelical spirituality in the period on the map and highlights the author's aim of showing how evangelicalism in later decades of the century can be better understood when its spirituality in this period is taken into account.

Accordingly, there is heavy dependence on primary sources, which are well documented using end-notes rather than footnotes, a procedure which is normally less 'reader friendly', but in this case there is no problem because the notes contain virtually no comments but are confined to citation of sources. A comprehensive bibliography, a full index and a detailed list of contents assist in making the vast amount of material in this book, one of the publisher's 'Biblical and Theological Monograph' series, readily accessible.

ERT (2004) 28:4, 376-378

**An Absolute Sort of Certainty:
The Holy Spirit and the
Apologetics of Jonathan Edwards**

Stephen J. Nichols

Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing,
2003

ISBN 0875527914.

Pb, pp 202

*Reviewed by Amos Yong, Visiting
Distinguished Professor, Edward B.
Brueggemann Chair of Theology,
Xavier University, Cincinnati, Ohio*

This book is a revision of a Westminster Theological Seminary dissertation which contributes to the contemporary renaissance in pneumatological theology from the Reformed Calvinist tradition. Building on the work of Michael McClymond, Gerald McDermott and others who have suggested apologetics to be the central

interpretive key to Edwards thought, Nichols proposes the more specific thesis that Edwards' apologetics against Deists, Arminians and other Enlightenment free thinkers is pneumatologically anchored. It is the Spirit who provides 'an absolute sort of certainty' of the truth of Christian faith.

Six chapters frame the book's argument. The first situates Nichols' presentation of Edwards as apologist in dialogue with the broad sweep of Edwardsean scholarship since the groundbreaking work of Perry Miller, while the last explicates the argument by focusing on how the persuasive preaching of the gospel (in two sermons by Edwards) is the means through which the Holy Spirit accomplishes the work of apologetics—i.e., convicting, judging and converting sinners. In between, the heart of Nichols' thesis revolves around Edwards' pneumatological understanding of revelation, perception, assurance, and testimony. In each case, Nichols uncovers a subtlety in Edwards' conception of these notions such that they include both objective and subjective components. Thus, revelation is the subjective or internal illumination of the Spirit *and* the objective testimony of God himself in the Scriptures. Perception is the 'new sense' made possible by the regenerative work of the Spirit *and* the gift of God that is the capacity for human beings to see and sense a world that exists objectively apart from themselves. Assurance is the *internal subjective witness* of the Spirit (in the hearts of human beings) even as it is also the objective work *of the Spirit of God* (thus of theocentric origins). Finally, testimony is the means of verifying the truth of Christianity, not only because it is a standard human means of conveying knowledge (the subjective dimension), but also because it is God's chosen means through incarnation, the Scriptures and

the working of the Spirit to reveal himself (the objective dimension). Throughout, Edwards' Calvinist commitments drive him to see the absolute necessity of the Spirit for transforming what is otherwise incapacitated by original sin and depravity so that human beings can receive the glorious and beautiful truth of the Bible. Nichols' book makes very important contributions along (at least) two lines. First, while Edwards is located squarely in the tradition of 'faith seeking understanding' which privileges the self-revelation of God, his sensitivity to pneumatological themes and motifs is here retrieved and highlighted. On the one hand, given the subordination of pneumatology in the theological tradition, it is encouraging, indeed surprising, to see a theologian of Edwards' stature with such a robust pneumatology. On the other hand, given the neglect of Edwards' pneumatology until now, it is discouraging that the post-Edwardsean Evangelical tradition neglected for the most part these pneumatological resources. Is this the fault of Edwards or of those who followed him? Not being an Edwardsean scholar, I leave this question to others.

Second, Edwardsean apologetics located at the beginnings of the Enlightenment project is also illuminated as being just as, if not more, sophisticated than both later modern rationalists and contemporary postmodern relativists. Edwards' attempt to find a *via media* between mere objectivism and mere subjectivism reveals his project as being neither merely foundationalistic nor merely postfoundationalistic, to use our terms. In dialogue with contemporary thinkers ranging from Alvin Plantinga and William Alston to Richard Rorty, Nichols shows that Edwards' apologetics was founded or grounded in God's objective self-revelation and work by the Spirit (hence foundationalism, or,

perhaps better, presuppositionalism, even if the latter is also a more contemporary term), even as it recognized as essential the inward and internal work of the Spirit to regenerate, illuminate, and assure believers. After all, as St. Paul himself noted, only the 'spiritual person' can understand the things of God by the Spirit (cf. 1 Cor. 2:10-16).

Yet at least two types of questions can be raised in response to Edwards. First, what if Christians themselves do not agree? In Edwards' time, the divide was between the Calvinists and the Arminians. In our contemporary context, there is the open theist controversy, among many other conflicting interpretations of the Bible by Evangelicals, not to mention the Pentecostals, charismatics, and other Bible-believers who see themselves first and foremost as followers of Jesus empowered by the Holy Spirit. Is Edwards right to think that the doubts of believers are due only to one's neglect of one's spiritual life? Once we recognize the essential pneumatological dimension of apologetics, can we so easily dismiss those who, precisely because of their pneumatic experiences, disagree with us because of their 'enthusiasm'?

The second type of question concerns the world religions. On Nichols' reading of Edwards, God appears to have chosen the preaching, testimony and apologetics of the regenerate to reach the unregenerate and provide the possibility for the Spirit's transformative work in their lives. Yet this raises the question of experience in the apologetics of other religious traditions as well. If we have to taste Christianity in the form of being regenerated, illuminated and assured by the Spirit in order to receive an absolute sort of certainty about Christian faith, what kind of experiential matrices or practices also serve to provide 'an absolute sort of

certainty' for those in other faiths? To what degree do we have to be 'enlightened' in order to embrace the message of the Buddha as preserved in the numerous collections of sutras? Or to what degree do we have to experience 'repose' (wu-wei) with heaven, earth and humanity to be convinced of the Chinese Daoist view of the world? Or to what degree do we have to be 'submitted to Allah' to be converted to the truth of the Qur'an?

These are not easy questions, and I am unsure if there are answers to them by Edwards even in this fine study of Edwards' apologetics. However, this is in part what is motivating pneumatological theology today, and for this important reason, we should be grateful to Nichols for this contribution to the ongoing discussion.

ERT (2004) 28:4, 378-379

**The Indian Church in Context:
Her Emergence, Growth and
Mission**

Mark T. B. Laing (editor)

Delhi/Pune: ISPCK/Union Biblical
Seminary Centre for Mission Studies,
2002.

ISBN 81-7214-708-2

Pb, pp 269

*Reviewed by Bruce Dipple, School of Cross
Cultural Mission, Sydney Missionary and
Bible College*

In February 2002 a group of academics, local church leaders and mission representatives was called together at Union Biblical Seminary in India for the eighth consultation organized by the Seminary's Centre for Mission Studies. The volume contains the papers offered at that consultation, using the theme of the confer-

ence as its title. As with all collections of papers, the chapters vary considerably in quality and style, as well as in theological emphasis.

The book is conveniently divided into four sections, dealing with biblical, historical, theological and contextual perspectives. Chris Wright opens the first section with a clear and concise study of how the Scriptures report the developing revelation of God and of salvation in a world of diverse religions. J. Manohar David then considers the development of Israel among the nations, taking the view that their delivery from slavery in Egypt was at the core of the articulation of their faith, rather than their unique status of being God's chosen people. Brian Wintle concludes the first section with a well crafted analysis of the biblical teaching on idolatry.

In the historical section, Jacob Kavunkal extracts the lessons that can be learned from the story of the Catholic Church in India, while Mark Laing provides an insightful account of the contrasting ministry approaches of Alexander Duff and John Clough. The section is rounded off by a brief but succinct review by Richard Hedlund of one hundred years of mission conferences, in which he particularly focuses on the issue of engagement with Hinduism and Islam.

In considering some theological perspectives, Sebastian C. H. Kim discusses the issue of the place of converts and the Christian community in the wider Hindu community and the different models that have developed within India. In the second chapter of this briefer section, Plamthodathil S. Jacob pleads for the establishment of bridges between Hinduism and Christianity and seeks to present examples of Christian theological concepts that could be reoriented to Hindu religio-cultural thought patterns.

In looking at contextual problems, John Azumah considers the key Islamic resources in order to ascertain the place of minority faiths in the teaching of Islam, concluding with a call for Christians to remain faithful to the Bible and to Jesus Christ, regardless of the difficulty of their situation. Jangkhoham Haokip focuses specifically on the Tribal Christians of Northeast India and emphasizes the very different social, political and religious issues that the people of the region confront. Hansraj Jain uses the final chapter for a series of case studies that helpfully raise a number of pastoral issues facing first generation converts to Christianity in India.

This book has the situation in India as its primary focus, but the topics covered are anything but unique to the Indian scene. The thoughtful chapters, for example, by Azumah and Jain deal with issues that are confronted in any country where the church is being planted in the midst of a majority religious grouping. Similarly, the biblical studies in the chapters by Wright and Wintle would provide a foundation for reflection by any group of Christians in an environment of religious pluralism. The book would undoubtedly have been enhanced by a paper dealing with the presentation of the gospel within the context of the Hindu worldview, particularly with the spread of that worldview to many parts of the world.

As it stands, however, the book is essential reading for reflective mission practitioners and trainers anywhere in the world, and should be found in every theological library. Thinking Christians with an interest in the spread of the gospel around the world would also find this a stimulating read. The publishers are to be commended for allowing these papers to gain wider circulation within the Christian community.

ERT (2004) 28:4, 379-380

A Reformation Reader: Primary Texts with Introductions

Denis R Janz (editor)

Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress
1999

ISBN 080063473X

Pb pp 400

*Reviewed by Raymond J. Laird, Adelaide
South Australia.*

In this book the author, Provost Distinguished Professor and director of the Graduate Program in the Department of Religious Studies at Loyola University, New Orleans, has brought together a wide variety of primary texts relating to the sixteenth century Reformation. The collection is the fruit of experimentation in teaching the subject over a period of some twenty years. It contains texts that will be familiar to most and some that are sure to be new. Among the familiar are extracts from Thomas a Kempis, Boniface VIII's *Unam Sanctam*, Erasmus, Luther's *Ninety-five Theses* and *The Freedom of a Christian*, Zwingli's *On True and False Religion*, Thomas Muntzner's *A Sermon Before the Princes*, *The Schleithem Confession*, and Calvin's *Geneva Ordinances*, just to name a few of the many easily recognizable.

On the other hand there are some items among this collection of 97 documents that are rarely found in translation. Among these are a treatise on the status of women by two Dominican inquisitors in the late fifteenth century, a compelling insight into the attitude towards women at the time. Another similar document comes from a catechism by a German Franciscan monk. It includes extended instructions on such items as 'How a Person Should Conduct Himself When He

Goes to Bed', again another insight to some sections of medieval religious life. Although these items, along with other rare jewels, are culled by Janz from recent sources, they are items usually known only to the specialist. Janz has done general Reformation study at undergraduate level a great service in this feature of his collection.

The collection is arranged under six standard sections, The Late Medieval Background, Martin Luther, Zwingli and the Radical Reformation, John Calvin, The Reformation in England and The Counter/Catholic Reformation. This facilitates alignment of the readings with standard texts on the Reformation, such as Ozment, Cameron, Lindberg and McGrath. Most of the sections are well represented except that the English Reformation section is somewhat light and suitable only for a very general survey course that takes in the totality of the Reformation. As many undergraduate courses tend to separate out the Reformation in England and Scotland from the Continental Reformation into two subjects, this Reader has limited use in that regard. However, as the section on England takes

up only about a tenth of the book, this lack does not reduce its usefulness for the study of the Continental Reformation. Each section has a brief but perceptive introduction, often leaving the reader wishing for more. Likewise, each reading has a brief paragraph placing the reading in its context. Both of these features are helpful guides to the texts.

Janz admits that his choice of texts is 'heavily theological'. This may not suit the historian whose perspective is more social, economic and political than theological. It is true that these aspects were neglected in the past. Indeed, the corrective of the social historians of the last third of the twentieth century is a welcome reform in the historiography of the Reformation. Nevertheless, I think Janz is right when he remarks that 'it was precisely religion that was the bone of contention'. I doubt if there would have been anything we could entitle a Reformation had it not been for the genius of a Luther, a Zwingli, a Calvin or the many others who laboured to bring true life back to the church. In this regard Janz has got the balance right in the texts he presents in this very useful Reader.

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EDITOR: DAVID PARKER

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Robin Parry is Commissioning Editor for Paternoster Press.

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Paternoster Biblical Monographs

Paul Barker

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Paul Barker is Visiting Lecturer in Old Testament, Ridley College, Melbourne, and Vicar at Holy Trinity Doncaster, Victoria, Australia.

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