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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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Editorial: The New Reality in Christ

AS ANOTHER VOLUME of our journal concludes, reflection on the year that has gone by underlines the uncertainties that the world faces. So our opening article by James Danaher of New York helpfully identifies the transitional nature of the cultural mood known as 'postmodernism'. Although the certainties of the Enlightenment period may have gone, he argues, this does not mean there is less scope for the gospel. In fact it is quite the opposite because, 'We are now free to pursue forms of rationality more compatible with a Gospel that is personal and mysteriously beautiful rather than objective and mathematically precise.'

This is no mere western concern, as Frank Adams of Ghana shows in his paper which explores some of the ways in which the Christian message needs to relate to the African scene. He concludes, 'The Christian message is one and unchangeable, but the people employ their worldviews and the totality of their being to understand the message of Jesus Christ, to make it relevant to their daily life.' Thorsten Prill focuses on contemporary evangelistic methods in another cultural setting rich in tradition – Germany; he evaluates models and practices in a national church to encourage more authentic biblical insights which would result in holistic outcomes arising out of a genuine grass-roots commitment.

One of the most noticeable charac-

teristics of contemporary Christianity is experimentation in worship in an attempt to reflect biblical principles for the new age. Drawing upon the fresh appreciation of the past that is one of the elements of the postmodern turn, Walter McConnell of Singapore urges those responsible for worship to ask key questions about its essential nature by studying the principles developed by the Puritans who faced paradigm changes. The biblical elements they identified can serve as 'route markers' for us.

This brings us back to Scripture, and in his study of 1 Corinthians, David Ackerman of Australia, who completes our global panel of authors for this issue, highlights another important element of the postmodern context, community, and how the apostle was conscious of its importance when dealing with one church's immaturity and inability to break free from their pagan environment: 'Paul attempts to resocialize the Corinthians in light of the new reality in Christ. He tries to create a new community by placing the boundary of love around the church and by enhancing fellowship within the church.'

It is this 'reality of Christ' that will give authenticity to the Christian life and mission in this uncertain age as surely as it has in any other period, and to which this journal remains dedicated.

David Parker, Editor

The Postmodern Gospel

James P. Danaher

KEYWORDS: *Enlightenment, science, mathematics, romantics, metanarrative, modernity, biology, psychology, class, atheism*

WE ARE TOLD THAT we live in a postmodern age, but what exactly is meant by 'postmodern'? Our age is being termed postmodern quite simply because of a general rejection of modernity and the principles upon which it was founded. Modernity refers to the modern period of the 17th and 18th centuries which is often dubbed, 'The Enlightenment'. The cornerstone of the Enlightenment was the belief in a new and *enlightened* form of science. This new science was founded upon two modern beliefs. The one, advanced by Frances Bacon, was that science ought to be based on objective, empirical study rather than philosophical speculation. The other view, championed by Rene Descartes, was that our knowledge could be made precise and certain after the model of mathematics.

This second view required that the world be reduced to matter or a single kind of thing that could be quantified.

Ancients like Plato and Aristotle had believed that a precise and certain knowledge of the world, after the model of mathematics, was impossible. The reason it was impossible was that the world was made up of many different kinds of things. A mathematical understanding requires that things be of the same kind (five apples plus six oranges equal what?). The advent of the corpuscular philosophy, which would evolve into atomic chemistry, solved this problem by reducing everything to the same basic matter or atoms which could be quantified. Isaac Newton then took these two tenets of Bacon and Descartes and brilliantly combined them in such a way that his mathematical calculations were verified in observation, and his observations were quantifiable.

The belief that the world was orderly, which dated from at least the Greeks, took on a new form. The order of the universe was now in the form of universal and mathematically precise laws that could be detected with scientific reason. The early fruits of this new science were so impressive that

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progress quickly came to be seen as synonymous with the new science. In time it became the great metanarrative and model for all right thinking.

Of course, from the start, Enlightenment science was not without its opposition. The romantic poets of the 18th century, as well as philosophers such as Leibniz, Berkeley, and Hume, were among the first to take opposition to either its materialism or optimism. In the 19th century further opposition arose from philosophers as diverse as Hegel, Nietzsche, and William James, to mention just a few. With the 20th century the attack increased. New insights into the nature of language by the likes of Saussure and Wittgenstein undermined the idea that an objective view of the world was attainable. Foucault persuasively argued that our idea of truth was a social construct created by those in positions of power. Others from Thomas Kuhn to Derrida showed how perspectival and relative our understanding really was. With Einstein even the scientific community had to admit that we had no objective or privileged place from which to make our observations. The social sciences of anthropology and sociology brought even more light to the fact that our human understanding was enormously biased by our culture and history. What truly brought about the end of modernity and its claim to be the path to progress, however, was not so much the work of intellectuals but rather the history of the 20th century.

The vision of the Enlightenment was that three hundred years of scientific progress would bring us to utopia. However, quite to the contrary, the 20th century witnessed over 100 million people killed in wars, and 35,000

to 40,000 thousand children dying each day from the effects of hunger and malnutrition. By the end of the 20th century the very existence of the planet was being threatened, and science did not seem capable of doing anything about it. The Enlightenment's faith in scientific reason had failed to deliver what it had promised, and something else was obviously needed. But what is it that postmodernism promises as an alternative?

There seems to be a mistake in supposing that postmodernism offers an alternative to modernity. It certainly does not. At this point, we know that modernity has come to an end but, as of yet, we know little more than that. We can no more say what typifies this new, postmodern age than someone in 1650 could have defined modernity or Enlightenment. By 1650, Bacon and Descartes had already published, and the medieval world was passing away, but Isaac Newton was only eight years old, and it was far too early to say what modernity was to become. Likewise, the publications of Derrida, Foucault, and Lyotard are not enough to establish the nature of a postmodern age.

What popular culture considers postmodernism is merely the fact that there is, at present, no metanarrative that we all embrace, in the way most of us embraced the myth of Enlightenment science for the last 300 years. Today, the only consensus is that the science of modernity is not capable of bringing us into the wonderful world it promised. We are thus left for the moment without any definite direction. That creates a great opportunity for the gospel.

Modernity's model of knowledge as empirical, objective, and precise was

certainly not conducive to the idea of knowing God through a personal faith relationship. With the demise of the myth that the scientific model was the model for all real knowledge, room has been made for the kind of knowledge of which the gospel speaks. With the debunking of the scientific idea that all knowledge must be objective knowledge, we can now speak of a God who is not an object but a subject – indeed, a person.

Furthermore, there is more good news concerning the end of modern science as the great metanarrative and the only way to truth, for with its destruction modern atheism lost much of its foundation. Atheism found support in the modern period from the Enlightenment myth that there were objective laws or principles to which we had access through scientific reason. If language is relative to culture and a language community, and our understanding is cast in language, there can be no metanarrative that objectively and universally explains the reality of our existence. That post-modern insight that the metanarrative was an Enlightenment notion whose time has passed eliminates the support modern atheism found in Darwin, Marx, and Freud.

Certainly biological species may change over time, and they often may change for the reasons Darwin gave, but it was the belief of modernity that such a principle was a universal and absolute law which governs all species. But why should species change or remain unchanged because of a single reason or principle? Why does there have to be one totalizing metanarrative? Why not multiple principles or explanations?

Likewise, Marx's idea of class analysis certainly provides a valuable insight, but to believe that this is the Rosetta stone or underlying principle behind all social interaction is to make it into a metanarrative. It is certainly a valuable insight, but not *the* insight to which all others are subordinate.

Freud too certainly contributed to our understanding of human behaviour by introducing us to the unconscious. However, to believe that the unconscious holds the key to all the secrets of human existence is again founded upon the modern belief that we had finally become enlightened and discovered the universal principle central to all understanding.

As these sources of modern atheism are undermined, Christianity, by contrast, remains intact. That is because Christianity is not a metanarrative in spite of all efforts to make it one. Christianity will always be a personal relationship with the risen Christ, and never an explanation of how things are for everyone everywhere. Of course, there are similarities between our personal relationships because we are in relationship with the same person, but those relationships differ as well due to the fact that we are all different people, with different conceptual understandings, and at different points in our relationship with God. God meets us where we are in our respective understandings, so we all begin in different places. Our initial understanding of God is always that of a tribal god who is largely a product of our own culture and understanding. Through humility and a genuine desire to know him, however, we can, in time, come to know the God who transcends all culture. This knowledge of God will never be the

kind of objective and precise knowledge that modernity sought. But although this God cannot be discovered through the methods of science, he is faithful to reveal himself to those who humbly seek him.

The lie of modernity was that truth and meaning were to be found only in that which could be known objectively and with the kind of narrow exactness that we find in mathematics. That was the great metanarrative of modernity to which everyone was forced to conform if they wished to be considered rational. Of course, such thinking did produce a technology that we may not want to be without, but it was not capable of leading us to the kind of truth and meaning that lies at the base of the Christian life. It certainly was not an appropriate model for intimately knowing persons, either human or divine.

Modernity taught us to seek a truth that was objective, certain, and precise, but the gospel sets before us a God who is a subject and not an object, and like any subject or person can never be known by the method of knowing that modernity insisted upon. Modernity told us that we should rid ourselves of all bias in order to discover an objective truth untainted by our prejudice. The gospel, however, tells us that we are to bring the prejudice of faith to every circumstance.

Modernity provided us with a method that gave us a confidence in our certain and precise understanding, but the gospel leads us to an understanding founded upon a divine beauty that we behold in humble awe. The truth of modernity was something we could get a hold of, but the truth of the gospel is something that gets a hold of us.

Fortunately, we now know the method that modernity insisted upon is not the universal form of right reason it had claimed to be, but it merely represents one form of reason. This should be good news to Christians, since it means that we are no longer forced to accept a logic so antithetical to the gospel. We are now free to pursue forms of rationality more compatible with a gospel that is personal and mysteriously beautiful rather than objective and mathematically precise.

Thus, a postmodern gospel is not one in which all order, meaning, and truth is lost. Rather, all that is lost is the kind of order, meaning, and truth that modernity had insisted upon. The good news of the postmodern gospel is that, with the end of modernity, we now have an ever greater opportunity to order our lives, not based upon an understanding of some universal and objective truth, but rather upon an intimate understanding of a truth that is personal and subjective – indeed, a truth that is a person (John 14:6).

Challenges Facing African Christianity in the Post-Modern World

Frank Adams

KEY WORDS: *Contextualization, Traditional religions, Afrikania movement, missions, exclusivism, pluralism, time, universalism*

CHRISTIANITY IS the outcome of the response of faith of the early church to the saving presence of God in the God-man, Jesus Christ. That saving presence was radiated through the life, ministry, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word of God. 'The Word became a human being and lived among us. We saw his glory, full of grace and truth. This was the glory which he received as the Father's only Son' (John 1:14). Any authentic theology must start ever anew from the focal point of faith, which is the confession of the Lord Jesus Christ who died and was raised for us; and it must be built or rebuilt in a way which is both faithful to the inner thrust of the Christian revelation and also in harmony with the mentality of

the person who formulates it.¹

Since Christianity must be culturally continuous, we must retrieve and interpret these fundamental religious values in the African traditional religion and identify how these values provide a way of understanding the gospel, that is, God's revelation in Christ. The revelation of God in Christ is forever available to people of all generations and cultures. This eternal availability of God's saving presence in Christ is rooted in the historical incarnation. However, the very fact of historical incarnation suggests that the presence of Christ is not always effectively mediated to one culture.² There

1 D. von Allmen, 'The Birth of Theology: Contextualisation as the dynamic element in the formation of New Testament Theology', in *IRM* Vol. 64. (January 1975), p. 50.

2 O. Imasogie, *Guidelines for Christian Theology in Africa* (Accra: Africa Christian Press, 1983), p. 18.

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is always a search for living and relevant symbols that mediate the saving presence of God in Jesus Christ. The basic question now is; 'Does God have something to say to the African People through cultural ideas of faith?' Does African traditional religion provide clues to name this 'More' of God?

This exercise of rediscovering and naming this 'More' of God in African traditional thought has become necessary because the early missionaries did not recognize the potency of the religious value in the African worldview and how it could be used to interpret Christianity in Africa. The superficiality of the average African commitment to Christ is the result of the failure of early missionaries to take African culture seriously.

Historically, Christianity was brought to Sub-Saharan Africa after it had taken definite form in the West. 'The framework of the theology brought from the West to Africa however, was set, forged in the interaction between the original Jewish world view and that of the Greeks and later Europeans.'³ After over a thousand years of its existence in the West, Christianity was introduced to Africa with little or no attempt at local cultural integration. Christianity was equated in the minds of Africans with western Christianity, education and civilization; it was a foreign religion, which had been transplanted to a foreign soil and which had not taken root. The early missionaries thought that their understanding of God as revealed in Christ had an identical application in all situ-

ations irrespective of different worldviews and self-understandings.⁴

Africans may not come to a full understanding of Christ unless Christ is presented to them from the perspective of their worldview. According to Bediako, '...the African who has become a disciple in the kingdom is called to bring his "Africanness" into that kingdom to enrich it and to contribute to its varieties of beauty'.⁵ Mbiti also makes the point that 'Christianity must become "native" in tropical Africa just as it is "native" in Europe and America. It must therefore deepen its roots in the context of our community life, the soil where the gospel is being planted.'⁶

There are several challenges facing Christianity in Africa and we will discuss the following: (i) Christianity and African Traditional Culture; (ii) African Christianity and the concept of time and history; (iii) African Christianity and religious pluralism, and (iv) African Christianity and Afrikania Movement.

1. Christianity and African Traditional Culture

The critical debate between the missionaries and traditional leaders posed serious questions regarding the role of culture in Christianity. The traditional leaders took the approach of 'cultural revivalism', that is, reviving the cul-

3 Kwame Bediako, *Theology and Identity* (Oxford: Regnum Books, 1992), p. 229.

4 Bediako, *Theology and Identity*, p. 19.

5 Bediako, *Theology and Identity*, p. 371.

6 'The Ways and Means of Communicating the Gospel' in *Christianity in Tropical Africa*, ed. C.G. Baeta, (Oxford: University Press, 1968), p. 337.

ture in its totality. The missionaries took the approach of 'cultural anti-revivalism', that is, doing away with or throwing away the cultural practices.⁷

The 'cultural revivalists', including the Afrikania movement, argue firstly that the commitment to the cultural heritage of the people will serve as the basis of the search for cultural identity and cultural pride and unite them as a society. Secondly, reviving one's culture would also create authentic values for the future, 'their perception of reality, their understanding of themselves, and their shared apprehension and interpretation of societal experience'.⁸ Thirdly, there is the assumption that recovering and developing one's cultural past becomes the basis of making a contribution to global civilization. Fourthly, they argue that cultural revivalism will lead to mental freedom from a colonial mentality. According to Okomfo Damuah, 'mental bondage is mental violence, religious bondage is invisible violence and cultural bondage is cultural suicide'.⁹ Colonial rule makes the colonised people intellectually servile to the ideas and values of the colonial government. Fifthly, they argue that the reason why some societies in Ghana are not developing is because they tend to use foreign ideas to which they have no ideological attachment. Okomfo Damuah mentioned that, 'the main trend is to discover our own authentic native val-

ues and grow from those roots rather than trying to be an extension or offshoot of other traditions'.¹⁰ Lastly, they argue that reviving the cultural past will contribute to national integration and nation building.

The argument of the 'cultural anti-revivalists' (referring to the missionaries) is that if Christianity is going to grow in Africa and also 'catch-up' with modernity, then Africa must abandon a great part of its cultural practices that are archaic and primitive.¹¹ The attitude of the church towards all traditional beliefs suggests that Christians should abandon any form of contact with spirit-powers and spirit-ancestors, all use of magic and fear of witchcraft.¹² Any attempt to revive the cultural practices would be irrelevant to the goals and concerns of the African Christian.

The firm stand of these two groups has led to tensions, confusion, controversies and inconsistencies; this is due to the failure to distinguish between what may be regarded as positive and negative elements in the culture. It is this failure that led the revivalist group to regard the entire culture as positive, good, and perfect, while the anti-revivalist group saw everything in the culture as negative, worthless and good for nothing.

The grounds for evaluating when a tradition should be accepted, refined or abandoned may be several. Some may

7 K. Gyekye, *Tradition and Modernity* (Oxford: University Press, 1997), p. 232.

8 K. Gyekye, *Tradition and Modernity*, p. 233.

9 K. Damuah, *Afrikania Handbook—Reformed African Traditional Religion* (Accra: Afrikania Mission, 1983), back cover.

10 K. Damuah, *Afrikania Handbook*, back cover.

11 Gyekye, *Tradition and Modernity*, p. 235.

12 S. G. Williamson, *Akan Religion and Christian Faith* (Accra: Ghana University Press, 1965), p. 81.

see a tradition to be dysfunctional and hampering the progress of a society, 'others may see it as discordant with the ethos of a new set of cultural values that a new generation is bent on establishing',¹³ while others still may see it as morally unacceptable to the society.

In my view, neither the revivalists nor the anti-revivalists are entirely correct in their argument and criticism. Both of these positions are mistaken and unjustifiable. The anti-revivalist position (I am referring to the extreme group) implies that though culture is the embodiment of a people's way of life, nothing useful can be derived from the ideas, values and practices of their culture. They see no reason why the past must be revived. Gospel and culture are for them 'polar' concepts that cannot be integrated.¹⁴ In my view, to argue that a great part of a people's culture must be rejected is unacceptable. In fact, a total rejection of one's cultural past would be absurd. The revival of some cultural values is very legitimate and relevant, and this is what this study is seeking to do. But not every aspect of a cultural heritage ought to be revived.

Thus, it will be impossible for me to support the position of the revivalist, if that position were to advocate the revival of the whole corpus of the culture. For the revivalist also argues that for development to take place the whole culture must be revived. I disagree with this position, because some cultural elements hinder progress. The revivalist who does not show any

awareness of the negative features of the culture that impede progress, is misguided and his view will be counterproductive.

My position is neither cultural revivalism nor cultural anti-revivalism, but appropriating the positive elements in African culture. By appropriation I mean critically examining ideas and values embedded in African culture and giving them a theological meaning. Some of the values would have to be retrieved, refined, improved, and re-evaluated. There are values that can be regarded as so fundamental to the existence of the African culture that they transcend every generation. Appropriating these elements and giving them theological meaning will suggest that something worthwhile can be developed from the African cultural past.

2. African Christianity and the concept of Time and History

Another significant feature in dealing with African Christianity in the post-modern world is the African conceptualisation of time. It is a renewal of history, a fresh appreciation of past events revisited in the present and projected into the future. It runs ahead towards the new, towards the future, even in repetitions. As Paul Tillich explains, 'the time of creation is not determined by the physical time in which it is produced but by the creative context, which is used and transformed by it'.¹⁵ Mbiti's understanding

13 Gyekye, *Tradition and Modernity*, p. 223.

14 Gyekye, *Tradition and Modernity*, p. 238.

15 P. Tillich, *Systematic Theology III* (London: SCM Press, 1963), p. 317.

of the African view of time was first expressed in his doctoral thesis, in which he attempted to examine New Testament eschatology from an African cultural perspective. He did a study of the Akamba (his own tribe in Kenya) and came to the conclusion that the Akamba's view of time can be conceived of as two-dimensional 'with a long past and a dynamic present', but the future is virtually non-existent.¹⁶ He later generalised this to be true of the thinking of all of Africa.

The linear concept of time in Western thought with an indefinite past, present and infinite future is practically foreign to African thinking. The future is virtually absent because events which lie in it have not taken place, they have not been realised and cannot, therefore constitute time.... What is taking place now no doubt unfolds the future, but once an event has taken place, it is no longer in the future but in the present and what is past.¹⁷

According to Mbiti this understanding of time undergirds the African understanding of himself or herself, the community and his or her universe. He asserts, 'when Africans reckon time, it is for a concrete and specific purpose, in connection with events but not just for the sake of mathematics'.¹⁸

The modern Africa is discovering the future dimension of time due to Christian teaching, western education and modern technology. Mbiti's concept of time may be identified with the Akamba tribe, but it is an over-generalisation to state that this concept of time is true for all of Africa. Nor is it the 'key' for understanding 'the African worldview'.

The diversity of Africa with over a thousand languages shows that the concept of time among the Akamba tribe may be different from that of others. The concept of time of the Asante people (a major ethnic group in Ghana) is different from that of the Akamba people, because the past is revisited in the present and projected into the future. It is more than cyclical or linear; it has the notion of a 'spiral'. While Mbiti's understanding of time cannot be accepted as definitive for all Africa, it does give valuable insights into a concept of time among Akamba that is very different from that of the Asante. What is different between the Akamba and Asante is that while in Akamba future is virtually non-existent, in Asante the past is projected into the future. This means that any religion that does not give the Asante a linkage to his past as a key to future orientation is likely to be misunderstood or ignored.

3. African Christianity and Religious Pluralism

Christianity exists in a world of religious pluralism, so the Christian attitude to other religions is a pressing issue on today's pastoral agenda. In Africa one of the major challenges fac-

¹⁶ J.S. Mbiti, *New Testament Eschatology in an African Background* (London: University Press, 1970), p. 24.

¹⁷ J.S. Mbiti, *African Religion and Philosophy* (Oxford: Heinemann International, 1970), p. 17.

¹⁸ J.S. Mbiti, *African Religion and Philosophy*, p. 18.

ing the continent as a clash of civilizations is religious pluralism. The three major religions in Africa are: Christianity, Islam, and African Traditional Religion (ATR).

The major question confronting the African Christian is the Christian attitude to other religions. How do we confess the Lordship of Jesus Christ as we live and work together with neighbours of other faiths? Why have Islam and the ATR, the other major religions in Africa, posed a great challenge to Christianity, denying the claim of Christianity to be the final or even the highest type of religion? The Christian faith has always claimed that Christian religion is not only superior to all others, but is final and absolute truth for all time. This claim has indeed never been admitted by these major religions. In 1922, Syed Ameer Ali, in his book *The Spirit of Islam*, maintained that every department of the life, teaching and example of Mohammed is superior to that of Jesus Christ.¹⁹ S.A.W. Bukhari of the Jamalia Arabic College, Madras, writes; 'Revelation is not the monopoly of one section of the people to the exclusion of another. Allah is not the God of the Jews or Christians or Muslims only.'²⁰

In Africa, Islam and ATR are reacting to the global transformation that is taking place. The reaction is a mixture of anger, incomprehension and violent hatred—a clash of civilizations in which Muslims and ATR are seen as the main opponents. This has raised

many questions like: Does the Quran preach violence? Do Muslims hate Jews and Christians? Why is the message of peace and compassion of the world's religion lost in the din of anger and hatred?

The Challenge from the Non-Christian Religions

It is often said that our age is one of increasing materialism, which has resulted in the widening the gap between the rich and the poor. This has also resulted in a revolt against all forms of religion. Sometimes these developments are associated with political movements, and politicians use these occasions for their own ends. A combination of politics and religion produces a compound of immense dynamic energy. This has been the case again and again in the history of the church. A typical example is the Reformation period. In Africa we find many of the non-Christian religions, in alliance with political movements, asserting their claims with fresh vigour.²¹

They bring a challenge that is both positive and negative. On the one hand they deny the claim of Christianity to be the final or even the highest type of religion; on the other hand, they invite Christians to join with them in resisting the advance of materialism, unfair trade, civil wars and ethnic tensions, and HIV AIDS.²²

The main tradition of Christendom has always claimed that the Christian religion is not only superior to all oth-

19 E.C. Dewick, *The Christian Attitude to Other Religions* (Cambridge University Press, 1953), p. 16.

20 Dewick, *The Christian Attitude*, p. 21.

21 Dewick, *The Christian Attitude*, p. 13.

22 Dewick, *The Christian Attitude*, p. 14.

ers, but is final and absolute truth for all time. This claim has, indeed, never been admitted by the adherents of other faiths. In 1862, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, founder of Aligarh Muslim University, published a commentary on the Bible at Ghazipur. He commented, 'We Mohammedans hold that Jesus Christ is honourable in this world, and in the world to come.... The Apostles of Christ were inspired men.... The Injeel (Gospels) are all true and sacred records, proceeding primarily from God.'²³ In 1922 Syed Ahmer Ali maintained that in every department of life the teaching and example of Muhammad is superior to that of Jesus Christ. Sir Md. Iqbal has affirmed that while European (Christian) ideas are today hindering the progress of humanity, Islam alone points the true way of advance.²⁴

Approaches to Religious Pluralism in Africa

There are three different approaches to religious pluralism: Exclusivist, Pluralist and Inclusivist

a) Exclusivist Paradigm.

This approach maintains that all people have sinned, including members of other religions, and that Christ offers the only valid way to salvation.

²³ Dewick, *The Christian Attitude*, p. 16. Sir Syed was following the example of the great Muslim theologians of the 11th century who in their controversies with the Christians used to appeal to New Testament text. *The O.T. in the World Church* (London) 1942, p. 152.

²⁴ Dewick, *The Christian Attitude*, p. 16.

Hendrik Kraemer's Exclusivist Approach

Kraemer, an advocate of exclusivism, says, 'God has revealed the Way and the Life and the Truth in Jesus Christ and wills this to be known through the world. That salvation is found only through the grace of God revealed in Christ.'

Byang Kato's Exclusivist Approach

Byang Kato's starting point is that the Bible IS God's Word in its entirety, without errors. It is the final authority in all that it affirms. He considered 'inerrancy' so important that he would not accept infallibility as an adequate description of the trustworthiness of the Bible.²⁵ In Kato's view, the whole exercise of exploring other religious values and ideas and appropriating them for a possible contribution to African Christian thought is a denial of 'the sufficiency of the scriptures as the sole authority for faith and practice'. He is of the view that the church in Africa is heading towards universalism, which he defines as 'the belief that all men will eventually be saved whether they believe in Christ now or not'.

He gives reasons why universalism poses a threat to African Christianity. First, he mentions modern mission agencies. Some American Baptist missionaries have a universalistic view and those who oppose such a view ask why these missionaries should be allowed to serve on the mission field.

²⁵ Byang Kato, *Theological Pitfalls in Africa* (Kenya: Evangel Publishing House, 1975), p. 4.

Secondly, the new political awareness in Africa promotes universalism. There is a search for political solidarity and the goal of African Government is to unify all ethnic groups into one nation. 'Universalism would be an excellent tool for uniting people of different faiths.' Thirdly, Africa is searching for personal identity and this makes the continent prone to syncretism. Fourthly, the reawakening of African traditional religious thought by some African Christian scholars promotes universalism.²⁶

Kato agrees to a partial and superficial method of adaptation of African Christianity. His viewpoint is that Christians should be willing to adapt African culture to Christianity provided it does not conflict with scripture. Kato's understanding of the relationship between other religions and the Christian faith is that they constitute two distinct and discontinuous entities. Kato's viewpoint on the centrality of the Bible as the starting point for doing theology in Africa is his important contribution to modern African Christianity.

b) The Pluralist Paradigm

John Hick's Pluralist Approach

John Hick adopts the pluralist view, according to which, God is the centre and all religions serve and revolve around him. Hick's theological argument is based on the affirmation of the universal salvific will of God.²⁷ 'We say

as Christians that God is the God of universal love, that he is the Creator and Father of all mankind, that he wills the ultimate good and salvation of all men.'²⁸ Hick asks whether such a God could have 'ordained that men must be saved in such a way that only a small minority can in fact receive this salvation'? His answer is 'No'. It is precisely the doctrine of a God of universal love that dictates Hick's answer. The theological argument of the universal salvific will of God is a fundamental principle of the pluralist approach.

Hick has been criticized by many theologians for abandoning the central Christian truth of the incarnation of Jesus Christ as the only way to salvation and subverting the distinctiveness of Christianity.²⁹ But Hick argues that 'New Testament scholarship has shown how fragmentary and ambiguous are the data available to us', so much so that he has called Jesus 'the largely unknown man of Nazareth'. Hence, there is not enough historical evidence on which to base a claim for the divinity of Jesus; such evidence as there is shows that the historical Jesus did not make for himself the claims that the church was later to make for him.³⁰ According to Hick, the attitude of Christians to other religions need

²⁶ Kato, *Theological Pitfalls*, p. 16.

²⁷ G. D'Costa, *Theology and Religious Pluralism* (Basil Blackwell: Oxford, 1986), p. 25.

²⁸ G. D'Costa, *Theology and Religious Pluralism*, p. 25.

²⁹ Green, M. (ed.) *The Truth of God Incarnate* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1977), Ch. 1,2,4,5.; J. N.D. Anderson, *The Mystery of the Incarnation* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity, 1978), Ch. 3.; J. Lipper, 'Christians and the uniqueness of Christ', in *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 28 (1976), pp. 359-68.

³⁰ D'Costa, *Theology and Religious Pluralism*, p. 27.

not be characterized by mistrust, desire to convert or superiority, but a will to learn and grow together towards the truth.

Osofo Komfo Damuah's Pluralist Approach

Komfo Damuah began his Christian ministry as Roman Catholic priest. He furthered his education in the United States. Twenty five years after his ordination, he left the Catholic Church and founded the Afrikania Mission and took the name of Osofo Okomfo (fetish priest) Kwabena Damuah. While in the Roman Catholic ministry he did his PhD at Howard University and wrote on the topic, 'The changing perspective of Wasa Amanfi traditional religion in contemporary Africa'. The focus for Damuah's study was his own people group in the Wasa Amanfi, which he came to consider as a statement of divine self-disclosure through the traditional religion.³¹ Damuah also linked his study to the modern African search for independence from the colonial rule. He proposed five key statements for Africa independence, in relation to the profundity of African Traditional Religion and how it pervades every aspect of traditional Africa:

- How this characteristic is ingrained even today in the twentieth century non-westernised African
- How Christianity and Islam do not seem to satisfy adequately Africa's quest for identity and self-determination
- How a reconstructed African Tradi-

tional Religion may be considered as a likely answer to Africa's search for freedom and self-determination

- How African Traditional Religion can exist in its own right on equal terms with other religions within an ecumenical framework.

The most important part of his thesis was the last chapter 'The Search for a New Synthesis'. He states what he considers to be the problem:

The conflict over the meaning of being African runs through all African life today—religion, the arts and popular culture and education—so that it is in these areas that many of the crucial struggles over Africa's future in the world are being decided. When it comes to religious values, contemporary Africa is the battleground of four contending forces: Traditional Religion, Christianity, Islam and religiously indifferent materialism. The traditional religions seem to be everywhere in decline, ... There is no attempt to capitalise on any specific traditional religion. Nowhere in Africa is there anything parallel to the organised pressures for a return to Hindu theocracy found in India, State Shinto in Japan.³²

Having isolated traditional religion as the most crucial index of the critical state of African societies, Damuah then sought to show how neither Christianity nor Islam seems to satisfy adequately Africa's search for identity and self-determination. Damuah's new synthesis is a reconstruction of the traditional religion, which he affirmed as

³¹ Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: the Renewal of a Non-Western Religion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), p. 24.

³² Bediako, *Christianity in Africa*, p. 25.

being within the divine purpose for Africa and for the world. He states:

The time has come when the African intellectual must take a new look and help resuscitate Traditional African Religion so that she can take her rightful place in the struggle for liberation and self-determination. The fact that she has been able to survive despite the encroachment of Christianity and Islam is an indication that there is something in the tradition, which God wants, preserved.³³

The Afrikania mission that Damuah established seeks to be a 'universal' religion from Africa and from African tradition, reaching to the wider world with universal vocation. It is traditional African religion with the aim of fulfilling the dream of the new Africa. 'It is Africa's religion of today's generation, but it is open to all, irrespective of race, creed, colour or ideological orientation.'³⁴

The most fundamental challenge of Damuah and Afrikania to Christianity in Africa is the issue of identity – in particular, the problem of the identity of Christian Africa. Damuah sums up the challenge Afrikania poses to Christianity in Africa:

Mental bondage is mental violence
 Religious bondage is invisible violence
 Cultural bondage is cultural suicide
 The time for liberation (is) now.³⁵

c) Inclusive Paradigm

The Inclusive Paradigm affirms the salvific presence of God in non-Christian religions while still maintaining that Christ is the definitive and authoritative revelation of God.

Karl Rahner's Inclusivist Approach

Rahner maintains that salvation comes only through faith in God through Christ and again argues the salvific presence of God in non-Christian religions. To hold the two principles in balance he argues that:

When we have to keep in mind both principles together, namely the necessity of Christian faith and the universal salvific will of God's love and omnipotence, we can only reconcile them by saying that somehow all men must be capable of being members of the Church; and this capacity must not be understood merely in the sense of an abstract and purely logical possibility, but as a real and historically concrete one.³⁶

Rahner gives four theses to explain his position:

1. Christianity understands itself as the absolute religion, intended for all men, which cannot recognize any other religion beside itself as of equal right. Rahner adds a statement to this thesis by saying that the fact that Christianity understands itself as the absolute religion must be balanced by the difficulties involved in discerning 'when the existentially real demand is made

33 Bediako, *Christianity in Africa*, p. 27.

34 Bediako, *Christianity in Africa*, p. 32.

35 K. Damuah, *Afrikania Handbook—Reformed African Traditional Religion* (Accra: Afrikania Mission, 1983), back cover.

36 D'Costa, *Theology and Religious Pluralism*, p. 83.

- by the absolute religion in its historically tangible form'.³⁷
2. The universal salvific will of God revealed in Christ, God's grace, can be experienced by non-Christian religions. He argues that God must somehow offer grace to all those who have never properly encountered the gospel. The grace of God must be made available through, and not despite, the non-Christian's religion.
 3. A non-Christian may have already accepted God's grace in the depths of his or her heart by doing good. If a non-Christian has responded positively to God's grace, through selfless love for another, then even though it is not known objectively, that person has accepted the God that is historically and definitively revealed in Christ. God's salvation cannot be divorced from Christ; hence the term 'anonymous Christian' is more appropriate than 'anonymous theist'.
 4. The church cannot be seen as an elite community of those who are saved as opposed to the mass of unredeemed non-Christian humanity. The church is a tangible sign of the faith, hope and love made visible, present and irreversible in Christ. The Inclusive approach affirms that the only possible normative truth basis for Christians is Christ, while accommodating the salvific experience in non-Christian religions. The inclusivist challenges

the pluralist removal of Christ and his church from the centre of the universe of faiths and those exclusivist who sever the relationship between Christ and other faiths.

The Lordship of Jesus Christ and Religious Pluralism

The Lordship of Christ is one of the central affirmations of the New Testament. The manner in which it was expressed was developed in the West where religious pluralism was not a big issue. Those of us Africans whose history, tradition, culture, and social relationships are different from those in the West do not find it easy to bear the burden of this heritage. This means that the involvement of African Christians in pluralist communities should be taken seriously. The divine-human encounter in Jesus Christ is the basis for this confession.

The obvious mark of a Christian is the confession that Jesus Christ is Lord (2 Cor. 4:5; Rom. 10:9; Col. 2:6 etc). It signifies a new relationship of the believer to Jesus Christ, of commitment and loyalty, of surrendering oneself to God and to the one Lord, Jesus Christ. It is an affirmation that by virtue of his death and resurrection, Jesus Christ has been exalted above all lords.

There are three main points in the New Testament that can help in understanding the Lordship of Jesus Christ in the context of religious pluralism. The first is the connection between the confession of Christ's Lordship and faith in his resurrection. The second is the relation between the exaltation of Jesus Christ as Lord and his humility, his suffering, his emptying himself, his servanthood. The third is the unique

³⁷ D'Costa, *Theology and Religious Pluralism*, p. 84.

combination of the fatherhood of God with the Lordship of Jesus Christ.³⁸

This leads us to a major question as to how Christians can witness to the Lordship of Jesus Christ as they live with neighbours of other faiths. Christians should witness to the Lordship of Jesus Christ by proclaiming the salvation of Jesus Christ and being actively involved in the struggle for justice. Christians should also share with neighbours of other faith that in Jesus Christ the Ultimate has become intimate with humanity, 'that nowhere else is the victory over suffering and death manifested so decisively as in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ'.³⁹

4. African Christianity and Afrikania Movement

Christianity is universal, so the particularity of African Christianity should provide a contribution to the universal church. This contribution will defuse the Afrikania claim that what Africa needs is African Traditional Religion as an alternate to Christianity. The following statements of Komfo Damuah confirm the challenge the movement poses to the church. His fundamental problem with Christianity in Africa is stated in this way:

Christianity is generally viewed by Africans as not indigenously African, but rather a white man's religion, because as in other 'pagan' areas of the world, Christian missionaries often opposed or denigrated traditional local customs and institutions: veneration of ancestors, traditional tribal ceremonies and authority systems, and polygamy...⁴⁰

Damuah proposed a solution to the problem of what he called 'the great dilemma facing Africans today' by calling for a 'new synthesis', a reconstruction of the traditional religion which he considers as the divine purpose for Africa and for the world. He mentions in the Afrikania handbook what the movement wants to achieve:

It is not a new religion. It is a traditional African Religion 'come alive', reformed and updated. Afrikania is here not to destroy but to fulfil the dream of a new Africa. It is Africa's religion of today's generation, but it is open to all, irrespective of race, creed, colour or ideological orientation.⁴¹

Perhaps the most fundamental challenge Afrikania poses to Christianity in Africa is the question of cultural identity: the question of Ghanaian Christian identity. Bediako has raised the following questions that need further research. Have churches in Africa, especially the mainline churches, adequately indigenised the Christian gospel by making full use of the poten-

38 S.J. Samartha, 'The Lordship of Jesus Christ and Religious Pluralism' in G.H. Anderson, and T.F. Stransky (eds.), *Christ's Lordship and Religious Pluralism* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1981), pp. 19-24.

39 G.H. Anderson, and T.F. Stransky (eds.), *Christ's Lordship and Religious Pluralism* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1981), p. 36.

40 Bediako, *Christianity in Africa* (Edinburgh: Orbis Books, 1995), p. 26.

41 Bediako, *Christianity in Africa*, p. 32.

tial elements of faith rooted in our traditional religions? Does Africanisation of the church hierarchy, leadership and the ordained ministry amount to an adequate rooting of the faith in a community?

Conclusion

African Christianity can evolve only out of the interaction of the gospel of Jesus Christ with the cultural experience of the people. Christianity has always been incarnate within a culture—first Hebrew, then Greek, then Roman, Western and African. Andrew Walls argues that ‘the principal evidence of the ongoing life of traditional African religion lies within African Christianity.... African Christianity is

shaped by Africa’s past.’⁴² As Bediako rightly mentioned, ‘No Christian theology in any age is ever simply a repetition of the inherited Christian tradition; all Christian theology is an “adaptation” of the gospel.’

This study has shown that Christianity takes shape in the local setting and within the history of the people concerned. The Christian message is one and unchangeable, but the people employ their worldviews and the totality of their being to understand the message of Jesus Christ, to make it relevant to their daily life.

42 A. Walls, ‘African Christianity in the history of religion’ in C. Fyfe and A. Walls (eds), *Christianity in Africa in the 1990s* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996), p. 4.

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Evangelism, Theology and the Church

Thorsten Prill

KEYWORDS: *Models of evangelism, German Protestant Church, theologies of evangelism, conversion, evangelists, social action, theological education*

TO THE SUCCESSFUL 19th century American evangelist D. L. Moody one woman said that she did not like his method of evangelism. Moody replied, 'I agree with you. I don't like the way I do it, either. Tell me, how do you do it?' The woman replied, 'I don't.' Moody retorted, 'Then I like my way of doing it better than your way of not doing it.'

This well-known story suggests that evangelism is a pragmatic hands-on business. Whilst it is true that there is the danger of too much talking (and writing!) about evangelism and not enough evangelism itself, one must not overlook the fact that evangelistic practice and attitudes are determined not only by the gifts, limitations and the commitment of an evangelist, but also by theology. It is the theology of evangelism of a church, that of a local

congregation or a national church body, which deeply impacts the evangelistic strategies, the church chooses. Consequently, any church that is committed to evangelism, needs to have a clear understanding of its theology of evangelism.

Models of Evangelism

At the heart of every theology of evangelism lies a certain basic model or definition of evangelism. When we turn to the Bible to look for the terms evangelism or evangelisation we face a dilemma. Neither terms appears in the Bible nor is there a clear cut definition of what they mean. What we do find in the New Testament are the verb *evangelizesthai* and the nouns *evangelion* and *evangelistes*. *Evangelion* is unusually translated 'Gospel' (i.e. good message or good news), but it can also describe the activity of proclaiming or announcing that good news. The verb form, likewise, refers to the activity of telling the gospel. The term *evangelistes* derives from the verb

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evangelizesthai and means literally messenger of good.

When we look at the use of these words in the New Testament, it becomes clear that evangelism must be closely linked with the proclamation of the gospel. However, it should not surprise us that different models of evangelism have been construed which more or less take into account the proclamation aspect and claim to be truly biblical. There are many such models, but the following are probably the most prominent ones.

Proclamation Model

The traditional Protestant model of evangelism is the proclamation model. The reformed Anglican theologian J.I. Packer, a prominent contemporary exponent of this approach, writes: '...evangelism is just preaching the gospel, the evangel. It is a work of communications in which Christians make themselves mouthpieces of God's message of mercy to sinners.'¹ This transmission of the message can be achieved through formal preaching and teaching in a church environment but also in personal contacts. For the many supporters of this model, which equates evangelism with verbal gospel proclamation, the ultimate aim of evangelism is conversion to faith in Jesus Christ. By taking the ministry of the apostle Paul as an example that Christians should follow, Packer concludes: 'Evangelizing, therefore, is not simply a matter of teaching, and instructing,

and imparting information to the mind...It is communication with a view to conversion...It is an attempt to gain, or win, or catch, our fellow-men for Christ.'²

An obvious strength of this model is its emphasis on sharing the good news of Jesus Christ and on the necessity of conversion and personal faith in Christ. Thus, the apostle Paul underlines the idea that 'faith comes from hearing the message' (Rom. 10:17), and that turning to Jesus in faith is the only prerequisite of salvation (Acts 16:31). Also, the proclamation model helps to determine if evangelism is actually taking place or not by examining if the gospel is preached or taught. Last but not least, the proclamation model seeks to do justice to the available biblical material on evangelism.

A weakness of the proclamation model is its view of the aim of evangelism. It is arguable whether conversion, i.e. turning to Christ in faith, is really the ultimate aim of evangelism. The great commission in Matthew 28:18-20, which is generally regarded as a mandate for evangelism, does not speak of converts but of disciples (*mathetes*), i.e. learners or followers. S.J. Grenz argues that this is in line with Jesus' practice as it is presented by the gospel writers: Jesus expected more from people than mere confessions. He called people to become his disciples, even if this was costly.³ Consequently, it would be more appropri-

¹ James I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (London: Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1961), p. 41.

² Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, p. 50.

³ Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1994), p. 656.

ate to understand the ultimate aim of evangelism as making disciples, who are determined to become more like Jesus (Lk. 6:40, Rom. 8:29), to serve one another (Mk. 10:35-45) and to make more disciples of Christ (Mt. 28:18-20).

In *Transforming Mission* D. Bosch writes that the whole Gospel according to Matthew points to the final verses of the Great Commission. These verses are a kind of theological programme or summary of the teaching that is contained in this gospel. Because of this, Matthew 28:19-20 must not be taken out of context and thus be degraded to a mere slogan.⁴ These verses must be interpreted in the light of the whole gospel, but especially in the light of the ethical teachings that can be found in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5-7).⁵ Consequently, the process of disciple-making also involves the teaching of kingdom values such as justice, peace and righteousness.

Power Model

The model of power evangelism goes back to the American pastor John Wimber, who argues that Jesus himself exercised power evangelism, and therefore it is a model which Christians must follow. Wimber defines power evangelism as a highly effective evangelistic method, in which the verbal proclamation of the gospel is accompanied by supernatural signs and wonders. These signs and wonders include words of knowledge, physical heal-

ings, prophecies and exorcisms.⁶ Their main function is to help people to overcome their resistance and thus to make them more receptive to the Christian message.⁷

The strength of power evangelism is its emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit. It is undoubtedly true, that Christians must reckon with the work of the Holy Spirit when they share the gospel with non-Christians. Such an attitude guards them against a purely technocratic approach to evangelism.

Besides this strength there are also significant weaknesses. Firstly, there is the underlying kingdom theology, which overemphasizes the conflict between the kingdom of God and Satan. Power evangelism views all physical and psychological illness as caused by Satan. It leaves little room for the personal responsibility that human beings have for their health. It forgets that sickness is part of human life, or, as the apostle Paul writes, that our bodies are perishable (1 Cor. 15:42). Secondly, there is no proof from the New Testament that Jesus' main ministry was power evangelism and that he expected the church to get involved in it. It is true that Jesus performed miraculous healings and that healing is an important part of the church's ministry, but as L. Newbigin writes, Jesus' calling was 'to the way of suffering, rejection, and death, to the way of the cross.'⁸ Newbigin goes on to say that Jesus bore witness 'to the

⁴ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission* (New York: Orbis Books, 1991), p. 57.

⁵ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, p. 69.

⁶ John Wimber, *Power Evangelism* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990), p. 46.

⁷ Wimber, *Power Evangelism*, pp. 46-47.

⁸ Newbigin L, *The Open Secret* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), p. 37.

presence of the reign of God, not by overpowering the forces of evil, but by taking full weight upon himself.⁹ For his disciples Jesus is more than a model of divine power. He is the model of coping with the hardships of life. How else can we understand Jesus' remark in Matthew 16:24: 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.'?

Witness Model

The witness model defines evangelism as anything Christians do in order to bear witness to their faith. This may include the verbal proclamation of the gospel in public or privately, but it focuses on the way Christians live, i.e. their lifestyle, and the socio-political involvement of individuals or the church. All these activities qualify as evangelistic witness as long as they are done out of commitment to Jesus Christ. Consequently, every Christian is an evangelist, whether he or she is aware of it or not.

A great strength of the witness model is that it underlines the holistic character of the church's mission. Furthermore, it stresses that evangelism should form an integral part of the Christian life. On the other hand, this definition of evangelism seems to be too broad. W. J. Abraham comments: 'If everything we do is an act of witness, and every act of witness is a form of evangelism, then everything we do is evangelism. This invariably allows us to pretend that the church has fulfilled

its obligations...when in reality it has reduced evangelism to acts of mercy.'¹⁰ In other words, there is the danger that the verbal proclamation of the gospel is neglected. But verbal proclamation is essential, since social action and personal lifestyle alone cannot communicate the content of the good news. They must be accompanied by appropriate explanation.

Social Action Model

Related to the witness model is the social action approach. The basic idea of the social action model is that Christians respond to human needs and thus demonstrate God's love. This demonstration of God's love by human deeds will then lead to a positive response to Christianity.¹¹ This model has its roots in the social gospel movement, which developed at the end of the 19th century in the USA. One of its most prominent exponents was the Baptist theologian, Walter Rauschenbusch. Rauschenbusch regards social and political power as sin.¹² Since capitalism is based on these powers it must be considered as a sinful system. Therefore, the largest evangelistic task of the Christian Church and of every single Christian is to convince people of this sinfulness and to awaken the desire in them to save the community

¹⁰ William J. Abraham, *The Art of Evangelism* (Calver: Cliff College Publishing, 1993), p. 25.

¹¹ Douglas Webster, *What is Evangelism?* (London: Highway Press, 1959), p. 147.

¹² Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel*, first published 1917, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), pp. 45-50.

from it. This salvation can be reached only by an intensive act of love, i.e. a collective action of the community to change the economic order.¹³

The action model is based on a completely horizontal understanding of salvation. Salvation is perceived as the liberation from unjust social and economic orders that oppress people. There is no idea of salvation that was accomplished by Jesus' death on the cross. There is no idea of salvation as reconciliation with God (2 Cor. 5:18-21) or as redemption from personal sin (Rom. 8:3, Col. 1:13-14). Sin is mainly understood as structural sin. Therefore, the subjective basis of salvation, i.e. personal repentance, conversion and faith, play only a minor role in this approach and are even considered with some kind of suspicion.¹⁴ For Rauschenbusch the touchstone of Christian regeneration and personal salvation is a high social consciousness and not personal faith in a personal saviour.¹⁵

Church Growth Model

According to the church growth model, which was first construed by Donald A. McGavran, evangelism must have its focus on the growth of local churches. This growth of churches can be achieved by following certain principles, which are based on biblical truths

and sociological and anthropological insights. Christian A. Schwarz, a contemporary German church growth theologian, identifies eight qualities, which show a strong correlation with the numerical growth of a church. These characteristic qualities are: an empowering leadership, a gift-orientated ministry, a passionate spirituality, functional structures, inspiring worship services, holistic small groups, need-orientated evangelism and loving relationships.¹⁶ Schwarz speaks of a natural church development, which he defines as 'releasing the growth automatisms by which God himself grows his church'.¹⁷

One of the great strengths of the church growth model is that it emphasizes the importance of discipleship and the need of cultural sensitivity. Evangelism is considered to be more than verbal gospel proclamation. It is also seen as equipping and establishing new Christians in a particular culture. The great danger of this model is that numerical growth becomes the primary goal of the church. Also, it can foster the belief in human principles and thus reduce 'the role of the Holy Spirit to that of a sociological caretaker'.¹⁸

13 Walter Rauschenbusch, 'Christianizing the Social Order', in John Atherton, ed., *Social Christianity* (London: SPCK, 1994), p. 181.

14 Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel*, pp. 96-100.

15 Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel*, p. 108.

16 Christian A. Schwarz, *Natural Church Development Handbook* (Moggenhanger: BCGA, 1998), pp. 22-36.

17 Schwarz, *Natural Church Development Handbook*, p. 21.

18 A. Scott Moreau, 'Church Growth Movement', in Walter A. Elwell, ed, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), p. 260.

Initiation Model

Having examined the strengths and weaknesses of the main evangelistic models, the Methodist theologian W. J. Abraham argues that evangelism should be construed as the initiation into the kingdom of God. Abraham sees evangelism as a variety of actions, which all share the intention of initiating people into God's reign.¹⁹ Among these actions are the proclamation of the good news of the kingdom, the call to repent and to believe in Jesus Christ, a basic teaching of Christian theology and Christian moral tradition, the act of baptism as a prerequisite for full participation in a Christian community, as well as the equipment of new Christians to serve God in the church and the world by helping them to discover and to develop their spiritual gifts.²⁰ As the main agent for such a process of initiation Abraham calls for a new form of catechumenate.²¹

The initiation model seeks to do justice to the limitations and weaknesses of other prominent models of evangelism. Thus, it takes into account that the Great Commission in Matthew 28 actually speaks of disciples, baptism and instruction. Furthermore, it pays tribute to the fact that the 'kingdom of God/kingdom of heaven' is the central theme of Jesus' teaching. Also, it recognizes that the church and the kingdom of God are not identical. With the

emphasis on the kingdom it emphasizes that evangelism is a Christ-centred activity. Another strength, especially from a postmodern, post-Christian western perspective, is the idea of a revived catechumenate, which deals with all the activities of the evangelism process. However, the initiation model leaves an important question unanswered: How can the church make contact with those catechumenate candidates who have no church links in the first place?

Evangelism in the German Protestant Church

The (Re-) Discovery of Mission

A good example of how much theology impacts evangelistic attitudes and practice of a church can be seen in Germany. It is the example of a church that has only recently (re-) discovered its evangelistic task.

In November 1999 the synodical meeting of the Protestant Church in Germany (EKD), a community of then twenty-four Lutheran, Reformed, and United regional churches, took place in the East German city of Leipzig. The theme of the EKD synod was 'To Tell the World About God—The Task for the Mission of the Church at the Threshold of the Third Millennium'. It was the first time ever that the EKD synod had discussed the missionary task of the church in depth. At the close of the meeting the Synod made a public declaration, calling upon all congregations, full-time church workers and the laity to remember the mission-

¹⁹ William J. Abraham, *The Logic of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), p. 103.

²⁰ Abraham, *The Logic of Evangelism*, pp. 104-105.

²¹ Abraham, *The Logic of Evangelism*, pp. 174-179.

ary task of the Christian church.²²

Members of the evangelical camp within the EKD regarded the outcome of the Leipzig synod as a kind of dawn of a new era. One well-known evangelical even spoke of a miracle, which had happened at Leipzig.²³ The positive reaction of some people to the Leipzig synod is understandable. In the past the areas of mission and evangelism were fairly neglected by the German Protestant Church as a whole. Evangelism was basically regarded as the ministry of evangelical Christians. Today, several years later, the question is whether the positive response to the Leipzig synod and its effect for mission and evangelism in the regional churches were justified.

Evangelism and Proclamation

A good indicator for the role evangelism plays in the EKD regional churches today is the use of three high-profile contemporary evangelistic strategies, which are recognized and recommended by national and regional Protestant church leaders. These strategies are ProChrist, Willow Creek and Alpha.

ProChrist is a classic mass evange-

lisation campaign, which is held every three years. For eight days evangelistic programmes, which consist of music, interviews, drama and a sermon, are transmitted from a main venue live via satellite to locations in Germany and other European countries. At the local level, churches and para-church groups organize specific supporting programmes, but the central part of the programme comes from the main site. ProChrist 2003 was transmitted to more than 1,300 locations and attended by 1.8 million people. The organisers claim that about 30,000 people came forward to make a commitment of faith in Christ or expressed an interest in the Christian faith. Altogether, 3,712 German churches and groups were involved. Among these were 1,898 free churches and 816 EKD congregations. In addition to that, 706 congregations and youth groups of the Gnadau Union, the largest evangelical movement within the EKD, took part.²⁴ In other words, 22% of the groups involved were parish churches belonging to one of the 24 EKD regional churches, whilst 51% were free churches.

At the heart of the **Willow Creek** concept are seeker-friendly or sensitive services, which are aimed at so-called unchurched people. These services avoid traditional elements such as hymnbooks or clerical robes. Instead, they are characterised by an extensive use of modern technology (e.g. video clips), songs, which are modelled on popular music, as well as

22 Kundgebung der 9. Synode der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland auf ihrer 4. Tagung zum Schwerpunktthema 'Reden von Gott in der Welt—Der missionarische Auftrag der Kirche an der Schwelle zum 3. Jahrtausend', published in *Das Evangelium unter die Leute bringen* (Hannover: Kirchenamt der EKD, 2001), pp. 42-50 (p.42).

23 Hartmut Barend, *Worte von oben in der Praxis vor Ort—AMD Studienbrief A60* (Stuttgart: Arbeitsgemeinschaft Missionarische Dienste, 2000), p. 2.

24 ProChrist e.V., (ed.) *Berichtsheft Unglaublich. Lesen und Staunen* (Kassel: ProChrist, 2003), pp. 15-21.

messages, that show a high grade of application. To promote this specific approach Willow Creek Community Church, Chicago has spawned a global network of churches from many different denominations. In addition, it holds regular conferences and seminars. The first German conference took place in Hamburg in 1996. Since then the number of participants has grown constantly. At the last church conference (together with Alpha Germany) in 2003 28% of all conference participants were affiliated with EKD parishes while 14% belonged to the Gnadau Union and 57% were members of free churches.²⁵ In the Willow Creek Association Germany 70% of its 188 partner churches are free churches and 22% are EKD congregations.²⁶

Alpha, is a process evangelism course, which is used in more than 23,000 churches around the world. Whereas in the United Kingdom there are currently Alpha courses running in 7,215 congregations,²⁷ the number of German churches registered with Alpha is relatively small. In January 2004 there are 784 churches and groups registered with Alpha Germany. 67% of these churches and groups are Baptist, Methodist, or Pentecostal free churches, and only 16% belong to the EKD.²⁸

The survey of these three well-

known evangelistic initiatives shows that the number of EKD parishes which use these strategies are very small. Willow Creek, Alpha and ProChrist are more or less dominated by evangelical and charismatic free churches, which represent only 900,000 people or 1,5% of all church members in Germany. For the majority of EKD churches with a total membership of 26.2 million, Willow Creek, Alpha, and ProChrist are apparently not evangelistic methods they are willing to use. This raises the question of what kind of evangelistic strategies there are in the Protestant churches.

Evangelism and Social Action

To find out more about the evangelistic situation at grassroots level a closer look at the Protestant congregations in the Rhineland can be helpful. With three million members, the Protestant Church in the Rhineland is not only one of the largest regional churches but it is also one that has been encouraged by the Leipzig Synod to take mission and evangelism seriously. The analysis of a questionnaire on the understanding of mission and evangelism, which was distributed among Rhenish pastors has led to the following results²⁹:

²⁹ In 2003 I constructed a written questionnaire to survey the understanding of mission and evangelism in selected congregations of the Evangelical Church in the Rhineland. It was sent to 100 incumbent pastors, and received 52 responses. It asked for the pastors' views on the Leipzig Synod and their attitude towards contemporary forms of evangelism and mission and mission training offered by their regional church. At the time, the Evangelical Church in the Rhineland had 817 parishes and 1,491 incumbent pastors.

²⁵ 'Kongress-Statistik', WillowNetz 4/2003, p. 30.

²⁶ Willow Creek Deutschland, <www.willowcreek.de/gemeinden.html>, accessed 17th January 2004

²⁷ *Alpha News* (March-June 2003), p. 31.

²⁸ Alpha Deutschland, <www.alphakurs.de/kurse/register_search.php>, accessed 17th January 2004

46% of the pastors asked believe that the Leipzig synod has had positive effects on the missionary work of the twenty four regional EKD churches. The majority of these ministers think that the Leipzig synod has helped to put mission on the church's agenda. The term 'mission', as one pastor puts it, has lost its 'negative flavour'. 54% of the pastors do not see any clear positive effects of the Leipzig meeting. 49% do not agree with the statement by the synod that 'the Protestant church sets the theme of faith and the missionary calling in first place'. Instead, they see the following areas as at least of equal importance: finances, church structures, diaconical and social work, peace, justice, environmental issues, pastoral care, unemployment and homosexuality. One pastor even says that he is against any specific evangelistic work by the church. The way Christians live, he argues, has either positive or negative effects on others.

When asked about particular evangelistic strategies, 83% name social projects and services, such as second-hand shops, homeless ministries, advice bureau for people in need or hospital chaplaincies, as appropriate evangelistic tools. 65% think that so-called 'Kircheneintrittsstellen' and Protestant academies are useful. 50% consider bookshops and cafés run by congregations as good methods of evangelism. Only 12% believe in church planting and 13% think of ProChrist as an adequate method. 17% find the Alpha course to be helpful. Concerts, festivals and church choirs are named by 44% and mission weeks by 15%.

When we look at the answers of those pastors who do not regard the

missionary task of the church as a priority, the results are slightly different. None of these pastors considers Alpha or ProChrist as suitable strategies. Among those who agree that mission is the priority of the church, 28% think of Alpha, and 24% of ProChrist as appropriate ways to evangelise, while 28% believe in mission weeks. Only 45% regard social action as an important part of mission.

Evangelism and Theological Training

Regarding the training of EKD ministers, the Declaration of the 1999 Leipzig synod states: 'We urgently need to give mission training new impetus. This is true not only for special mission training centres but also for basic and further vocational training of our ministers at the theological faculties and the preaching seminars.'³⁰ A survey of the twenty two university departments and church faculties in Germany at which EKD ordinands receive their academic training reveals that a chair of evangelism studies does not exist at any of the departments. At five universities there are chairs of practical theology, that are supposed to cover studies in 'Gemeindeaufbau'. At the University of Greifswald the launch of an institute for the research into evangelism is planned for April 2004.

An analysis of the syllabus of the twenty two theology departments for the years 2002 and 2003 has led to the following results: At six universities

³⁰ *Kundgebung* (Hannover: Kirchenamt der EKD, 2001), p. 47.

lectures or seminars in evangelism or 'Gemeindeaufbau' were part of the curriculum.³¹ At the three Rhenish theology departments that train ordinands for the ministry in the Protestant Church in the Rhineland, evangelism studies or 'Gemeindeaufbau' respectively are more or less non-existent. At the University of Bonn there has not been a single lecture or seminar in this field for the last five years. Instead, students at Bonn have had the opportunity to attend 17 seminars or lectures in diaconical studies since 1998.

Evaluation: Evangelism—a Grassroots Ministry!?

The results of the surveys seem to confirm K. Schäfer's evaluation that mission 'has reappeared as a central term in the vocabulary of the Protestant churches'.³² The term 'mission' is no longer disregarded among the majority of the clergy, but it is questionable whether this is true for the term 'evangelism', too. According to Schäfer the churches have rediscovered the 'evangelistic dimension of mission',³³ i.e. the necessity to invite people to a living faith in Christ. While this may be right for some of the national and regional church leaders, the survey shows that willingness to get involved in evangelism at grassroots level is still very low.

Evangelistic strategies which

clearly aim to evoke personal faith in Jesus Christ, such as seeker services, evangelistic courses, or evangelistic campaigns play only a minor role. The main emphasis is still on social action. Also, one can still see a kind of Constantinian state-church mentality among the majority of pastors. Mission and evangelism are understood as inviting people to join the church by contacting a 'Kircheneintrittsstelle', a kind of church recruitment office, which gives advice about the formal steps one needs to take if one wants to become a church member. Furthermore, the laity seems to play a minor role in evangelism. Evangelism is seen, if at all, as the responsibility of the ordained clergy.

The surveys show that a fresh understanding of mission and evangelism at leadership level does not necessarily cause local congregations to make evangelism a priority. Schäfer rightly underlines that 'missionary renewal has never come from the top but from the bottom'.³⁴ He goes on to say that it is not clear how church leaders can help the whole people of God to rediscover their role as witnesses for the Christian gospel.³⁵

The surveys show that this problem, which Schäfer identifies, is more than a question of the right strategies and initiatives, i.e. a purely practical issue. The issue is also a highly theological one. Schäfer seems to recognize this by saying that there are two camps: those who pursue a secular mission through political and social action, and those

31 Erlangen, Greifswald, Halle, Jena, Leipzig, and Tübingen.

32 Klaus Schäfer, 'Mission in Secular and Postmodern Societies: The Example of Germany', *International Review of Mission*, No. 364, (January 2003), pp. 40-44 (p.40).

33 Schäfer, 'Mission', p. 40.

34 Schäfer, 'Mission', p. 42.

35 Schäfer, 'Mission', p. 42.

who understand mission as inviting people to join the church.³⁶

As a matter of fact, the problem is more complex than that. There are basically three main groups, who hold different views of evangelism, which are more or less rooted in Scripture. All these views are, to some extent, reflecting the theologies of evangelism of influential German theologians.

Secular 'Evangelism' and the Gospel of Liberation

Firstly, there are undoubtedly those who understand mission and evangelism in an almost secular way. They emphasise kingdom values such as social justice and peace but pay no real attention to the personal dimension of mission. Their model of evangelism is basically a social action model. For them the Christian gospel is the good news of liberation from political and social oppression. They are in danger, as Abraham writes, of reducing evangelism 'to acts of moralistic witness which are orphaned from the lights and powers of the Holy Spirit'.³⁷ They fail to see that God's kingdom cannot be established by human endeavour.

A contemporary German theologian who has fostered this view of evangelism is Jürgen Moltmann, who restricts the call of conversion to the rich and influential of society. Referring to the beatitudes in Matthew and Luke, he argues that there is no need for the poor to be converted since God's kingdom already belongs to them, while all

those who are converted join the poor in the community of the messiah, i.e. the church.³⁸ Furthermore, he stresses the horizontal dimension of conversion and neglects the vertical aspect. 'Conversion', he writes means to '... turn from violence to justice, from isolation to community, from death to life'.³⁹

For Moltmann the gospel is the gospel of the kingdom, i.e. 'the gospel of the liberation of the people'.⁴⁰ In *The Future of Creation* he writes that this liberation includes liberation from economic exploitation, political oppression, alienation between human beings, destruction of the environment and human apathy.⁴¹ He even claims that social and political action groups can find their way into the community of Christ through mere cooperation with Christian congregations.⁴² If this is true, there is no real need to call people to faith in Christ. Moltmann overlooks the fact that the New Testament also speaks of personal sin and the need for forgiveness regardless of peoples' social standing (e.g. Rom. 3:23). It looks as if Moltmann in his attempt to show the social dimension of mission has fallen into the trap of neglecting the individual side of faith. Stephen Williams expresses this quite clearly when he writes: 'The importance of attaining faith in Christ in this world, reiterated in the New Testament, is

36 Schäfer, 'Mission', p. 42.

37 Abraham, *The Art of Evangelism*, p. 35.

38 Jürgen Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ* (London: SCM Press, 1990), pp. 102-103.

39 Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, p. 102.

40 Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, p. 96.

41 Jürgen Moltmann, *The Future of Creation* (London: SCM Press, 1979), p. 110.

42 Jürgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life* (London: SCM Press, 1992), pp. 242-243.

scarcely given its due place in Moltmann's theology.⁴³

Growth 'Evangelism': Church Membership without Commitment

Secondly, there are those who stress the importance of infant baptism, church membership and community, but seem to be less interested in the spiritual side of evangelism. They follow a kind of secular church growth or witness model. They welcome evangelistic initiatives, which lead people into the church or make them stay. Evangelistic tools, which call upon people to believe in Jesus Christ, are either refused by them or accepted only because they are seen as useful methods against a further decline in church membership. They are in danger of concentrating on numbers and human fellowship regardless of whether or not people are really committed to Jesus Christ.

Much of this can be found in Paul Tillich's theology of evangelism. Tillich argues that evangelism, which consists of apologetics and evangelistic preaching, belongs to the so-called church functions of expansion. As such it mainly serves two purposes. The first purpose is self-preservation. Evangelism, Tillich writes, must be cultivated to prevent churches from diminishing in extension. The second purpose of evangelism is helping peo-

ple to find one's self.⁴⁴ The ultimate goal of evangelism is the transformation of 'the subjectivity of the listener'.⁴⁵ In other words, evangelism helps people to overcome their estrangement from themselves. Tillich's gospel is an existentialist gospel. The concept of inviting people to repent and to believe in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour is strange to Tillich. This becomes clear when he writes that there is no universal Christian message and that 'it is the silent witness of the community of faith and love which convinces the questioner'.⁴⁶ Tillich rejects strongly the idea of conversion and salvation through faith in Christ alone.

It is Tillich's unorthodox view of the person of Jesus Christ, which is basically an adoptionist position, that causes him to understand evangelism in such a limited way. Tillich distinguishes between the historical person of Jesus of Nazareth and the Christ who brings the New Being. While the person Jesus was received as the Christ, he is not the subject of faith. The meaning of Jesus, as A.E. McGrath puts it, 'lies in his being the historical manifestation of the New Being'.⁴⁷ For Tillich, this manifestation could have happened in any other human being.⁴⁸

43 Stephen Williams, 'Jürgen Moltmann: A Critical Introduction' (Duce Philip and Daniel Strange, (eds.) *Getting Your Bearings* (Leicester: Apollos, 2003), p. 107.

44 Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols (London: SCM Press, 1978) vol.3, p. 194-196.

45 Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, p. 196.

46 Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, p. 195.

47 Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), p. 346.

48 Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols (London: SCM Press, 1987) vol.2, p. 114.

Proclamation Evangelism: Evangelism as Mere Gospel Communication

Finally, there are those, who adhere to the proclamation model of evangelism. For them the christological character of the gospel is central. They stress the importance of proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ, conversion, salvation, a personal relationship with God and church membership. They also acknowledge the role of baptism and discipling (personal prayer, devotions, etc.), but do not understand these as being part of the evangelistic process. The teaching of the intellectual heritage of the Christian faith, as it can be found in the creeds or the denominational confessions of faith, is less important to them. The same is true for the teaching of kingdom values. Like the other groupings, they tend to ignore the teaching of spiritual gifts. They are in danger of forgetting that 'salvation is made present in the acts of the Holy Spirit carried out through the agents of the kingdom who are grafted into the body of Christ'.

In his introductory lecture given at the Leipzig synodical meeting, Eberhard Jüngel promotes such a proclamation model of evangelism. Referring to the biblical meaning of the terms 'mission' and 'evangelism', he says: '*Missio* means sending and evangelising simply means proclaiming the evangel, the gospel. *Missio* happens for the sake of *evangelizesthai*, which in turn happens because of mission.'⁴⁹ He goes on to say

that the mission of the church is the mission of Jesus Christ who sends her and commands all believers to be his messengers.⁵⁰ The final goal of all missionary activity, Jüngel argues, 'is to help people to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and that means knowledge of a truth that sets them free'.⁵¹

Towards a Biblical Theology of Evangelism

The German example shows that people who belong to the same church can use the same terminology without actually meaning the same thing. In such a situation it is less helpful to state, as German church leaders have done, that liberal and evangelical groupings in the church are equally committed to mission and evangelism, when in fact these groups have totally contradictory views in these areas.

The situation in Germany makes clear how important it is for every church to develop a theology of evangelism, which is faithful to biblical truths, principles and concepts. Like every theology it will be shaped by many different aspects. It will be shaped by its understanding of God, the kingdom of God, the church of Christ, the gospel, salvation and conversion, as well as its attitude towards culture. Since it would go beyond the scope of this article to look at all these aspects I will focus on four areas, which are crucial for any theology of evangelism that deserves the attribute 'biblical'.

49 Eberhard Jüngel, 'To Tell The World About God', *International Review of Mission*, No.353 (April 2000), pp. 203-216 (p. 207).

50 Jüngel, 'To Tell The World', p. 238.

51 Jüngel, 'To Tell The World' p. 239.

The Gospel of Jesus and the Gospel of the Kingdom

As discussed earlier, the verbal proclamation of the gospel plays a central role in evangelism. But what is the gospel, what is its content? For the advocates of the prosperity gospel⁵² the good news of the Christian faith is that people who put their trust in Jesus Christ and give to the church generously will be blessed by God through health and wealth. For liberation theologians the good news is that God

52 At the heart of prosperity or word of faith theology, which has its roots in Latin and North American Pentecostal circles, lies the conviction that God blesses people not only spiritually but also materially and physically when they trust him and show obedience to him. Often generous financial support of those who deliver this good news of prosperity is seen as an expression of this trust and obedience. In other words, faith in Jesus guarantees a successful life. Consequently, poverty or ill health become signs that there is something wrong with one's faith. In 1995 the World Evangelical Fellowship made clear that such teachings are not in line with the biblical teaching on prosperity. The WEF stated: 'Wealth and prosperity can be a blessing from God, but they can also be Satan's temptation (Lk. 4:5-7). Wealth can be used in a manner that brings great glory to the Lord and great blessing to his people, or it can supplant the place of the Lord in one's life... Jesus warns us that we cannot serve both God and Mammon (Wealth) (Mt. 6:24)... Jesus taught us to trust God for our daily bread, i.e. the necessities of life rather than the luxuries.... Whatever wealth an individual Christian or a Christian community has provides an opportunity for *koinonia*, for sharing.' (Statement of the World Evangelical Fellowship on Prosperity Theology and Theology of Suffering, in Andrew Perriman, *Faith, Health, and Prosperity* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2003), pp. 240-241.

wants to set us free from political and economic oppression, while for the supporters of an existentialist theology the gospel tells us that we can overcome the estrangement from ourselves.

The New Testament actually speaks about the 'Gospel of Jesus Christ' (e.g. Mk. 1:1) and the 'Gospel of the Kingdom' (e.g. Mt. 4:23), but it would be wrong to interpret these terms in such a way as to infer that there are two different kinds of good news. The Gospel writers leave us with no doubt that the good news of the kingdom of God, i.e. of God's reign, is centred on Jesus Christ. The kingdom of God finds its expression in Jesus' deeds (e.g. Lk. 11:20), through Jesus' teaching (e.g. Mt. 18:3-4), and last but not least in the person of Jesus (e.g. Lk. 17:20-21). To receive or to enter the kingdom, which is closely linked with being saved and inheriting eternal life, requires faith in the gospel and in Jesus (Mk. 10:17-31) Melvin Tinker concludes: 'It is therefore not a strange shift that the one who proclaimed the good news becomes... the one who is proclaimed as the good news.'⁵³

That the person of Jesus Christ is actually the gospel which needs to be proclaimed is also at the centre of Paul's letters. In 1 Corinthians 15:1-11 Paul defines the essence of the gospel message by listing five gospel truths. Firstly, Jesus is the Christ (v. 3). Secondly, he died for our sins, was buried and was raised to life again (vv. 3-4). Thirdly, we can know this through the Scriptures and the reports of many wit-

53 Melvin Tinker, *Evangelical Concerns* (Fearn: Christian Focus, 2001), p. 70.

nesses, including the apostles (vv. 4-8). Fourthly, we need to respond to this message 'by holding firm to it', i.e. by faith (v. 2). Fifthly, if we do so, we receive salvation (v. 2).

Salvation

In his book *Good News For A Suffering World*, Philip King tells the well-known story of a Salvation Army worker and a bishop who were travelling on the same train. After a while the Salvation Army worker feels urged to ask the bishop, 'Are you saved?'. The bishop's reply takes him by surprise, 'It depends what you mean; I have been saved, I am being saved, and I will be saved.'⁵⁴ This story indicates that salvation is a rather complex biblical concept, which has more than just one meaning.

Thus, we can find in the Old and the New Testament examples of individual and corporate salvation. Furthermore, both Testaments deal with the physical and spiritual aspects of salvation. However, there seems to be an emphasis on the physical dimension in the Old Testament, while the New Testament seems to emphasize the spiritual side. While there are examples of salvation in the Old Testament, which can be interpreted as liberation from political and economical oppression, salvation in the New Testament does not involve political or economic liberation.

Spiritual and Physical Salvation

In the Old Testament there is obviously

a strong emphasis on the physical dimension of salvation. Salvation includes deliverance from illness (Is. 38:20) or from enemies (Ps. 22:21, Neh. 9:27). But it would be wrong, as Michael Coogan does, to deny categorically the existence of a spiritual dimension in the Hebrew Bible.⁵⁵

Firstly, the framework of salvation in the Old Testament is generally, though not exclusively, Israel's covenant with Yahweh. The Sinai Covenant was the foundational element of Israelite religion and its religious ethic formed the basis of Israel's social life.⁵⁶ Terms like 'priestly kingdom' and 'holy nation' in Exodus 19:6 underline this spiritual character of the covenant. Secondly, the Old Testament teaches neither a division of a human being into soul and body nor a division into soul, body and spirit.⁵⁷ The term *nefesh* for example, which basically means 'breath', represents the whole person, the physical and the non-physical elements.⁵⁸

Michael Green rightly points out that this holistic view of human beings

⁵⁵ Michael D. Coogan, 'Salvation', in Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan, Michael D., eds., *The Oxford Companion to the Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 670.

⁵⁶ Gary A. Herion, 'Covenant', in Freedman, David Noel, ed., *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), p. 291.

⁵⁷ Th. C. Vriezen, *An Outline of Old Testament Theology* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1970), p. 408.

⁵⁸ Willem A. VanGemeren, *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, vol 3 (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1997), p. 33.

⁵⁴ Philip King, *Good News for a Suffering World* (Crowborough: Monarch, 1996), p. 83.

has consequences for the understanding of salvation: 'It safeguards the unity of human existence, it stresses God's involvement in history, and it guards the divorce of the sacred from the secular and the spiritual from the physical.'⁵⁹ Green goes on to say that in the Hebrew Bible human beings are presented as social beings. For them salvation was a social matter. It not only involves the whole person but also the whole society. They understood salvation as the 'reign of God in a redeemed community on earth'.⁶⁰ Consequently, the acts of physical salvation, such as the liberation from enemies or the deliverance from sickness, which take place within the covenant relationship also have a spiritual dimension.

In their article, 'How Broad is Salvation in Scripture', R. Sider and J. Parker argue that in the Gospels the idea of salvation involves more than the forgiveness of human sin. They write: 'The language about salvation in the Gospels is applied to more than what we normally think of as "spiritual concerns".'⁶¹ Sider and Parker rightly point out that in many healing stories which are recorded in the synoptic Gospels the word 'save' is used to describe not only acts of physical healings but also physical rescues from dangerous situations.⁶²

While salvation in the Gospels has undoubtedly this holistic character, Sider and Parker are in danger of overemphasizing the physical dimension and ignoring the predominance of the spiritual dimension of salvation. Most of the New Testament passages in which the words 'save' or 'salvation' are used deal with the ultimate salvation of human beings in Jesus Christ.⁶³ Both the synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of John present Jesus Christ as the saviour. Matthew 10:21-23, for example, tells us that followers of Christ can expect to experience hatred, rejection and betrayal, but everyone 'who endures to the end will be saved'. In other words: salvation is for those who are loyal to Jesus to the end. Those who are faithful, 'will be saved...and will enter finally into the blessed peace promised to the participants in the kingdom'.⁶⁴

This emphasis on the spiritual aspect of salvation can also be found in Paul's theology. As L. Morris points out, salvation from sin and its consequences is a predominant theme in Paul's writings.⁶⁵ In 1 Timothy 1:15 Paul writes 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners', and in his letter to the Romans he argues that Christians are no longer slaves of sin, since they have been set free from it (6:17-18). This spiritual understanding of salvation can also be clearly seen in those passages that link salvation with

59 Michael Green, *The Meaning of Salvation* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1965), p. 40.

60 Green, *The Meaning of Salvation*, p. 40.

61 Roland J. Sider and James Parker III, 'How Broad is Salvation in Scripture?', in Bruce Nichols, ed., *Word and Deed* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1985), p. 93.

62 Sider and Parker, 'How Broad is Salvation in Scripture?', p. 93.

63 Michael D. Coogan, 'Salvation', p. 670.

64 Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13* (Dallas: Word Books, 1993), p. 278.

65 Leon Morris, 'Salvation', in Gerald F. Hawthorne, ed., *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Leicester: IVP, 1993), p. 858.

faith, such as Romans 1:16, 1 Corinthians 1:21, or Ephesians 2:8.

Individual and Corporate Salvation

While in the Old Testament salvation is mainly within the covenantal relationship with God, Paul stresses that salvation is open to all people. There is no distinction between Jews and non-Jews (Rom. 10:12). All salvation requires is personal faith in Jesus Christ. In Romans 10:9 Paul writes: '...if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.' Consequently, there is quite a strong individual aspect in Paul's understanding of salvation. But there is also a corporate, spiritual dimension. In his letter to the Ephesians 2:13 Paul says that those who have been saved through faith are 'in Christ Jesus'. For Paul this means that they are citizens and members of God's household.⁶⁶ They are part of a community in which all members intimately relate to Christ and thereby relate to each other,⁶⁷ or, as S. Travis puts it, 'I cannot be "in Christ" without at the same time being in deep relationship to all others who are "in Christ".'⁶⁸

In the Gospels there are many passages which portray salvation as something totally individual. Thus the writers of the synoptic Gospels tell us how

Jesus forgave a paralytic man (Mt. 9:1-8, Mk. 2:1-12, Lk. 5:17-26) and a woman who anointed his feet (Lk. 7:36-50) their sins. In the Gospel of John we are told that a personal new birth and faith in Jesus are essential in order to avoid destruction and to gain eternal life (3:1-16). In John chapter 10, verse 9 we read, 'I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved.' Salvation is personal and it is through Jesus alone. Besides the individual nature of salvation, the corporate aspects of salvation are clearly presented in the gospels, too. Thus we can read in Luke's accounts of Simeon's Song: '...for my eyes have seen your salvation...a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel' (2:30, 32). The Gospel of John makes it clear that God sent his son to save the world, and not only the people of Israel (3:17).

Salvation and Political-Economic Liberation

The key story of salvation from oppression in the Old Testament is located in the book of Exodus. For G. Gutierrez Israel's exodus is clearly a political event. Gutierrez rightly underlines that the situation of the Israelites in Egypt is one of political persecution and economic exploitation.⁶⁹ The Israelites are not only forced into slavery (Exod. 1:11-14) but the Egyptian rulers also try to keep their numbers low by killing every Israelite male child (Exod. 1:15-22). Consequently, there is an element of political liberation in this story.

⁶⁶ Ephesians 2:19.

⁶⁷ Sider and Parker, 'How Broad is Salvation in Scripture?', p. 96.

⁶⁸ Stephen H. Travis, *The Scope of Salvation* (Sheffield: Conservative Evangelicals in Methodism, 1980), p. 11.

⁶⁹ Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (London: SCM Press, 1974) p. 156.

However, it would be wrong to rule out any spiritual aspect. The starting point of Israel's liberation is that 'God remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob' (Exod. 2:24). The basis of this covenant is undoubtedly an act of faith. Thus we can read in Genesis 17:7 that God not only established a covenant with Abraham, who had become a believer (Gen. 15:6), but also with Abraham's descendants. In other words, God entered into a covenant with Abraham's descendants on the basis of Abraham's faith.

According to Gutierrez the idea of political liberation is also part of the New Testament message of salvation. He argues that political liberation forms one of three different levels of liberation, the other two being the liberation of humankind throughout history and the liberation from sin through Christ's death and resurrection.⁷⁰ For Gutierrez political liberation involves an active transformation of the social order. He holds that the abolishment of unjust structures is part of the work of Christ.⁷¹

Against this S. Travis rightly argues that neither in the Gospels nor in the Pauline letters is salvation presented as political and economic liberation. For Paul salvation is about forgiveness and the possibility of a relationship with God through Christ.⁷² Thus we can read, for example, in Ephesians 1:7: 'In him (Christ) we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace.'

This theme of forgiveness, Travis writes, is also the central theme of the Gospels.⁷³ Mark and Luke tell us that John the Baptist offered forgiveness to the people of Israel on the condition that they would repent (Mk. 1:4, Lk. 3:3). Mark, Matthew and Luke also report how Jesus forgives sins because of people's faith (Mk. 2:5, Mt. 9:2, Lk. 5:20; Lk. 7: 48-50). In Luke 7:34 and Matthew 11:19 Jesus is called 'the friend of sinners', and in John 20:23 we can read the following promise Jesus gives to his disciples: 'If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'

Salvation, Evangelism and Social Responsibility

For evangelism, which proclaims salvation through faith in Christ, this means that it must neither be equated with social action nor must it be seen as separate from it. Social-political action is not a substitute for evangelism. Socio-political action does not lead to salvation as it is first and foremost understood in the New Testament. But at the same time it is also true that a church, which wants to evangelise, must also be a church that recognizes its social responsibilities. Jesus cared for the human soul and the human body. He showed a deep social concern for those at the fringes of society. Consequently, word and action belong together. If a church denies its social responsibility it puts its credibility at stake. If it ignores the spiritual dimension of salvation it runs the danger of being no longer church.

70 Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, p. 176.

71 Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, p. 177.

72 Travis, *The Scope of Salvation*, pp. 12-13.

73 Travis, *The Scope of Salvation*, p. 12.

Conversion: Process or Event?

Both in the New and the Old Testament conversion basically means turning. The main meaning of conversion in the New Testament is that of a person turning to God (e.g. Acts 9:35, 15:19). Often such turning is associated with repentance (Acts 3:19, 26:20) or faith (Acts 11:21).

With regard to the nature of conversion we have seen quite a dramatic paradigm shift over recent years.⁷⁴ While in the past conversion was generally understood by the majority of evangelicals as instantaneous turning to God, i.e. a decision for Christ made at a certain point in time, it is nowadays conceived by many as a gradual progress.⁷⁵ In other words, finding faith is seen as a process or journey and not as an event.⁷⁶ This has consequences for the way evangelism is viewed. If coming to faith is a process, then evangelism, too

must be a process rather than an event. In this case the evangelistic strategies a church chooses are more likely to be process strategies such as the Alpha course. But if conversion is seen as a crisis rather than a process then evangelism will be more likely regarded as a one-off event. In this case appropriate methods will be Willow Creek style seeker services or campaigns, such ProChrist.

When we look at the New Testament we can actually find both aspects of conversion—the journey model of conversion and the crisis or event model. In Acts 16, for example, Luke tells us about the business woman Lydia and the Philippian jailer who both experience sudden conversions. Both hear the gospel message and respond to it immediately. There is no hint that the jailer had had any contact with Christians or the local Jewish community before he met Paul and Silas in his prison.

When we look closer at Lydia's conversion we can see that there is a wider dimension to it. Lydia, we are told, was a worshipper of God. As such, she believed and behaved like a Jew without actually having become one. In other words, she was a spiritual seeker. Her journey of faith had begun, long before she met Paul and Silas. It was only when she met the two missionaries and heard the good news, that God opened her heart to accept the message. Her conversion was still an instantaneous change, but it was a change at the end of a longer journey of change.

Consequently, one can speak of conversion as an event and a process. There is no need to polarise the two, or as Robert Warren puts it: 'In fact a

74 Stephen Cottrell, *Catholic Evangelism* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1998) p. 19.

75 M. Booker comments about the idea of conversion as a process and the importance of relationships within that process: 'These two themes have become accepted within the Church in Britain with a speed and to a degree that is quite remarkable.' (Mike Booker, 'Mission, Evangelism and the Church of God', in Mike Booker and Mark Ireland, eds., *Evangelism—Which Way Now?* (London: Church House Publishing, 2003), p. 4.

76 'Belonging before Believing' has become a prominent slogan. M. Moynagh writes: 'Encouraging non-believers to feel some kind of ownership of the church as they travel into faith is vital...Christians must become not recruiters but friends—fellow-travellers...' (Michael Moynagh, *Changing World, Changing Church* (London: Monarch Books, 2001) p. 113.

process is a sustained series of events. It is important therefore not to set 'event' (in terms of moments of decision/choice) in opposition to process.⁷⁷ For our evangelistic practice this means that we should always seek a mixture of event and process evangelism strategies.

The Evangelist—the Forgotten Office!?

Finally, if we asked different people the question 'Whose responsibility is evangelism in the church?' we would probably get many different answers. Some would rightly argue that every Christian has the responsibility to share his or her faith. Thus the apostle Peter tells us to be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks us to give the reason for the hope that we Christians have (1 Pet. 3:15). Others would stress that it is the task of the pastor or preacher to evangelise. They are undoubtedly right, too. The apostle Paul was a pastor and a church planter, but that did not stop him from evangelising. To the church in Corinth he wrote: 'Yet when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, for I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel' (1 Cor 9:16). And to his pupil Timothy, also a pastor, Paul gives the following command: 'But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry' (2 Tim 4:5). Roger Carswell comments: 'The pastor has many responsibilities—to feed the flock of

God, to pray, to lead, to comfort, but he must act as an evangelist also. The pastor is to strive to lead souls to Christ, not only through the public ministry, but in one-to-one encounters.⁷⁸

While it is true that evangelism is the obligation of all Christians, it seems that many churches, like the German Protestant Church, have forgotten that the New Testament also speaks of evangelism as a ministry in its own right. In Ephesians 4:11 Paul mentions five categories of ministers, which have been given to the church by Christ: apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers and evangelists. Their task is to build up the body of Christ. P.T. O'Brien writes: 'Ephesians 4 focuses on the exalted Christ's action of giving these "ministers" to the church. We may assume that they regularly functioned as apostle, prophets, evangelists, and the like, and that their ministries were accepted and recognized in the churches. It is appropriate, then, to speak of them as "officers".'⁷⁹ In other words, the early church had ministers who had specific evangelistic gifts. They could preach evangelistic sermons, make the good news relevant to unbelievers, or help them to make a commitment to Christ.⁸⁰

What does this mean for the evangelistic practice of a church today? First of all it means that evangelism studies must be part of the curriculum at theological seminaries and univer-

⁷⁷ Robert Warren, *Signs of Life* (London: Church Publishing House, 1996), p. 66.

⁷⁸ Roger Carswell, *And Some Evangelists* (Fearn: Christian Focus, 2000), p. 49.

⁷⁹ Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (Leicester: Apollos, 1999), p. 301.

⁸⁰ John R. Stott, *Essential Fellowship* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1989), p. 163.

sity theology departments. A church cannot afford to have its future ministers trained at universities or church seminaries without having received any training in mission and evangelism. Also, it cannot rely on theological students to gain evangelistic competence on their own initiative. If a church is really serious about evangelism, then evangelism studies must become compulsory for the theological training of future pastors.

Secondly, it is simply not enough to help pastors to gain an evangelistic competence. Evangelism is not only the task of the clergy. The church must make sure that the whole people of God are trained, encouraged and empowered to share the good news. Process evangelism courses, such as *Alpha*, *Christianity Explored*, or *Emmaus*, are a good opportunity to involve many church members in evangelism. Mark Ireland writes: 'On every Alpha course approximately one-third of the people involved are leaders and helpers, most of whom would run a mile from knocking on doors, but who are happy to do evangelism through cooking, serving, washing up, leading worship, leading small groups, putting out chairs.'⁸¹

Thirdly, the church needs to identify people who have the gifts of an evangelist and recognize them as ministers in their own right. Carswell writes:

My plea is for the setting aside of gifted believers to be devoted to the fulltime work of evangelism, in the same way that pastors and mis-

sionaries are appointed for their task. They will spearhead evangelistic endeavour in their locality and beyond. Their emphasis will be the proclaiming of the gospel. Christ crucified will be their abiding theme.⁸²

Summary

The German example shows how much theology impacts the evangelistic practice of a church. A theology which is not really grounded in scriptural truth or has an unbalanced understanding of it can easily lead to a secular 'evangelism' that is not interested in inviting people to a living faith in Jesus Christ. If Jesus is seen only as the New Being or the political liberator, the message of his substitutionary death and resurrection, of forgiveness and eternal life becomes a minor matter. The call to follow and trust Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour degenerates to the appeal to become a better person.

The German example clearly shows how essential it is for every church to have a biblical theology of the nature and practice of evangelism. To put evangelism on one's agenda is undoubtedly laudable, but frankly not enough. Neither is it necessarily helpful to adopt existing evangelistic models uncritically. Instead, every church that is serious about evangelism, needs to develop a theology that takes into account what the Bible has to say about the aim, the message, and the agents of evangelism, as well as the relationship between evangelism and social action.

⁸¹ Mark Ireland, 'Alpha', in Mike Booker and Mark Ireland, eds., *Evangelism—Which Way Now?* (London: Church House Publishing, 2003), pp. 17-18.

⁸² Carswell, *And Some Evangelists*, p. 91.

Last but not least the example of the German Protestant Church shows how important it is that such a biblical theology of evangelism is owned by the whole church, i.e. the clergy and the laity. Evangelism is a grassroots ministry. Another story of D.L. Moody illustrates that quite vividly: Once,

when walking down a certain street in Chicago, D.L. Moody stepped up to a man, a perfect stranger to him, and said, 'Sir, are you a Christian?' 'You mind your own business,' was the reply. Moody replied, 'This is my business.' Evangelism needs people who make it their business.

Hope for Ever

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Stephen S. Smalley

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Facing New Paradigms In Worship: Learning New Lessons From Old Masters

Walter McConnell

KEYWORDS: *Worship, Puritans, adiphora, prayer, the ministry of the word, singing of psalms, sacraments, Sabbath.*

IN THE NOT TOO distant past, worship was sometimes referred to as the missing jewel of the evangelical church.¹ However true this may once have been, during the past few decades an incredible renewal of interest in the topic has taken hold of the church so that this jewel is missing no longer. In many settings, church life has been transformed by the writing of worship songs and books, the offering of worship seminars, the development and implementation of new liturgies (or non-liturgical forms that often become as regula-

tive as written liturgies are), and the establishment of worship committees and worship teams in local congregations. Even so, it may still be questioned whether the new emphasis on worship places the jewel in the appropriate setting that will enhance its brilliance and allow it to sparkle to the greatest effect, or whether it allows the jewel to remain sullied, or even forces it into a new setting where it does not fit very well.

It appears that the new focus on worship is but part of a paradigm shift in church life that has brought about changes on many levels. Even though we cannot focus on all of the changes in church life that are taking place today, we do want to consider the motivations that lie behind our new interest in worship. Why are people so interested in worship today? What moves them to attend worship seminars and buy books on the subject? Is this simply the latest fad to hit the church or is God moving in some new way? Could it

1 A. W. Tozer, *Worship: The Missing Jewel of the Evangelical Church* (Harrisburg, PA: Christian Publications, n.d.), and Ronald Allen and Gordon Borror, *Worship: Rediscovering the Missing Jewel*.

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be that we are disappointed by what we have been used to and want to try something new? Do new times require new worship practices just like new wine requires new wineskins?

My concern is that our renewed interest in worship may in some cases lead to a misunderstanding of the true nature of worship as revealed in the Bible and practised throughout church history. Since worship centres on the person of God, we need to evaluate whether our new worship styles are an honest attempt to experience more completely God as creator, redeemer, comforter, and friend, or whether we have adopted them in order to be relevant to the people of our age.

As we consider our approach to worship today, we would do well to examine the way the subject was approached by other believers at different points in history. This gives us an opportunity to learn from their wisdom (and mistakes), and also allows us to see ourselves as an integral part of the church that has been led by God throughout the centuries. Although church history gives us many examples of people and movements that have dealt with worship, this paper will be limited to an examination of the Puritans' approach.

The Puritans are chosen, not because they have the final word on how worship should be understood or performed, but because their wrestling with this issue provides us with some reference points that will enable us to think more clearly about the issues that should influence our current practice. In particular, the questions they asked when they faced a paradigm shift, both in the way worship was conceived and performed and in almost

every aspect of religious life, can instruct us about the kind of questions we should be asking today. Even if we come to different conclusions, their answers may well force us to think a little harder as we seek God's will on the matter. Our starting point will be to provide some background on the Puritan movement.

During the sixteenth century, when Puritanism was developing, the church in England was struggling with the implications of the Reformation and its rejection of many medieval Roman Catholic doctrines and practices. The Puritans were convinced that many in the English church had not gone far enough in their reformation of thought and practice. They viewed with suspicion and rejected many of the practices long associated with the medieval church, not because they were old, but because of the theology that lay behind them and the superstition that was frequently associated with them. The goal of their reformation was not to replace certain old practices with new ones that might be relevant to their time, but with older ones that had been used by the early church and were clearly God-centred and Bible-based. As the biblical basis and God-centredness of worship should be foremost in the minds of those today who are modifying their worship practices, we will begin by examining the Puritan view of biblical authority, as it forms the foundation for all that will follow.

The Biblical Basis for Worship

As true Christians and the spiritual descendants of the earlier reformers,

the Puritans inherited a high view of Scripture. They accepted the Bible as the authoritative 'rule of faith and life' for all people.² They wanted to obey what it said people should do, and refrain from what it prohibited. In this they followed their predecessors. The Puritans, however, differed from those who went before them in that they believed that the Bible prescribed everything that was necessary in life. Whereas the magisterial Reformers left room for *adiaphora*—things that did not matter—the Puritans developed a unique doctrine of biblical warrant which stated that everything in life was to be regulated in accordance with the written word of God. As we will see, their desire to base all of their thoughts and actions upon what they found in the biblical text had wide ramifications that actually led them to reject a number of doctrines and practices that were acceptable to the other reformers. Although this is true about a number of issues, we will examine only its implications for worship.

The magisterial Reformers believed that much of the church's worship had been corrupted by the traditions introduced over the years of Roman supremacy. It was these man-made changes that spurred them on to reforming worship. Even so, they held that many medieval practices could be considered matters of *adiaphora* and did not need to be rejected or even altered as long as believers were edified through them.

The Puritans, however, took a very

different line. Realizing that many of their English compatriots maintained medieval superstitions deep in their hearts, they wished to see a complete reformation of the church in their country, a reformation based on the teachings of the Bible alone that would remove what they believed to be impediments to the true worship of God. For them, *sola scriptura* became the foundation, not only of theology, but also of worship. This emphasis set them apart from the other Reformers.

The central place of the Bible in their theology of worship is plainly seen in the Westminster Confession of Faith.

The acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, or any other way not prescribed in the holy Scripture.³

Notice that this statement does not make allowance for any worship practices unless they come from Scripture. According to the Puritans, since God institutes worship in his revealed word, he should not be worshipped by

² 'The Confession of Faith,' I: ii, in *Westminster Confession of Faith* (Glasgow: Free Presbyterian Publications, 1985), p. 21.

³ 'Confession,' XXI: i, in *Westminster Confession*, p. 90. One of the Westminster divines, Jeremiah Burroughs, *Gospel Worship*, ed. Don Kistler (Pittsburgh: Soli Deo Gloria, 1993), p. 13, put it this way in sermon form: 'in God's worship, there must be nothing tendered up to God but what He has commanded. Whatsoever we meddle with in the worship of God must be what we have a warrant for out of the Word of God.'

any method devised by either people or the devil, and he should not be worshipped with the aid of any kind of visible representation of him. The right way of worshipping God is that which he prescribed in Scripture. Any other source that provides ideas about what should be included in worship is rejected. The Puritan view that God has revealed the way he should be worshipped in the Bible, which serves as the only source for truly Christian worship, has become known in many circles as the 'regulative principle'.⁴ The Bible regulates what should be included in worship and what should not.

Thus it was that the Puritans, desiring to follow scriptural principle and to rid England of all superstitious Catholic practices, began their attack on those elements they believed did not serve the edification of the church because they were not mentioned in the Bible. These included such things as the vestments worn by clergy, making the sign of the cross when a person was baptized, the use of wedding rings, and kneeling for communion. These were rejected in the main because they were seen to reinforce, in the minds of the common man, ideas that had been invented by the Roman church rather than God. The thoughts of the Puritans about necessary changes, however, did not end with the removal of certain

medieval practices. They desired that every aspect of the worship of God be supported by an explicit statement from Scripture or at least that it could be deduced from what is found there.⁵ This led them to search the Bible diligently in order to discover what God had commanded about worship.

From our perspective, the Puritan desire to understand and act upon what Scripture says about worship is the trait that should be emulated by modern worshippers, even if this leads to worship practices that are somewhat different from theirs. They were correct to insist that everything the New Testament texts say regarding worship should be practised in the church during all ages. Even so, it says so little about the nature and content of worship that it is not possible to base all of one's worship practices upon New Testament revelation alone. Even the Puritans added elements to their worship that were not clearly stated in the New Testament text or easily deduced from what was found there. Examples include the preaching of

4 Although this term is commonly used in a number of Presbyterian and Reformed circles, R. J. Gore Jr., *Covenantal Worship: Reconsidering the Puritan Regulative Principle* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2002), p. 38, claims that he can find no specific reference to the term prior to the twentieth century.

5 It should be noted that even though the Puritans agreed that the Scriptures revealed God's will for worship, they did not always agree upon which practices had Scriptural warrant. For instance, when Thomas Cartwright expounded the first two chapters of Acts at Cambridge University in 1570, he argued for a Presbyterian church polity based on his belief that the early Church should be the model for the entire church age and that the apostles practised that form of church government. Even though they would have agreed with Cartwright that church practices should have biblical warrant, many Puritans (particularly those belonging to Anglican or Independent circles) rejected his conclusions about church polity.

expository sermons and the wearing of preaching gowns. It thus seems wiser to adopt the practice of the earlier Reformers, who admitted that people should be allowed a certain degree of freedom with regard to worship practices that are not mentioned in the Bible.⁶

No matter what conclusion one reaches concerning the regulative principle, the Puritan desire to base all worship practices upon God's revelation in Scripture should serve as a twofold challenge to the modern church. First, it should compel us to evaluate whether our worship practices were designed to reflect what the Bible says about God's requirements for worship or whether they were adopted for some other reason. The Puritans believed that God expressed his will for the worship of the church in his word. They therefore worked hard to identify and implement it. As we will see below, the Puritans' desire to find scriptural warrant for all of their worship practices led to the inclusion of a number of practices that are missing from many modern worship services. If any of the practices the Puritans identified as elements of worship that were required by God are omitted from our services, we should reexamine both our practices and their reading of the Bible to see where the problem lies. If the problem lies with Puritan interpretation we should ignore them. But if

the problem lies with our practice, we should correct it. This is because the word of God should serve as the primary source for our beliefs and practices.

That we should reexamine the Puritan interpretation of the Bible where their conclusions and practices differ from ours leads us to the second scriptural challenge that they bring us. Though the Puritans were extremely diligent biblical scholars, they sometimes made mistakes with regard to the meaning of God's word, and were, at times, more influenced by their environment and the controversies of their day than they would have cared to admit.⁷ That the Puritans did not always come to the correct conclusion with regard to biblical interpretation or practice should not cause us to dismiss all that they said. Rather, it should serve as a warning to us, that, even when we attempt to follow biblical principles, we could be mistaken about the correct way to interpret or apply Scripture. It should therefore cause us to be doubly critical about our own understanding of the Bible and of our reasons for establishing or maintaining the worship styles that we prefer.

Components of Public Worship

The Puritans' examination of the Bible

⁶ It is strange to find that although the Puritans believed that God regulated worship, they did not believe he regulated other parts of life in the same way. As the New Testament never makes this kind of distinction, it seems a bit inconsistent for them to do so.

⁷ Gore has demonstrated a number of flaws in their approach that led to the regulative principle. See his book *Covenantal Worship*, particularly chapter 6, 'Thy Will be Done', for his explanation of the principle and how it departs from both the biblical and standard Reformed understanding of worship.

enabled them to see that worship covered all of life lived out before the Holy God. But even though they saw all of life as worship, they frequently narrowed the meaning to include the things that were necessary in the public worship of God. The best sources on their thoughts about worship can be found in the Westminster 'Confession of Faith', 'Catechisms', and 'Directory for Publick Worship', and Richard Baxter's *Reformed Liturgy*, along with what is recorded in their printed sermons on the subject.

These works make it clear that the Puritans identified a limited number of essentials they believed were 'all parts of the ordinary religious worship of God'.⁸ These include prayer (with thanksgiving, confession, and supplication); the reading, preaching, and hearing of the Scriptures; catechizing; the singing of psalms; the administration and reception of the sacraments (which were limited to baptism and the Lord's Supper); and keeping the Sabbath. On special occasions such duties as performing 'religious oaths and vows, solemn fastings, and thanksgivings' were considered to be in order.⁹ Although excluded from most lists, the Larger Catechism adds church government, discipline, and the rejection of all forms of false worship.¹⁰

Clearly the Puritan understanding of worship encompassed many aspects

of life. The focus of this paper, however, will be narrowed to the aspects they deemed important when believers came together for communal worship. Specifically, this includes prayer, the ministry of the word, the singing of psalms, the administration and reception of the sacraments, and keeping the Sabbath. As their study of the Bible helped them determine that these elements were essential for public worship, we should consider the place given to them in our corporate worship services.

Prayer

Prayer was considered 'a special part' of the worship of God whether performed privately, within the context of the family, or within the assembled congregation.¹¹ Puritan prayer was wholly Trinitarian. It was to be made to God the Father who called us to pray to him, offered in the name of Jesus Christ who acts as our mediator so that we can approach the holy Father, and made with the help of the Holy Spirit who knows our weakness and is able to help us when we do not know how to pray as we ought. As an offering up of our desires to God, it included both confession of sins and thankful acknowledgment of God's mercies.¹²

Prayer should not, however, be self-centred. Rather, it focuses on the needs of the whole church of Christ, as well as for government officials, minis-

⁸ 'Confession', XXI: v, in *Westminster Confession*, p. 93.

⁹ 'Confession', XXI: iii and v, in *Westminster Confession*, pp. 91-4.

¹⁰ 'The Larger Catechism', question 108, in *Westminster Confession*, p. 192.

¹¹ 'Catechism', question 179, in *Westminster Confession*, p. 268.

¹² 'Catechism', question 178, in *Westminster Confession*, p. 268.

ters of the gospel, and for others both known and unknown. Those who pray should always remember that we are unworthy, by ourselves, to bring our requests before God, and that we need the grace of God which is found in Jesus Christ who personally leads us into the presence of the Father. Thus our prayers not only reveal our needs, they also demonstrate our penitent and thankful hearts, as well as our faith in and love for the God to whose will we submit ourselves. Prayer, to the Puritans, was a serious business, and rightly so, because we are encouraged to pray in the Bible.

Before gathering for worship, Puritan believers were encouraged to prepare themselves by praying individually and as families. When they assembled publicly, immediately after being called to worship, the service would begin with a prayer that reminded them of their unworthiness to draw near to God and of their need for his forgiveness and help so that they would be able to worship him and learn from him. From that point on, public worship was frequently punctuated by prayer.

Prayers were made in confession of sin with the hope that the Lord Jesus Christ would intercede and grant remission, that the Holy Spirit would bring assurance of pardon and reconciliation, and that God's people would put sin to death so that they could live lives that were truly pleasing to God. Prayers were made that the gospel might go forth so that Christ's kingdom could spread to all nations, that churches might be free of spiritual tyrants, and that the church would not be split by schism. Prayers were made for those in political authority (whether kings or lower rulers) that

they would rule in a way that is pleasing to God, for church leaders that they might live holy lives and have powerful ministries, for educational facilities that they might pass on both learning and piety, and for the local city or congregation that they might be blessed by the ministry of the word of God. Even the weather was considered a matter for prayer so that crops would not fail.

Prayer for the ministry of the word of God received special consideration.¹³ This was in part because the Puritans were aware that spiritual lethargy often causes people to ignore God's word. They therefore prayed for both the preacher and the congregation that God's word might perform its task in their hearts and lives. Their desire was that the minister could preach and the listener hear God's word aright and then go on to obey his will.

Although they were very clear about the kind of things that should be prayed for during a church service, they did not require set prayers, but rather gave individual ministers freedom in bringing their requests to God. And bring their requests to God the Puritans did. Many Puritan pastors would open a service with a fifteen-minute prayer, conclude the service with a longer prayer, and offer up several more prayers to God in between. According to Davies, 'Some ministers prayed for as long as they preached',

¹³ According to Horton Davies, *The Worship of the American Puritans* (New York: Peter Lang, 1990, reprinted Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 1999), p. 146, the Puritans believed that 'Prayer even made the preaching efficacious'.

and they often preached for more than an hour.¹⁴

With such a prominent place given to it in a service, and the range of topics brought before the Lord, prayer was clearly an important part of Puritan worship. They ardently followed what they understood to be the Bible's directions to pray for everything and everyone. This devotion to prayer in worship presents us with a challenge to consider the place prayer has in our worship today. We need to ask ourselves what it is that we pray for and what kind of time do we set aside to worship God in this manner during our corporate services.

While many churches continue to see prayer as an essential part of a service, others seem to devote very little time to prayer during corporate worship. Could it be that some believers have separated prayer from worship, seeing it as something that should be engaged in at some different time? Is it possible that the fear that worshippers might get bored makes us uneasy about bringing multiple requests before God? Even if we do not follow the Puritans slavishly as to their practice of prayer, we should reconsider our own practice in the light of theirs and in the light of what we find in the Bible.

As we have seen, the Puritan method was simply to follow the pattern that had been set for them in the Bible where worship was filled with prayer. This is seen from the time of the Patriarchs when they called upon the name of the Lord. It was evident

during the wilderness years when Moses and the children of Israel turned to God in prayer. The psalmists further modelled it by producing both praises and laments designed for both individuals and congregations to bring their requests before God. In the early church, prayer was one of the things the believers devoted themselves to in addition to the apostles' teaching, fellowship, and the breaking of bread (Acts 2:42). Filling themselves with God's word and ways, the Puritans fervently engaged in prayer both in private and public worship. As the word of God guided them in this, so it should guide us so that we too can be recognized as people of prayer who know that it is an essential part of worship and who design our services in such a way that all who gather will see its importance and long to respond to God in faith by bringing their requests to him as well.

The Ministry of the Word

Of the worship elements they discovered in the Bible, the Puritans often considered the reading, hearing, and particularly the preaching of the Bible to be the climax of worship. Through the preaching of God's word, the Spirit was able to minister directly to the people in a number of ways. Through the spoken word, people could be both edified and rebuked. By listening to the exposition of Scripture, they could receive God's grace which brings spiritual healing where necessary, and leads to repentance and salvation. Due to the great spiritual benefits the listeners were expected to receive, preaching was regarded as an act of great seriousness, and it was entered

14 Davies, *American Puritans*, p. 148.

into by people of great seriousness.

Since the preaching of the word was the power of God unto salvation and one of the greatest and most excellent works belonging to the ministry of the gospel, it was of the utmost importance. Those who performed this task should ensure that they were spiritually able and had spent the necessary time getting to know what God said in his word. In this way, they would be qualified as workmen who would not be ashamed, be assured of their own salvation, and be able to save those who listened to them.¹⁵

The seriousness and centrality of the act of preaching was felt both by the minister and his congregation. In an age when many people bought and sold their goods during the weekly market day, Sunday — or as they often called it, the Lord's Day — was considered the market day of the soul. The word of God preached on that day was deemed to be the spiritual food that would nourish the soul for the following week. In order to have something spiritual upon which to ruminate, everyone was supposed to work hard to participate in the act of preaching. Every member of the community was expected to recall, recite, and strive to understand and practise what had been preached to them. Doing so would naturally lead people who loved the Lord into the other parts of worship, especially prayer and praise.

As churches today evaluate the paradigms under which they arrange acts of worship, they should attempt to be

as serious as the Puritans in asking about the place of the reading and preaching of the word of God in their services. Even though Paul commanded that Scripture be read publicly (1 Tim. 4:13), many churches give little if any time to Bible reading. Another contemporary problem lies in the way many churches make a clear distinction between the 'worship' and 'teaching' parts of a service.

If we understand worship as a proper response to who God is and what he has done, the hearing of his word read and taught must be considered an essential aspect of worship, as it is the only foundation upon which true worship can be built. Furthermore, as it is the word of God that changes lives so that those in rebellion against God can become worshippers and those who believe in God can grow in their faith, churches should ensure that the saving and sanctifying power of the Bible is released as we worship our Lord. Similarly, we should consider the Puritans' injunction to prepare ourselves adequately for preaching, listening to, and practising what God has revealed in the Bible. In an age that suffers from biblical illiteracy, following in the path of the Puritans may help us overcome spiritual lethargy and lead to healthier congregations through a renewed focus on God's word.

Singing of Psalms

The Puritan desire that the Bible provide the basis for all worship practices greatly influenced their use of music in a congregational setting, and in a way that will surprise most of us. Their understanding of the Bible led them to

15 'The Directory for the Publick Worship of God', in *Westminster Confession*, p. 379.

reject the use of all musical instruments for worship. In addition, they rejected the singing of all songs in their church services except for the *a capella* singing of metrical psalms.¹⁶ As this practice may be incomprehensible to many Christians today who virtually equate music and worship, the Puritan practice needs to be explained in more detail.

It is important to understand that the Puritans were neither antagonistic toward music in general nor had they anything against musical instruments. Many of them, in fact, had musical instruments in their homes and learned to play quite well. Puritan poets often allowed their secular poems to be set to music. John Bunyan is even said to have carved a flute out of a chair when he was in jail. They therefore had nothing against music *per se*. Their concern, rather, was the place of music in worship.

The Puritans' distinctive rejection of musical instruments in worship was based upon their reading of the New Testament. As they saw it, since the New Testament never mentions the use of musical instruments to accompany worship, they should not be used during the church age. Their stance was that if God did not specifically

state something should be used, it was to be rejected. Should anyone raise the issue of the use of instruments in the worship of the Old Testament, they would respond that God had permitted this in the earlier period much as he had permitted the Israelites to offer sacrifices. Such acts were permissible under the old covenant, but in the church age were neither necessary nor to be allowed, as they did not receive God's explicit sanction.

Whereas musical instruments were removed from the sphere of worship because they were not mentioned in the New Testament, the singing of psalms was retained as several New Testament passages mention their use in the early church (Eph. 5:18-19; Col. 3:16; Jas. 5:13). Furthermore, they sang psalms in worship because they were the only songs that could be considered inspired. That the Puritans were ardent psalm singers is testified by their frequent updating of collections of metrical psalms. The psalms were so important to them that after the Puritans settled in New England, the first book they published (which happened to be the first book printed in the Americas), was a collection of psalms, *The Bay Psalm Book*.

Many modern Christians would find limiting themselves to the singing of nothing more than metrical psalms extremely difficult.¹⁷ What is not appreciated is that the writing and singing of

16 A metrical psalm is a psalm that has been translated according to poetic meter so that it can be more easily sung. A metrical version of Psalm 1:1-2 as found in Sternhold and Hopkins' psalter from 1562 is given as an example.

1 The man is blest that hath not lent / to wicked men his ear, / Nor led his life as sinners do, / nor sat in scorner's chair.

2 But in the law of God the Lord / doth set his whole delight, / And in the same doth exercise / himself both day and night.

17 Many will also find it strange that people would sing psalms that were written to exhort worshippers to use many different instruments in the praise of God and yet reject the use of any instrument except for the human voice.

metrical psalms by the early Reformers and Puritans was a radical step for their age. Before the Reformation, singing in the churches of Europe was restricted mainly to the priest and choir, both of whom sang in Latin. This situation began to change almost immediately in Germany, Switzerland, and France when Luther and the believers who followed Calvin began to write hymns and metrical psalms in the vernacular. Suddenly, voice was given to a congregation that had previously been mute. Praises that had been reserved for a few were returned to the people. Songs that had been heard only in a foreign language could now be understood by and sung by all. For such a change to come upon the church was arguably much more radical than anything produced by the so-called 'worship wars' that have been waged in recent years.

Metrical psalmody served as a new paradigm in church music that played an important role in the development of congregational singing. According to Davies, the Puritans did nothing new in returning praises to the people of God. This was simply a rediscovery of something that had been used in the early church and in Israel. Their originality was seen in their versifying the Psalms in a contemporary poetic form that could be easily memorized and sung by the people of their day. This in turn paved the way for the development of hymns, when Isaac Watts and others paraphrased the Psalms in a manner that made them far easier to memorize and sing.¹⁸

Coming to grips with the way the Puritans faced their new paradigms in music should challenge modern believers who consider adopting new worship styles or musical instruments. The challenge is not to accept or reject the Puritans' conclusions about the place of music and musical instruments in worship in an uncritical manner. Neither is it to accept modern (or traditional) worship practices uncritically. The challenge is to be willing to ask the difficult questions of whether our decisions for or against a particular musical style, or instrument, or even song, is made because of our biblical understanding of worship, or for other reasons, be they pragmatic, or related to tradition, relevance, fun, or whatever.

Another consideration is whether the music that is presented in church truly enables the whole congregation to participate in the praise of God or whether it reserves praise for a gifted few. Many churches today have, probably inadvertently, returned to a pre-Reformation model of worship which has silenced many in the congregation and restricted praise to the lips of a few leaders. For various reasons, many churchgoers have given up singing and become spectators who stand by and watch those who are able to do a much better job. This sad, and somewhat ironic, state of affairs has come about due to a number of reasons that include the professionalism of a new worship elite, electronic sound systems and acoustical designs that make it impossible for people to hear themselves sing, and the projection of words without musical score for singers to follow. Anything that silences congregations so that they fail to participate in praise,

¹⁸ Horton Davies, *The Worship of the English Puritans* (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 1997), p. 162.

should cause church leaders to reevaluate their custom and follow the lead of the Puritans by returning to the early church practice of having whole congregations express their praise for God together in song and prayer.

Administration and Reception of the Sacraments

From the beginning of the Reformation, Protestant believers have almost universally accepted that, contrary to the teaching of the medieval Roman Catholic church, the church should recognize only two sacraments or ordinances—Baptism and the Lord's Supper. As followers of this tradition, the Puritans all agreed that these two sacraments should be practised as part of the worship of the church, and that they should be conducted by a recognized minister of the gospel rather than by just anyone. They also agreed that baptism should be administered in the context of public worship rather than in private.¹⁹

In keeping with their approach to the Christian life, the Puritans desired that Scripture guide their practice of the sacraments of the Lord's Supper and Baptism. However, in common with several other areas, the Puritan desire that the Bible serve as the only guide for worship acts did not result in uniformity of practice. As is experienced within modern evangelicalism, different groups of Puritans main-

tained somewhat variant customs based upon their own understanding of what the Bible meant, or perhaps based upon traditions they failed to identify as coming from other sources. This is true with regards to their understanding and practice of both baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Like modern believers, the Puritans split on whether baptism should be reserved for believers alone (as the Baptists held) or whether children should be baptized (as supported by the Presbyterians and Independents), and whether the mode should be by immersion or by sprinkling or pouring. Since different Puritan groups held to divergent practices for the same reasons given by Christians today, we will skip over the explanations given for these beliefs. However, we should not ignore their shared belief that baptism was an essential part of their worship of God, and that it should be performed as part of the public celebration of God.

While we have passed over their differences with regard to baptismal practice with scant comment, we will benefit from a somewhat longer discussion about the differences in the way the Puritans celebrated the Lord's Supper. We should begin by stating that they all believed that the Lord's Supper was a means of coming into communion, not only with members of the church, but with their Saviour himself. Furthermore, they were convinced that their practice should be grounded in what was revealed in Scripture. It was at this point that they divided in their practice, sometimes due to different emphases in biblical interpretation and sometimes for other reasons.

An examination of the different ways they celebrated this sacrament

¹⁹ Davies, *English Puritans*, pp. 220-1, says that while this was originally the case, by the Eighteenth Century the Independents (i.e., Congregationalists) had begun to baptize in homes rather than in the church.

will provide us with a means to examine our own practices. Most Puritans celebrated this sacrament on a monthly basis. Some, however, celebrated it weekly, while others only four times a year.²⁰ Some congregations would remain seated in their pews while the elements were passed around, while others would sit around a table in order to partake of the elements as did Jesus and his disciples.²¹ Some churches would partake of communion during the day time²² while others would hold the ceremony only 'after Supper' in the evening, as they believed that Christ set this as an example when he partook of the last supper with his disciples. In some churches, both the bread and wine were blessed at the same time, while in others the elements were blessed separately. All churches agreed that those who were ignorant or were living in sin should not be allowed to partake of the sacrament.

20 Since 'The Directory for the Publick Worship of God' was written to give guidelines to several different types of churches, it declines to say anything specific about the regularity of the Lord's Supper, except that it 'is frequently to be celebrated; but how often, may be considered and determined by the ministers, and other church-governors of each congregation, as they shall find most convenient for the comfort and edification of the people committed to their charge' (*Westminster Confession*, p. 384).

21 None would kneel for communion, as they believed it supported the Roman Catholic theology of the Mass in the minds of most people. See Davies, *English Puritans*, p. 204.

22 The writers of 'The Directory for the Publick Worship of God' suggest that the Lord's Supper should be celebrated 'after the morning sermon' (*Westminster Confession*, p. 384).

Clearly none of us will agree with the Puritan approach to the sacraments on every point, as they did not agree with one another about every point. But again, this should prompt us to think about the biblical meaning of these practices and the symbolism attached to them and how that affects our practice of these ordinances. No one will deny that our Lord commanded these practices. And since Jesus required them, the Puritans were surely correct to consider how they should be celebrated. This should encourage us to evaluate the way we participate in the sacraments so that they add to our worship of God and do not become a supplemental add on that we maintain due to tradition or for some other reason.

Keeping the Sabbath

In their desire to obey the Bible, as they understood it, the Puritans were willing to change their way of living and the way things were done in the church. This characteristic can be clearly seen in their approach to Sabbath keeping. Not only did they desire to set the day aside for the worship of God to a greater extent than did their neighbors, they were also more serious about their use of the day than were the Continental Reformers. As a result, they developed a way of keeping the Lord's Day that set it apart from the other six days of the week by the nature of the work that was allowed. Although normal activities were to be suspended, it was not a day of rest in the sense of requiring inactivity, but as being set aside for rigorous spiritual exercise. Their approach to the day exerted such an influence on the way

people thought about the Sabbath, that many people in England and other parts of the world still follow their pattern down to the present day. According to Packer,

The Puritans created the English Christian Sunday—that is, the conception and observance of the first day of the week as one on which both business and organised recreations should be in abeyance, and the whole time left free for worship, fellowship and ‘good works’.²³

How did they do this? As usual, they did it by attempting to understand God’s word and apply it to their own lives. They began with an examination of the Fourth Commandment. From their perspective, God’s commandment to remember the Sabbath and keep it holy was binding upon all people for two simple reasons. First, God’s rest on the seventh day after the six days of creation, and proclamation that it was holy, meant that God had intended that, not just Jews, but everyone should rest on that day. Their understanding that the Sabbath law is eternally binding can be seen in the statement recorded in the Westminster ‘Confession of Faith’.

As it is of the law of nature, that, in general, a due proportion of time be set apart for the worship of God; so, in his word, by a positive, moral, and perpetual commandment, binding all men in all ages, he hath particularly appointed one day in seven for a sabbath, to be kept holy unto him: which, from the beginning of the world to the resurrec-

tion of Christ, was the last day of the week; and, from the resurrection of Christ, was changed into the first day of the week, which in Scripture is called the Lord’s Day, and is to be continued to the end of the world, as the Christian Sabbath.²⁴

God, so they believed, had built a Sabbath rest into the very fabric of creation. It was his will that everyone, Jew or Gentile, Christian or not, should ‘rest’ on that day. Furthermore, they were convinced that since it was a creation ordinance, it was eternally in effect.

A second reason they found for keeping the Sabbath is its place in the Ten Commandments. As they considered the Decalogue to be a delineation of God’s eternal moral law, they again concluded that the Sabbath was incumbent upon all people. Its close connection with the first three commands indicated to them that its central focus was on the worship of God. Since the day was to be set aside for worship, other activities should be left aside. Again, the Confession of Faith states the common understanding.

This sabbath is then kept holy unto the Lord, when men, after a due preparing of their hearts, and ordering of their common affairs before-hand, do not only observe an holy rest all the day from their own works, words, and thoughts about their worldly employments and recreations; but also are taken up the whole time in the publick and

23 Packer, *Among God’s Giants*, p. 311.

24 ‘Confession’ Chapter XXI, VII, in *Westminster Confession*, p. 95.

private exercises of his worship, and in the duties of necessity and mercy.²⁵

It has already been stated that the Puritans did not view the Lord's Day as a day of rest in the sense of a day of inactivity. In fact, they believed that it was a sin to waste time on any day, and even more so on the Sabbath.²⁶ Even though they desired that people would rest from their normal business and worldly talk and activities, they replaced this with an immense amount of spiritual activity. According to the 'Directory for the Publick Worship of God,' individuals and families should prepare themselves for worshipping God by praying for themselves and for their minister. In addition, they should meet together with other believers to worship the Lord, spend time reading, meditating on, or repeating the contents of the sermon (especially within families), catechizing the members of the family,²⁷ praying, singing psalms, visiting the sick, coming to the aid of the poor, and practising the 'duties of piety, charity, and mercy'.²⁸

Many modern Christians will con-

clude that this approach to keeping the Sabbath would greatly impact their Sunday lifestyles, and indeed it would. But the Puritans never considered this lifestyle to be drudgery. Rather, they believed it was a duty before God that should be accepted with delight. And what could cause more joy than worshipping the Lord? What could be more freeing than doing those things that are pleasing to him? What could be better than doing that for which God created us?

Even if we do not fully agree with the Puritans' understanding of a Christian Sabbath, they still give us ample reason to reconsider our use of Sunday. Their conclusions about how the Lord's Day should be used were based upon principles they derived from their study of the Bible. Their determination to refrain from certain activities on the Lord's Day was similarly based upon their understanding of Scripture. Following their lead, we need to consider what influences our decisions about how to spend that day. Are we guided more by the world or God's word? If we take the position that all days are alike, we then need to ask when we will work on developing our spiritual lives and when we will schedule the acts of piety, charity, and mercy that the Puritans believed were a fundamental part of the Christian lifestyle. Were they correct in their understanding of Scripture with regard to the Sabbath and a Christian lifestyle? If not, why not? If so, how should that influence our actions today? If we desire to worship God in a way that pleases him, it is essential that we consider why we do or do not do certain things on Sunday.

25 'Confession' Chapter XXI, VIII, in *Westminster Confession*, pp. 95-6.

26 Packer, *Among God's Giants*, p. 317, quotes John Dod and Robert Cleaver, *A Plaine and Familiar Exposition of the Ten Commandments* (London: 1628), p. 143, as saying, 'Idleness is a sinne every day: but much more on the Lord's Day.'

27 The Puritans included household servants as members of the family who should receive spiritual instruction and who should be freed from work in order to take part fully in the worship of God.

28 'Directory,' in *Westminster Confession*, p. 386.

Conclusion

We began by looking at the new emphasis placed on worship in the church in recent years, an emphasis that should give us reason to rejoice, as churches seek to relate to God in an intimate and personal way. This desire to meet with God has led to the development of new paradigms of worship, and, in some cases, the resurrection of old forms. That people should want to worship in a fresh way is understandable and desirable. But as we have seen in our analysis of Puritan worship, any changes we make should come, not as a reaction against an old form simply because it is old, but only after spending time and effort thinking about the biblical and theological aspects of worship. Worship is, after all, a spiritual activity that focuses on a spiritual being — the Triune God who has revealed himself in the Bible. It is also an activity that can be rightly performed only by people whose hearts have been spiritually awakened.

As the Puritans insisted, our worship must be based upon what is taught in the Bible. Whether or not they were correct to insist that nothing should be added to worship that is not specifically mentioned in Scripture, the Puritans were surely correct to search God's word in order to ensure that they performed everything that is prescribed there. While the Bible does not instruct us as to the proper method with regard to all the details of wor-

ship, it does lay the foundation upon which the structure should be built, a foundation that the Puritans discerned was made up of prayer, the ministry of the word, the singing of psalms, the administration and reception of the sacraments, and keeping the Sabbath. From their perspective, any worship designed without taking this biblical foundation into account, will be a memorial to man's ingenuity, something the Puritans would have proclaimed carnal, not worthy of God's great glory.

What is needed in the modern church is for people to reevaluate their worship in the light of Scripture and the historical precedence of the church. The guideposts set out by the Puritans as they identified the basic biblical elements of worship, should serve as route markers for us to follow as we think through the many possible ways to worship our Lord. And even if we do not agree with them on every detail, we will find that the Puritans will make excellent guides as we search for the treasure of worship today. If worship is the missing jewel of the evangelical church, we had better rediscover it, polish it up, and make sure that it is mounted in the best setting possible, for as one of the Puritans rightly stated, 'worship is the nearest resemblance of heaven'.²⁹

²⁹ David Clarkson, *Works*, III (Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1865), p. 194.

Fighting Fire with Fire: Community Formation in 1 Corinthians 12-14

David A. Ackerman

KEY WORDS: *Corinthians, love, mind of Christ, spiritual gifts, tongues speaking, Christian maturity, community formation*

The Crisis

Friction can be a good thing when it sharpens dull edges, but if allowed to progress unchecked, it can create excessive heat, eventually igniting a fire. We laugh at the joke that a church split over the colour of the carpet, but experience tells us that the smallest spark can ignite an explosive situation. Sometimes the fuel for the fire is clearly evident, for example, if there is immorality among church leadership. Other times, the problems are deeper, more subtle, and only over time do they appear. When we begin to look at the issues, we may find that most church problems can be traced back to deeper spiritual matters. Jesus prayed, 'Make them one, Father' (John 17:21). The question is, *how?* In congregations of

the 21st century where on any given Sunday diversity may include age, gender, social or economic status, cultural background, language and denominational heritage, what can draw us together rather than pull us apart? When certain individuals or groups call for rights, power or position, how can church leaders focus the church on its purpose for existence? Paul's experience with the Corinthian church can offer us some valuable and applicable lessons for developing the church as community.

When Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, he was facing a community that was heating up because of unchecked friction between the members. The church had not yet caught fire, but all the ingredients were present for catastrophe. Some forestry services have learned an important lesson: sometimes it is necessary to prevent damaging fire by burning 'fire lines' or 'controlled burns'. This is exactly what Paul does in this letter. Paul assumes the position of a pastor trying to quell dissen-

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sion in a church that has lost its focus on the cross.

From Paul's perspective, the critical problem with the Corinthian Christians was that they failed to develop 'the mind of Christ' (1 Cor. 2:16). His primary concern is the *spiritual immaturity* of these believers. He writes in 3:1, 'I cannot address you as spiritual (*pneumatikois*) but as fleshly (*sarkinois*), as infants in Christ.' All the various problems facing this church that Paul addresses throughout the letter can be traced back to this critical issue. Significant in this letter is *how* Paul attempts to resolve the growing crisis in Corinth. It is noteworthy that Paul begins the first section of his letter with the message of the cross (1:18-2:16). In the foolishness and weakness of the cross lay hope for the Corinthians to experience the power and strength of a church united in Christ.

Paul devotes a significant amount of the letter to exhorting the Corinthians to act like the 'saints' God had called them to be (1:2). Although they had been purchased and freed from sin at a supremely high price, they were not living like redeemed people (6:19-20). They were still being adversely affected by their pagan environment. Internally, their lack of fellowship as a community showed in their lack of love for one another. Externally, they failed to distinguish themselves from their unbelieving neighbours by avoiding behaviour inconsistent with a holy ethic.

Paul attempts to create dissonance between their behaviour and the model provided by Christ on the cross (11:1). The power of his words should create friction between his interpretation of the cross and the present behaviours of

the Corinthians. If he is successful, this positive friction should put an end to any negative friction within the community. If he is unsuccessful, the disharmony within the community could eventually destroy the fellowship and ruin the church's witness to unbelievers; this 'church' would fail to be *ekklesia*, the ones 'called out' of the world to be united with Christ. The critical tension is not behind the text, between the members within the community, but within the text, between Paul's ideal of unity in Christ and the failure of the community to reach this ideal. If the Corinthians would conform their behaviour to Paul's ideal, then the problems with being community would have the necessary reference point for being resolved.

There are many passages in the letter that could illustrate this point. Perhaps one of the most revealing comes after Paul's call to imitate Christ in 11:1. This verse concludes a major section on the topic of eating food sacrificed to idols (8:1-10:33) and prepares for issues related to the community gathered for worship. The critical question in the letter is this: what does *imitating* Christ involve? What does it mean to have the *mind of Christ* in the pluralistic city of Corinth? The answer comes in the middle of a difficult and somewhat controversial section of the letter.

In chapters 12-14, Paul tackles what may lie at the heart of the Corinthians' self-understanding. At issue in these chapters are 'spiritual things' (*ta pneumatika*, 12:1). The Corinthians may have considered themselves to be mature (*teleos*, 1:6) believers because of certain gifts of the Spirit. Their use (and perhaps abuse)

of these gifts, however, only showed deeper problems. Paul's goal in chapters 12-14 is to free the Corinthians from their ignorance (*agnoien*) about being spiritual (*pneumatikos*; 12:1). Paul has already foreshadowed his argument earlier in the letter in 8:1-3 where he uses the key words 'knowledge' (*gnosis*) and 'love' (*agape*), which are also important terms in chapters 12 and 13. The ignorance of the Corinthians was already demonstrated in chapter 8 by their lack of love for the weaker members of the community. In chapters 12-14, Paul goes on to condemn their wrong interpretation of spirituality. Gifts of the Spirit can be wonderful tools for the church if put through the filter of the cross, but if used in self-service, they can become the fuel for a fiery demise.

Internal Combustion

Paul confronts the same underlying problems in chapters 11-14 as he does elsewhere in the letter. The more apparent problem is exhibited in the Corinthians' spiritual enthusiasm and individualism without regard for community most clearly seen in speaking in 'tongues' (*glossolalia*), resulting in the breakdown of 'fellowship' (*koinonia*). The deeper problem is simply a lack of love for others. They could show their spiritual maturity by enhancing their fellowship of love.

In 12:2 Paul attributes their ignorance to their former lives as unbelieving Gentiles, led aimlessly about as in a pagan procession.¹ In a subtle way,

Paul reminds the Corinthians throughout chapters 12 and 14 that their behaviour modelled the unbelieving Gentiles around them and was inconsistent with living 'in Christ' (see 14:23). They needed clear direction in their community and a new definition of spirituality.

The modern reader must carefully discern Paul's method of argumentation in these chapters to find the clues to help resolve church division. Paul cautiously crafts his argument in these chapters lest he create too much friction and cause the Corinthians to *burn* his letter. In order to avoid this, he uses a rhetorical feature called *insinuatio*. *Insinuatio* is used in difficult situations when the audience may be hostile and the speaker must criticize something highly favoured by the audience. The author hides the subject matter behind something else at the beginning and later articulates it.² Paul here hides the problem of speaking in tongues behind the issues of spiritual gifts and unity in the Spirit. The more pressing issue for him is the Corinthians' faulty understanding and practice of community.

The unifying force in the community is the Holy Spirit who enables believers to confess, 'Jesus is Lord'. An indicator of being 'spiritual' is to recognize Jesus as Lord. Being 'unspiritual' is shown by 'cursing' Jesus. If the

1 Terence Paige, '1 Corinthians 12.2: A Pagan Pompe?' *JSNT* 44 (1991), pp. 57-65.

2 Joop F. M. Smit, 'Argument and Genre of 1 Corinthians 12-14', in *Rhetoric and the New Testament*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Thomas H. Olbricht (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), p. 213, referring to Cicero, *De inventione* 1.15, 20-21; 1.17.23-24.

Holy Spirit is indeed present in this community, then any 'speaking' about Jesus must proclaim him as Lord (cf. John 16:13-15). The mature Christian community is made up of individual believers who are Christ-focused and Spirit-filled. It is significant theologically that Paul begins his discussion of spiritual gifts in the context of Christology, for in Christ lies the answer for both unity in the church and empowerment for service. At the foot of the cross sits the crucible where the Holy Spirit melts and moulds the community into conformity to the gospel and character of Christ. Without the cross, the gifts of the Spirit become rallying points for self-glorification. Without the Spirit, the power of the cross is not able to penetrate to the inner person where transformation takes place (see 2:14-16).

The real issue with this church from Paul's perspective is spiritual maturity, or better stated, maturity in the Spirit, and so he attempts in these chapters to define further what it means to be 'spiritual' (*pneumatikos*) by discussing 'spiritual gifts' (*charismata*). The word *charismata* basically denotes the manifestation of *charis* or 'grace'. This is a uniquely Pauline word, with half of all uses of the term occurring in 1 Corinthians.³ Paul gives three different lists of 'spiritual gifts' in this chapter (verses 8-10, 28, and 29-30). Three of the listed gifts appear at the centre of discussion and contention between Paul and the Corinthi-

ans: knowledge, tongues, and prophecy. The position of tongues as last in all the lists in this chapter (12:8-10, 28, 29, 30) suggests it lies at the core of Paul's problem with community.⁴ By putting tongues last and giving prophecy a more prominent place, Paul may be preparing his audience for his argument in chapter 14.⁵ A careful look at Paul's argument in chapter 14 will reveal his intent for this church.

In chapter 14, Paul compares tongues and prophecy. He uses the verb 'to speak' (*laleo*) 24 times in various forms in this chapter, which suggests that his problem with the Corinthians at this point lies with communication.⁶ Evidently, the Corinthians gloried in their ability to speak in tongues just as they boasted in their wisdom (*sophia*, chs. 1-4) and freedom or authority (*exousia*, chs. 5-10). They may have sought to speak in tongues because of the impressive nature of tongues and their eschatological orientation to understand 'mysteries' (14:2).⁷ Paul attempts to put the outwardly visible gifts of prophecy and tongues into the greater context of community edification and, by this, to offer the Corinthians an example of

3 Rom. 1:11; 5:15, 16; 6:23; 11:29; 1 Cor. 1:7; 7:7; 12:4, 9, 28, 30, 31; 2 Cor. 1:11; 1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6; 1 Pet. 4:10.

4 Archibald Robertson and A. Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians* (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1914), p. 280.

5 Prophecy is the only consistent gift listed by Paul in all his lists of spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:8-11, 28-30; 13:1-2; Rom. 12:6-8).

6 Verse 2 thrice, 3, 4, 5 twice, 6 twice, 9 twice, 11 twice, 13, 18, 19, 21, 23, 27, 28, 29, 34, 35, 39.

7 D. L. Baker, 'The Interpretation of 1 Cor. 12-14', *EVQ* 46 (1974), p. 230.

how love within the community overcomes personal preferences (14:18-19; see further 8:13).

Chapter 14 begins and ends with an appeal to keep on seeking love (14:1, 39). Paul gives love as the goal of 'spiritual gifts' in 12:31, and in 14:1 he applies this to the communication problems at Corinth. He shifts his attention in 14:1 from 'spiritual gifts' to 'spiritual matters'. The spiritual matter or gift of the Spirit that the Corinthians should pursue relative to love is the ability to prophesy. Paul emphasizes the gift of prophecy in this context as a better gift for the community because it edifies the gathered church. He states this as a thesis in verses 2 and 3, and summarizes it in verse 4: 'The one who speaks a tongue edifies one's self, but the one who prophesies edifies the church.' This is a significant assessment of tongues in the context of the letter because of Paul's insistence on placing the concerns of others over those of oneself. He recognizes tongues as a divine gift and does not attempt to hinder the Spirit by totally disregarding speaking in tongues, but by his numerous qualifications of it, especially the significant one given in verse 4, he basically assigns it an inferior position in the life of the gathered community.⁸ Tongues speaking can become useful to the community *only if it is interpreted*, which then makes it equivalent to

prophecy.

In the remainder of this chapter, Paul develops this thought through veiled logic: speaking in tongues fails the test of being intelligent and understandable, and thus also fails to edify the community (vv. 6-19), but prophecy meets this test (vv. 20-25). Therefore, prophecy should be the means of communication within the community (vv. 26-33a).

In the first step of his logic, Paul claims that speaking in tongues by itself serves no purpose in the community because such speaking does not build up the community. Communication that benefits the church comes by 'revelation, knowledge, prophecy, or teaching' (v. 6). He could be implying here that tongues cannot be described with any of these words unless it is made intelligible. He uses several illustrations to demonstrate the unintelligibility of tongues (flute, harp, horn, voices or languages) and then applies these images to the community in verses 9 and 12. His basic point is that speaking in tongues fails the test of intelligibility and therefore has no value for the gathered community. He does give one exception to this principle: there must be someone to interpret the meaning of the tongues (v. 13).

He presses the unintelligibility theme in verses 14-17. The speaker in tongues loses control of the mind even though his or her spirit is praying.

⁸ Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *1 Corinthians* (Wilmington, DL: M. Glazier, 1979), p. 106. Perhaps the critical interpretive issue in the modern phenomenon of 'speaking in tongues' is the divine-human mix. We also need to allow that Paul may not blatantly condemn speaking

in tongues here as part of his rhetorical strategy. See Joop F. M. Smit, 'Argument and Genre of 1 Corinthians 12-14', in *Rhetoric and the New Testament*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Thomas H. Olbricht (Sheffield, UK: JSOT Press, 1993), pp. 211-30.

Likewise, others (literally, 'the one who fills the place of the *idiotes*'⁹) cannot understand the message. Paul then describes his personal use and evaluation of speaking in tongues in verses 18-19. His statement in verse 18 that he speaks in tongues more than any of the Corinthians is qualified by a strong adversative in verse 19: 'BUT in the church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue.' Although he speaks in 'myriads' or ten thousand words in a tongue, he would rather speak five words that make sense and edify the community.

Paul then moves on to show how prophecy meets the test of intelligibility and edification. In verse 20, he makes a possible association between speaking in tongues and being immature (cf. 3:1-4). Because the Corinthians emphasized speaking in tongues, they were still immature in their thinking. Christian maturity is governed by love, not the display of certain spiritual gifts. Whenever any spiritual gift fails to lead people to Christ, it ceases being a gift of the Spirit who points to Christ and becomes a means to glorify the

self, something that will ultimately lead to division and destruction. Paul then begins to distance tongues from prophecy with a quotation from Isaiah 28:11-12 which stresses the nonsense of speaking in tongues for those who do not know its meaning. He gives the real danger with tongues in the community in verses 23-25: speaking in tongues fails to convict and lead to worship of God. Unbelievers will call tongues speakers mad or insane and be repelled from the message of the gospel (v. 23). Prophecy, on the other hand, confronts unbelievers with the power of God and leads to salvation (cf. 12:3). It is not that speaking in tongues is good or bad, but that if allowed to supersede its intent, it becomes only another human effort to be 'wise' and 'strong' (1:25).

In verses 26-33, Paul goes on to qualify the only positive use of tongues in the church. His logic is rather straightforward. For tongues to have any value in the church they must be interpreted. In other words, *tongues must become like prophecy and be intelligible to the community* in order that the community might be edified, convicted, or encouraged. For tongues, or any spiritual gift, to be useful for the church, it must draw attention to the cross of Christ and not be a jewel in the crown of self. If there is no interpreter, tongues should not be spoken. Speaking in tongues must involve more than one person, while prophecy has no such restriction (v. 31). Possibly one of Paul's most stinging rebukes of the tongue speakers comes in verse 33: 'For God is not one of disorder or confusion but of peace.' Prophecy contributes to God's purpose of love in the community, while uninterpreted *glos-*

⁹ The term can mean an amateur or non-specialist. It can refer to non-members who participate in sacrifices (Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, Second revision by William F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, and Frederick Danker [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979], p. 370). It is difficult to determine whether Paul is referring to 'outsiders' who visit the community or those who are amateurs at speaking in tongues. More to the point is that whoever they were, they could not understand what the speakers in tongues meant.

solalia leads only to the breakdown of community and witness. Any 'spiritual gift', no matter how spectacular or even how needed within a church, can become a barrier to having the 'mind of Christ' if it is not first put through the filter of Christ's love (13:1-3).

Paul then shows in verses 34-36 that his discussion about tongues is meant to make some in the church uncomfortable. Apparently there was a group of women in the church who did not submit in love to the needs of the community and may have been exalting themselves by speaking out in the times of gathering. These unknown women were creating the same type of confusion evidenced by the tongues speakers, and Paul mentions them here as proof of his basic point.

Verse 37 begins the conclusion to Paul's argument. A conclusion in letters of this time served as an author's last opportunity to convince the readers to accept his or hers views, often giving the good and the bad alternatives.¹⁰ Paul likewise states the two alternatives in his discussion in verse 39 by way of two infinitive clauses: seek the gift of prophesying, and use the gift of speaking in tongues in the right way. The bottom line is that all things should be done decently and in order (v. 40). The potential for division existed if the Corinthians accepted tongues speaking without qualification. Thus, Paul has subtly side-lined tongues speaking and left the better choice to be love in community.

Adding Fuel to the Fire

A question often asked of these chapters is, why does Paul deal with tongues speaking only in this letter and only with this church? This question is probably impossible to answer with certainty, but understanding the religious and cultural environment of these early believers gives us more of an appreciation for their struggles towards Christian maturity. Their internal problems had external influences. If Christ was not their example, then what or who was?

The tongues speaking by the Corinthians has interesting parallels in the Hellenistic world of the first century, which may have influenced this practice by some in the church. One possible source for this practice may have been the Platonic view of prophecy. Plato distinguished two types of prophecy, the first being *mantic* prophecy, seen in divine possession and inspiration where the prophet serves as the mouthpiece for the divine. The mantic goes into a trance and becomes the passive instrument of the divine. The second type of prophecy is *interpretation*, where skill is acquired through practice, and the prophet remains in control of him or herself.¹¹ Losing one's mind is part of the process of divination. Cicero (c. 43 B. C.) described this as a soul in frenzy without any reason.¹² Plutarch (c. 60-127 A.D.) wrote that the soul of the mantis expels sense or mind.¹³

Noteworthy similarities can also be

10 Quintilian, *Inst.* 4.1.28-30; 6.1.9-13.

11 Plato, *Tim.* 71E-72B; *Phdr.* 244A-B.

12 Philo, *Quis Her.* 1.2.4.

13 Plutarch, *De def. or.* 432C.

seen between the Corinthians and the Hellenistic Jew, Philo. Philo was a Platonist who viewed prophecy in a way similar to Plato. He distinguished four types of ecstasy: frantic delirium, excessive consternation, tranquillity of the mind, and divinely inspired enthusiasm. The last type is the best for a person to have and involves the inspiration of God.¹⁴ It is also characteristic of the prophets in the scriptures of whom Moses is the chief example.¹⁵ One of Philo's goals was to experience prophetic ecstasy, according to the model of Moses, that came by inspiration of the Holy Spirit.¹⁶ When the mind is 'agitated and drawn into a frenzy by heavenly love', it can enter into prophetic ecstasy, leave the body, and discern the things of God.¹⁷ Speech in this state stumbles about vainly, 'being unable by common expressions to give a clear representation and understanding of the peculiar properties of the subjects with which it was dealing.'¹⁸ The mindless state of the Corinthians' speaking in tongues, as Paul describes it in 14:14-15, is similar to Philo's understanding of ecstatic prophecy.¹⁹

Two nearby practices that may also have influenced the Corinthian believers were the Oracle at Delphi and the worship of Dionysus. One of the most famous places of prophetic activity in the Greco-Roman world was the Oracle at Delphi located less than 50 kilometres from Corinth. A priestess, known as the Pythia, was the medium of revelation at Delphi.²⁰ There is some debate as to what happened with the priestess, but apparently she descended into a pit and sat upon a tripod whereupon she entered into a trance or some form of ecstasy. Tatian wrote, 'Some woman by drinking water gets into a frenzy, and loses her senses by the fumes of frankincense, and you say that she has the gift of prophecy.'²¹ The prophetess would speak 'strange words' that she did not understand and that needed the interpretation of a priest who would then reveal the message to the inquirer.²²

Connected with the activity at Delphi was the worship of Apollo. Apollo was an important deity in Corinth since a temple to him was located next to the Lechaean Road, the main road through Corinth. Apollo was the god of prophecy and one of the most important gods in Greek epic. As the son of Zeus, Apollo interpreted the signs of his father.²³ He was the god of healing

14 Philo, *Quis Her.* 249.

15 Philo, *Quis Her.* 260-63.

16 Philo, *Leg. All.* III.100-4; *Mig.* 34-35; *Quod Deus* 1-3; *Gig.* 47.

17 Philo, *Quis Her.* 69-70.

18 Philo, *Quis Her.* 72, from *The Works of Philo*, trans. by C. D. Yonge (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993).

19 For links between Philo and the Corinthians at this point, see Birger A. Pearson, *The Pneumatikos-psychikos Terminology in I Corinthians; A Study in the Theology of the Corinthian Opponents of Paul and Its Relation to Gnosticism* (Missoula: Society of Biblical Literature, 1973), pp. 45-46.

20 Euripides, *Ion* 42, 91, 321.

21 Tatian, *Or. ad Graec.* 19, trans. by Molly Whittaker (Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press, 1982).

22 Plutarch, *Mor.* 406. For a different interpretation of the evidence, see F. J. Fontenrose, *The Delphic Oracle* (Berkeley: University of California, 1978), pp. 10, 217-18.

23 Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1985), p. 111.

and the father of Asclepius (another god of healing), as well as the god of purification and cryptic oracles. Often disease was viewed as pollution that needed to be purified. Purification came through prescribed action made known through super-human knowledge gained from oracles. Indirect and veiled revelation belonged especially to Apollo who was called *Loxias* or *Oblique*.

A second source of prophetic activity in Corinth possibly known to the Christians there was the cult of Dionysus. A wooden image of Dionysus covered with gold was seen in the Agora (marketplace) of Corinth by Pausanias who lived in the second century A.D.²⁴ Dionysus was the god of fertility, animal maleness, wine, drama, and ecstasy. He was believed to be present in raw animal flesh, the wine goblet, theatre performance, and ecstasy. Images show Dionysus always surrounded by frenzied male and female worshippers. The Dionysus cult was known for its ritual ecstasy. The worshippers often danced to music until in a frenzied state when they believed they became filled with the god and the god could speak and act through them.

These examples show some curious similarities with what Paul writes about in his letter. For example, the Corinthians' speaking in tongues is similar to Plato's first category of ecstatic prophecy. To counter this, Paul urges them to seek the gift of prophecy which uses the mind (14:14). Like the oracles at Delphi, tongues must be interpreted to have any mean-

ing for others (v. 13). It is not beyond possibility that some of the women in the fellowship had visited the oracle and had been inspired by the prophetesses there. These women may have been a major cause of dissension in the church (vv. 34-36).²⁵ Could Paul have had in mind the mindless worship of Dionysus when he refers to tongues speaking? It is impossible to tell, but the similarities between the Corinthians and these cults are striking.²⁶

Although Paul's letter is not explicit, we are still left with the possibility that the Corinthians' speaking activities had been influenced to some degree by their Hellenistic environment. Philo or Platonism, the Oracle of Delphi, the Dionysiac cult, or any combination of these could have provided examples of prophetic inspiration to the Corinthians, not to exclude the possibility that some of the Corinthians may have even practised such prophetic activity before joining the church.²⁷ The assumption behind Paul's claim in 14:23 is that if outsiders visited the church and saw such activity, they would associate the Corinthians with the frenzy of the *manic* prophets of the time. Paul's aim

25 This is the thesis of Antoinette Clark Wire in *The Corinthian Women Prophets: A Reconstruction through Paul's Rhetoric* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990).

26 See also Terrance Callan, 'Prophecy and Ecstasy in Greco-Roman Religion and in 1 Corinthians', *NovT* 27 (1985), pp. 125-40; Christopher Forbes, 'Early Christian Inspired Speech and Hellenistic Popular Religion', *NovT* 28 (1986), pp. 257-70.

27 See further H. W. House, 'Tongues and the Mystery Religions of Corinth', *BSac* 140 (1983), pp. 134-50.

24 Pausanias, *Desc. of Gr.* 2.2.6.

is to point the Corinthians to the superior goal of 'having the mind of Christ' and not modelling the world around them. When we do not look to the cross for our example, then someone or something will take the place, and everything else, even things that appear 'religious' or 'spiritual,' fails the test and will ultimately lead to the breakdown of community. God in his wisdom and power provides the answer in a way that calls us to reverse course and sometimes run against the influences of the world around us.

The Essential Paradigm Shift

In his concern for community formation, Paul offers the Corinthians a different perspective and a new paradigm that positively influences relationships within the community. Wilhelm Wuellner comments that Paul attempts to create a new social order by 'transformation of the multiplicity of different social and ethnic/cultural value systems into a unity'.²⁸

Paul attempts to set up a protective boundary of love and holiness around the Corinthian church. The 'mind of Christ' sets the boundary and defines the church as the people of God. Simply stated, to have the mind of Christ involves imitating him by living a life of love in response to the movement of the Holy Spirit in one's life. In chapters 5-7 Paul attempts to distinguish those

'inside' from those 'outside' the church.²⁹ In chapters 8-14 he moves on to define what should happen *inside* the community, yet without disregarding the community's relationship with those outside the church (14:23-25).

Paul uses the tools at hand to bring about this vital paradigm shift. He basically has three ways to do this: 1) the persuasive power of his words, 2) the Corinthians' own desire for spiritual maturity, and 3) his relationship with the Corinthians as their spiritual 'father' (4:14-21). Paul uses his position of power to challenge the Corinthians to accept his interpretation of spiritual maturity; he uses their desire for spirituality to shame them for their inappropriate behaviour relative to imitating Christ; and he carefully crafts his arguments throughout the letter to accomplish this paradigm shift. He reverses common perceptions of power, gender, and social status, thus creating a community governed by eternal criteria and not the limitations of creation or culture. Believers bound in fellowship to Christ can become a unified community where the typical positions of shame—being poor, female, or a slave—are put on a par with positions of honour—being rich, male, or free. The same is true concerning the more public gifts of tongues and prophecy.

Speaking in tongues represented a position of power and honour for the

²⁸ Wilhelm Wuellner, 'Paul as Pastor: The Function of Rhetorical Questions in First Corinthians', in *Apôtre Paul: personnalité, style et conception du ministère*, ed. A. Vanhoye, 49-77; BETL 73 (Leuven: Leuven University, 1986) p. 73.

²⁹ For Paul's symbolic universe and description of 'insider' 'outsider' language, see Jerome H. Neyrey, *Paul in Other Words: A Cultural Reading of His Letters* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1990), pp. 21-55, especially pp. 31ff.

Corinthians and a possible cause for boasting. Because of the interest in ecstatic speech in the vicinity of Corinth, some of the Corinthians may have been drawn to this *charisma* out of a desire to be *spiritual*, but by doing this, they created religious stratification between the 'haves' and the 'have nots'. Paul turns this around and challenges them to give more honour to the hidden gifts which are just as important to community life as the more visible gifts. The more 'honourable' gifts of tongues, prophecy, knowledge, faith, and even martyrdom count as nothing without love (13:1-3). When the Holy Spirit begins to grow a person *in Christ*, the result will be humility and consideration for others (Phil. 2:1-11; Gal. 5:23).

The new paradigm is given in chapter 13. Love is the greatest manifestation of being *in Christ* and the most honourable gift to seek. Paul makes a significant comparison in this chapter between his behaviour and that of the Corinthians. First, in 13:1-3 he puts himself in the position of honour by his willingness to allow love to take precedence over all the 'honourable' gifts that the Corinthians may have cherished. Carl R. Holladay points out the similarities between chapters 13 and 9, and suggests that Paul uses the first person singular in chapter 13 to offer himself as an example of love. In chapter 9, 'Paul adduces himself as the concrete paradigm of voluntary, responsible self-restraint for the self-indulgent Corinthians'. He then uses this same apostolic paradigm in chapter 13 in the context of community worship to show the blameworthiness of the behaviour of the Corinthians.

Holladay argues that behind 13:1-3

can be discerned Paul's own self-presentation. Of the seven attributes of the rhetorical 'I' given in the passage, all of the them can be attributed to Paul: Paul spoke in 'tongues' (14:18), functioned as a prophet (2:2-16; 7:40; 14:6; Gal. 1:15-16), knew mysteries (1 Cor. 2:1, 7), had knowledge, especially of the ways of God (2:12, 16), could perform miracles (2 Cor. 12:12; Rom. 15:19; cf. Acts 14:3; 16: 16-24; 19:11; 28:3-6), gave up himself for Christ (2 Cor. 4:7-15).³⁰ Paul's way, as demonstrated through his lifestyle and described in his letter, is the better way because it reflects Christ (11:1).

Then, in 13:4-8a, Paul subtly criticizes the Corinthians' defective spirituality. According to James G. Sigountos, Paul's description of what love is *not* matches the behavioural problems in Corinth. The word 'jealous' recalls the party strife mentioned in 3:3. The phrase 'is not puffed up' speaks to the spiritual pride of the Corinthians evident behind Paul's rhetoric in many places in the letter (4:6, 19, 19; 5:2; 8:1). Then, 'does not seek the things of itself' recalls how some of the Corinthians sought their own good and overlooked the weaker members of the body (10:24, 33).

The other attributes of love also describe the attitudes and actions of the Corinthians without using specific words from earlier in the letter. The words Paul uses are rare or are used

³⁰ Carl R. Holladay, '1 Corinthians 13: Paul as Apostolic Paradigm', in *Greeks, Romans, and Christians: Essays in Honor of Abraham J. Malherbe*, eds. David L. Balch, Everette Ferguson, and Wayne A. Meeks (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1990), p. 84.

only here in the New Testament, but they address the broader contextual issues in the letter. The word 'be conceited' evokes images of rhetorical boasting which Paul attacks indirectly in 2:1. The word 'shameful' has the connotation of acting indecently in a sexual way, part of the problem in chapters 5-7. The word 'provoked' may refer back to the fractures in the community characterized by strife and jealousy in chapters 1-4. The phrase 'counts the bad' speaks to the problem of revenge in lawsuits discussed in 6:1-8. Finally, 'rejoices in the unrighteous' as last of the negative statements and in emphatic position addresses the general disregard for personal and community holiness evident in chapters 5-11.³¹

Love is the ultimate paradigm for relationships within community and will also be the mark of the age to come (13:10-12). Paul wants the Corinthians to apply this eschatological ethic in their present community since they had been redeemed and freed from the powers of this world (1:30; 6:19-20). They were not to live according to an ethic found in this world or this age but an ethic characteristic of the age to come. The source and goal of their spiritual gifts ought to be the Crucified One. The real test of spiritual gifts is whether they cohere with the message of the cross. The Corinthians, however, remained entrenched to worldly para-

digms as 'fleshly' (*sarkinoi*) people (3:1-3) and failed to see the eschatological significance of existence in Christ.

Ben Witherington comments that love in Christ is the one attribute that bridges present reality to the eschatological reality.³² Paul contends that love outlasts prophecy, tongues, and knowledge (13:8) since it is the characteristic of the 'perfect' or 'mature' (*teleioi*). Love is the indicator of the new existence in Christ inaugurated by his death and resurrection. The 'gifts' of the Spirit cannot violate or take the place of love as the highest attribute of being in Christ without doing violence to the church. This was the danger facing the Corinthians. Their individualism and lack of love created unhealthy friction in the church and a barrier to unbelievers. Their display of gifts led not to faith but to alienation and further unbelief (14:21-22). They gave permanence to the temporal and neglected love, the true mark of the eschaton.

A Return to the Cross

How do you nurture community when certain individuals or groups seem to hold more power or persuasion than others, making unity in purpose and practice only a theory for church board meetings? Friction within a group is natural and can be a positive force for change or to shake members from com-

³¹ James G. Sigountos, 'The Genre of 1 Corinthians', *NTS* 40 (1994), pp. 255-59; Robertson and Plummer write that Paul aims his rhetoric at the 'special faults of the Corinthians' (*1 Corinthians*, p. 292, quoted by Sigountos, p. 256, n. 54).

³² Ben Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), p. 272.

placency. Any growing group will experience friction as part of the maturing process. If the friction, however, is not filtered by love, the human tendency for self-glorification will contaminate the fellowship, leading to a breakdown of community.

Paul begins his letter with the kerygma of Christ crucified because this message serves as the filter of love for the church in Corinth (1:18-2:16). All the crises facing these Christians have the common denominator of a failure to live by the model of the cross. Paul's purpose in writing this letter is to urge these believers to 'grow up' in Christ (3:1-2). The choice is clear. The Corinthians should have been ashamed of their boasting in certain gifts of the Spirit, especially speaking in tongues, which were not bringing unity but destruction to the community. Anything that causes division in the church or causes certain people to be overlooked would be considered shameful by Paul and contrary to the message of the cross.

Shame results in two ways. The first occurs on the experiential level in the Corinthian church. When individuals are exalted within or excluded from the Body of Christ because their spirituality is deemed either superior (because of tongues speaking) or unnecessary (because their gifts are less visible than others), their isolation brings disharmony to the community where everyone should have a vital role to play as the 'body of Christ'. Second, shame results before God as people find themselves resourced by their own power or according to cultural norms, thus isolating themselves from the divine plan of conformity to the likeness of Christ. Paul expects the

Corinthians to change how they relate to one another. His letter is all about change and conformity to his pattern of life (4:16; 11:1), not because there is anything special in himself, but because he represents the One who brings honour to all by bringing unity in the community. As steward of the divine mystery (2:1, 7; 4:1), Paul has in mind a model for the Corinthians that could influence social and religious standards within the community.

What God had done for them *in Christ* should have impacted how they lived as community. God revealed his wisdom, power, and love in the mystery of the Christ-event, for it is on the cross that true love is defined. Christ becomes for believers their righteousness, holiness, and redemption (1:30), objectively making relationship with God possible. The Holy Spirit makes this a reality subjectively in a person's life and teaches him or her the mind of Christ (2:10-16), resulting in a life of love (Gal. 5:22). Love is how one who is 'in Christ' ought to live. Whatever the reports Paul may have received from or about this church, his basic answer to them is love, a love lived out in tangible ways and that brings honour to all whom it contacts. This love will also confront cultural practices that succumb to the dishonouring force of self-glorification, whether that be taking fellow Christians to court (dishonouring a brother, 6:1-11), sexual immorality with temple prostitutes (dishonouring our own body, 6:12-20), or even speaking in 'tongues' like the emissaries of the gods (dishonouring the whole community, ch. 14). This church had overlooked the fundamental attribute of the mystery of Christ—the self-giving love seen in the divine

paradox of the cross. The most significant 'gracing' (*charis*) of God for Paul is communion with Christ. The Spirit will give other 'gracings' (*charismata*), but these serve only to help the community live out communion in Christ and thus conform to the mind of Christ.

Even though the Corinthians had been graced by the Spirit, they were fractured and functioning like an unhealthy body. Love is the one thing that can create unity within the God-ordained diversity in the church. The Corinthians may have wanted to be 'spiritual' but had been going about it in the wrong way. Because they lacked love in their community, they were 'nothing', as Paul (the 'I') calls himself in 13:1-3. Not all the Corinthians may have had problems with tongues and prophecy (ch. 14), but Paul's solution for the church is community-wide and requires all of them to love. The gifts given to them by the Spirit (12:7) would remain useless for the community unless accompanied by love. Ernst Käsemann comments, 'The test of a genuine charisma lies not in the fact that something supernatural occurs but in the use which is made of it. No spiritual endowment has value, rights or privilege on its own account. It is validated only by the service it renders.'³³

Paul summarises the issues very clearly at the end of the letter: 'Let everything that concerns you be marked with love' (16:14). Krister Stendahl remarks that love is concern

for the church. Any virtue apart from love threatens the well-being of the church.³⁴ Love keeps faith and hope 'from deteriorating into little lapel buttons which we flaunt to proclaim our own cleverness, our own commitment, or our own capacity to believe and trust. In reality, love means actually to be what one is together with one's brothers and sisters to the benefit of the building up of the church.'³⁵ Love and community go together.

Spiritual gifts wrestled into the service of self more often than not will ultimately lead to a breakdown of love within the community. By definition and intention, spiritual gifts must be self-giving in the model of the cross. All gifts of the Spirit, even Paul's favourite gift of proclamation, can be surrendered to the abuse of selfish motives. Paul was familiar enough with self-exalting preachers who proclaimed Christ out of envy and rivalry and not out of hearts of love (Philp. 1:15-17).

Fanning the Flame in Our Churches Today

What makes reading and interpreting 1 Corinthians so relevant for contemporary Christians is that human nature and experience have not changed much. Like the believers in Corinth, we find ourselves in communities struggling to be the church of Christ in a world filled with superficial love. In societies of litigation, rampant

³³ Ernst Käsemann, 'Ministry and Community in the New Testament', in *Essays on New Testament Themes*, trans. W. J. Montague (London: SCM Press, 1964), p. 67.

³⁴ Krister Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles and Other Essays* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), p. 58.

³⁵ Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles*, p. 59.

immorality, and glorification of the rich and famous, what paradigm do we follow? We live in an age where the spectacular grabs the news headlines. The church succumbs to this glorification of ego and the pursuit of the latest. How do we balance the need to be relevant and contemporary in message and method and not neglect the greater matters of spirituality? In days of 'purpose-driven' ministries, what power drives the church forward? Pastoral burnout is a hot topic among denominational leaders and theological educators. Could misplaced priorities among both clergy and laity be contributing to this problem? It would not be easy for any minister to be pastor to a church like the one in first-century Corinth.

These issues can be engaged in several ways. Theologically, the Corinthians became focused on the Spirit and spirituality rather than Christ and relationship. They considered themselves 'spiritual' (*pneumatikos*) and proved this by their demonstration of actions that could be construed by some as divinely inspired, one of these being speaking in tongues. Their focus on spirituality actually lacked the one divine resource that could build up the community—love. Paul's evaluation of them in chapter 14 seriously calls into question their efforts to be spiritual.

A spirituality that is not focused on Christ lacks the force that can unify individual believers into a community full of vitality and mission. The Spirit cannot do his work in us when our love for God and others is not pure, when we pursue spirituality for any other motive except the love that God has planted in our hearts. Jesus told his disciples that the Spirit will lead to him, speak about

him, and remind them of his teaching (John 14:26; 16:13-15). The Holy Spirit is the divine, drawing force compelling us to faith in Christ. As Paul says in 1 Cor. 2:10-16, the Spirit teaches us 'the mind of Christ'. Another way to say this is that Holy Spirit helps us make every thought captive to Christ until our thinking becomes his thinking, our perception of others becomes like his perception of others, and our love becomes self-giving like his love. The true greatness of the Christian faith is that God's love poured out in our hearts by the Spirit (Rom. 5:5) indeed transforms us into the likeness of Christ (2 Cor. 3:18) and enables us to fulfil our destiny in this world of being the holy people of God (1 Pet. 2:9-10).

In many ways, the problems in Corinth give us warning of what not to do as the church. Their disorderly worship, neglect of the quieter, 'weaker' members, lack of fellowship, and all the other issues can be boiled down to the root cause of sin. When the ways of the world become our standard and not the mind of Christ, we will find ourselves in the same danger as the Corinthians and ancient Israel, as Paul describes in chapter 10. Even though Israel looked spiritual from the outside by their baptism into Moses, eating of spiritual food and drink, and having the very presence of God with them, they yielded to temptation and participated in the evil practices of their idolatrous and immoral neighbours. Paul calls the Corinthians back to the fundamental of relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ, symbolized in the community meal of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 10:14-20). To eat of the bread and drink of the wine is to acknowledge the supremacy and sovereignty of Christ in our lives and

the exclusion of any other 'lord'.

This is so fundamental to true spirituality and to why Paul sees the deeper problem in this church to be spiritual immaturity (3:1-3). Any human enterprise, even the well-intentioned programs of the church, will hinder the divine gracing of the Spirit unless Jesus Christ is acknowledged as Lord both by verbal confession and through lives of self-giving service. The gifts of the Spirit are only means to an end and not the end itself. God gives these gifts as the channels for his love to flow through us to others. If we stop this love by hoarding it to ourselves or by stopping it because of our desire for self-glorification, we will not grow into mature Christians. The end result of God's gift of his love should be that he is exalted, not us. The cross as paradigm is not about human power and wisdom, but divine grace and love.

Fellowship with Christ should lead to a church characterized by love for all members with particular care given to those who are easily overlooked, less visible, or neglected. To be united with Christ means to have the same mind as he (2:16), first and foremost portrayed by sacrificial love for others (Philp. 2:1-11). A verse revealing of Paul's understanding of the divine mystery is Galatians 2:20: 'I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live now in the flesh, I live by faith in the son of God who loved me and gave himself in my behalf.' Here Paul states that union with Christ through identifying with Christ in 'death' is a result of the prior love of Christ shown on the cross. This union for Paul is not nebulous but experiential and rooted in community. Love as the way of the mystery of God

in Christ impacts community and is the necessary component for the body of Christ to thrive in wholeness and unity.

Love should be the supreme way Christians relate to one another in the church. It is the greatest evidence of spiritual maturity, and without it, a person remains a mere 'babe in Christ', prone to fall into temptation and sin. Paul wants the Corinthians to realize that they had been washed from the corruptions of sin and were to be different from their unbelieving neighbours (6:19-20). As Joop Smit notes, since the Corinthians continued to speak in tongues like pagan worshippers, Paul is led to believe that nothing had changed when they became believers in Jesus Christ.³⁶

Paul attempts to resocialize the Corinthians in light of the new reality in Christ. He tries to create a new community by placing the boundary of love around the church and by enhancing fellowship within the church. Although they could not leave the world (5:10), their community boundary could be clarified. Vincent L. Wimbush comments, 'The world was affirmed by Paul as the *sphere* of Christian existence... but the world was rejected by him as a *source* of value and identity.'³⁷ Their standard for behaviour should be the love Christ modelled on the cross. This standard has not changed since then. Love should still be the primary characteristic of all mature Christians.

36 Joop F. M. Smit, 'Tongues and Prophecy: Deciphering 1 Cor 14:22', *Biblica* 75 (1994), p. 188.

37 Vincent L. Wimbush, 'The Ascetic Impulse in Ancient Christianity', *TToday* 50 (1993), p. 427.

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Book Reviews

ERT (2005) 29:4, 364-365

To What End Exegesis: Essays
Textual, Exegetical, and
Theological
Gordon D. Fee

Grand Rapids / Cambridge:
Eerdmans and Vancouver: Regent
College, 2001
378 pages
ISBN 0802849253

*Reviewed by Ray Laird, South Australia
Graduate School of Theology, Adelaide,
Australia*

This volume is a collection of essays and articles by Gordon Fee that have been previously published in a variety of journals and books over a period of twenty-five years. As the sub-title suggests the papers range over a wide spectrum of issues, conveniently arranged under the general areas of textual criticism, exegetical studies and theological studies, with seven chapters devoted to each area. In the first seven chapters thorny textual issues are addressed, in some cases revealed, as in Chapter 5 which supplies a fascinating revelation on how some commentators avoid or miss critical textual variants in their works. Also, some old favourites are treated. For example John 20:31 comes under scrutiny and Fee gives a convincing argument for the present subjunctive of πιστεωω over against the aorist with the conclusion that its use is meaningful for the believing community.

For many, the exegetical studies in the next seven chapters will hold greater interest. Fee takes up passages such as John 7:37-39, 1 Cor. 7:1 in the NIV, 1 Corinthians 8 through 10 with attention

to εὐδωλοθητα, and Philipians 2:5-11 among others. Typical of Fee's willingness to swim against the tide is his handling of the Philippian's passage. Here he argues strongly against this passage having a former life as a hymn. He holds that it is Pauline in origin, without denying that some strands may have been acquired by Paul from elsewhere. He sees it as the theological foundation of the whole letter and the heart of Paul's understanding of God. This is stimulating reading to say the least.

For this reader the theological studies hold the most interest. The final seven chapters of the book focus on Paul's Soteriology, Christology, Pneumatology, Eschatology and Trinitarian Theology. These are dealt with by analyses of whole or large sections of particular New Testament books. This has a two-way effect. Fee's insights on the text informs his understanding of Pauline theology, and his grasp of Paul's theology in turn informs the text. This is probably a cumulative thing built up over many years of diligent study. Here, in particular, is one of the values of this book in that the reader is allowed to share some of the mature fruit of the journey of those years. In this final section is found the 'signature' essay from which the title of the book is taken. Here we find Fee's answer in an essay which is not only exegetical but is quite personal as well. He demonstrates here that the vital purpose of the text is to lead the reader/hearer to praise and worship in the presence of the awesome grace of God in Christ. Exegesis, Fee argues, must always have this end in view. Exegesis is simply a means to *this* end.

There will be readers of this journal who

will have read many of these essays elsewhere and may think that they will not find anything new in this book from this significant New Testament scholar. They could be wrong, for what is valuable about this book is that it invites its readers to join the unfolding of the story of the development of the interest of the author from critical textual analysis to careful exegesis, and through theological reflection on to doxological expression. Here is one reader who thinks it is a journey that every exegete should make.

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Struggling with Scripture

Walter Brueggemann, William C. Placher, Brian K. Blount

Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002.

ISBN 0-664-22485-7

Pb 69 pp – No index

reviewed by Prof. N.T. Barker, Emmanuel College, Brisbane, Australia

William S. Coffin introduces three lectures presented on November 3 and 4, 2000, at East Liberty Presbyterian Church, Pittsburgh, Pa., as part of a conference titled 'Biblical Authority and Church', sponsored by the Covenant Network of Presbyterians. Although slight in volume, the book raises important questions of hermeneutics, theology and pastoral care in the area of homosexual ordination causing distress in a number of churches.

The writers profess a high regard for Scripture. Walter Brueggemann is a product of the 1817 Prussian union of Calvinists and Lutherans that produced the slogan: In essentials unity – in nonessentials liberty – in all things charity. On this basis he appeals for an irenic spirit between those of different persua-

sions. Brueggemann speaks warmly of the place the Bible has had in his life, in the working out of his confirmation text, Psalm 119:105.

He is an exponent of a literary, rather than literal, understanding of the Bible as 'essentially an open, artistic, imaginative narrative of God's staggering care for the world'. While the literary reading of Scripture has undoubtedly added to our appreciation, does it replace rather than supplement the plain reading of Scripture? Presbyterian William C. Placher begins on a thoroughly evangelical note: 'From reading the Bible, more than anywhere else, I have come to know Jesus, my Lord and Savior.'

Placher appeals to Charles Hodge to introduce distinctions between the Bible's cultural clothing and its real message. Does Philemon, for example, teach the acceptability of slavery or proclaim a message about the transformation of human relations? Was the case of homosexuality in Romans 1 just a feature of a deeper and wider religious and moral problem? (Placher notes that both Luther and Barth treat Romans 1 without mentioning sex).

Biblical defence of slavery, with appeal to such portions as Philemon, has bitten deeply into the American Christian conscience. One becomes aware of a sinful human propensity to use the Bible to define limits for *others*. Some questions we view in retrospect with considerable embarrassment: Brian Blount points to a propensity on the part of American white preachers to appeal to Onesimus to urge blacks to keep their proper place. Compare the defence of apartheid by South African whites, or, still contentious in our day, the propensity of men to define limits for women in ministry. Is the heterosexual reaction to homosexuality of a like nature?

Placher challenges on the level of consistency. The Church goes easy on divorce 'because too many powerful and respectable people in our church and society are divorced', whereas, 'an interpretative favouritism for the powerful seems the opposite of Jesus' own practice'. Paul condemns not only homosexuality, but also gossiping. Yet we do not exclude a minister who happens to be a gossip! A problem with this argument is that the church is not asked to approve the gossip, whereas homosexual ordination calls for the church to approve homosexuality as a legitimate lifestyle.

The demands of controversy often cause overstatement. Brian Blount posits the view that the intentions of creation pushed procreation, not sexual intimacy. Yet the OT not only places Gen. 2:23-15 alongside Gen. 1:26, and has numerous examples of a primacy of intimacy (Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Rachel, Ruth and Boaz, Elkanah and Hannah – cf. 1 Sam. 1:8, 'Am I not more to you than ten sons?' – Hosea's concern for his wife, reflecting God's concern as divine husband, Ezekiel's wife—Ezek. 24:15, 'I am about to take away from you the delight of your eyes'). Some modern writers are often too prone to stress that the OT view of marriage is more about procreation, possession and power than inter-personal communion.

Blount asserts that Paul's 'radical statement' of Gal. 3:28 supersedes creation distinctions of gender, ethnicity and status. Are these distinctions inherent in creation or the result of sinful distortion (Gen. 3:16)? Any defence of homosexuality must face Jesus' affirmation of the creation bi-sexual nature of humanity (Mk 10:6 par.). The Bible reveals a pervading use of the marriage metaphor to describe the relationship of God and humans. Above and beyond particular hermeneuti-

cal questions are such basic theological convictions.

All writers affirm the basic biblical message of God's grace. As Brueggeman says, the Bible's message concerns 'the God who creates, redeems, and consummates – good news indeed!'. On the other hand, Blount affirms the difficulty of applying biblical ethical statements. Whereas the old Liberalism sought a biblical ethic without foundation of grace, it seems that this 'Postliberalism' affirms a theological foundation without a superstructure of ethical teaching. The Bible affirms both – Titus 2:11.

Pastorally, the conflict over homosexuality challenges Christians to walk a fine line between homophobia and adherence to Scriptural standards of sexual conduct.

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Parochial Vision: The Future of the English Parish Nick Spencer

Carlisle: Paternoster, 2004
ISBN 1-84227-238-1
Pb 171pp

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

Potential readers of this book should not let its title put them off by making them think that it is of 'parochial' interest only to Anglicans living in England! In fact, it is a good sample of how matters affecting a particular context can have much wider relevance and value. In this case, it is of interest also to Christians in non-parish type churches in any part of the world who are concerned to see that the structures and buildings of the church do not stifle, but rather serve, its missionary and pastoral functions.

The author has enthusiastically presented

a well researched review of the English church parochial system, highlighting its present needs and showing how certain aspects of its long history can be recycled and modified to provide hope of a great future.

It is no secret that the parish system has run into difficulties in the modern world, and that in many cases church buildings may have value for tourism and the heritage but little or even negative value for Christian life and ministry; as the author suggests, Christian witness may be 'crushed by our own heritage'! This fact, coupled with the problems faced by the Christian message in western culture, has presented difficult problems for Anglicans. The same may be said for non-conformist churches which have adopted a similar system (in the form of the local church with its solo pastor) although without many of the particular legal and administrative factors present in the English context.

Although the parish system has been in vogue for hundreds of years and therefore seems to many to be of the essence of the Church of England, the author points out that it is only one phase in the history of the church. Therefore, despite the complex legal, ecclesiastical and cultural issues involved, change is possible and urgently needed to maintain relevance in the present era.

After lucidly describing relevant facts about the establishment of the church in England, the evolution of the parish system and factors in recent cultural history that have put pressure on it, he advocates a solution which equally arises out of the complex history of Christianity in the country.

As a solution for the present problems, he points to the 'minster' system which predated the parish system. This system consists of a regional structure with a larger

central church resourcing neighbourhood churches and providing enhanced opportunities of fellowship, nurture, ministry, and witness. According to Nick Spencer, it was the minster system that effectively carried through the evangelization of England, and is therefore worth considering again in the post-Christian era where the missionary focus once more needs to be stressed even more than the community aspect.

He therefore advocates the idea of gradually introducing a modern form of the minster system which would be flexible and organic, focusing on mutual relationships between the larger central church and local churches surrounding it. He emphasizes that it would not be a matter of centralizing ministry by closing down outlying parishes, but the networking of ministry, worship and service into a more effective larger unit which would provide the benefits of both the intimacy and identity of the local parish with the resources and scale of the minster.

It is not too hard to see parallels between this and the emergence of large regional mega-churches in various parts of the world, especially in evangelical contexts. However, one striking difference is the emphasis Spencer puts on the positive role of the local units in a dynamic relation with the larger ones. This is all but squeezed out in the mega-church where the small group system is typically focused on the advancement of the larger unit.

Of course, Spencer's vision is not cut and dried, and he insists that in each case the local context and sense of ownership must determine the exact forms to be adopted. In this way, according to the author, the dynamic missionary oriented structure of pre-parish minster system would provide a relevant and powerful tool for evangelism, worship and fellow-

ship in the modern age where it is most needed and yet under extreme pressure in the parish system. All in all, this study is an interesting and effective example of the house owner of the gospel who 'brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old'.

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History of the World Christian Movement, vol. 1: Earliest Christianity to 1453

Dale T. Irvin and
Scott W. Sunquist

Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2001.
ISBN: 1570753962.

Pb, xvi + 519 pp.

Maps, illustrations, indexes.

*Reviewed by George W. Harper, Asia
Graduate School of Theology-Philippines,
Manila, Philippines*

Whose story is it, anyway? Is pre-Reformation church history nothing more than the tale of the progress of western Christianity perhaps supplemented with a few lines on developments in Asia and Africa? That's the way the story has been told in textbooks like Williston Walker's *History of the Christian Church* (1918; 4th ed., 1985), Earle E. Cairns's *Christianity through the Ages* (1954; 3rd ed., 1996), and even ex-missionary Kenneth Scott Latourette's *History of Christianity* (1953). More recent texts like Robert G. Clouse, Richard V. Pierard, and Edwin M. Yamauchi's *Two Kingdoms: The Church and Culture through the Ages* (1993) and Paul R. Spickard and Kevin M. Cragg's *God's Peoples: A Social History of Christians* (1994), reissued as *A Global History of Christians: How Everyday Believers Experienced Their World* (2001), are somewhat better, but even they place European developments at the centre of

their narrative and those elsewhere on its periphery.

But why? According to David Barrett's *World Christian Encyclopedia* (1st ed., p. 796, Global Table 29), although in 1500 there were only three million Christians in Asia and 1.3 million in Africa compared to 68 million in Europe, in 1000 there were 17 million in Asia and 5 million in Africa compared to 28 million in Europe, and in 500 there were 21 million in Asia and 8 million in Africa compared to just 14 million in Europe.

The first survey of pre-Reformation church history whose allocation of pages reflects the reality so dramatically documented by Barrett's data is Dale T. Irvin and Scott W. Sunquist's *A History of the World Christian Movement, vol. 1: Earliest Christianity to 1543*. Hands down, this is the most balanced, comprehensive book of its type yet published. As to balance, Asian, African, and European developments are on a roughly equal footing throughout; for example, the discussion of Pope Gregory the Great is no longer than that of John of Damascus, and the two together are no longer than the discussion of the Patriarch Mar Timothy I or that of Rabban Sauma and the Patriarch Yaballaha. As to comprehensiveness, what other such textbook devotes an entire chapter to the early expansion of Christianity in India, central Asia, and China? Or to the medieval church in Egypt, Nubia, and Ethiopia? Or to Asian Christianity under Mongol rule? The answer is simple – there isn't another. Irvin and Sunquist's volume stands alone.

One of the book's characteristics is a stress on early Christianity's diversity within the rather broad limits of basic orthodoxy. This leads the authors to argue, for example, that in the Christological crisis of the fifth and sixth centuries, what united those of Antioch

and Alexandria was much greater than what divided them: 'Those in both the Alexandrian and the Antiochene traditions of thought considered themselves to be fully Catholic, although their biblical and theological methods of reflection, and often the conclusions that they drew, diverged' (p. 189). This is essential to humanizing those of the Monophysite and Dyophysite churches; it allows the authors to set them alongside those of the Catholic and Orthodox churches as members of a single all-encompassing 'world Christian movement' (book title, pp. vii, viii, and passim).

Another of the book's characteristics is its stress on the pivotal role played by women from the church's very beginning. For example, the authors stress the 'measure of freedom' (p. 48) women found in early Christianity, observing that many of the first congregations met in their homes (p. 26; cf. Acts 12:12, Col 4:15). They note celibacy's attractiveness especially to women as a way in which they could, among other things, free themselves from traditional male domination (p. 142) and achieve 'a greater degree of social equality' (p. 151). They argue that although the church's egalitarian spirit soon began to fade, in monasticism women continued to find 'a degree of social freedom that allowed them to exercise gifts of ministry and spirituality which might otherwise have gone unexpressed' (p. 158).

Given these unique strengths, it might have been expected that the book's treatment of time-hallowed textbook topics would be weak, but such is not the case. For example, the chapter on medieval European scholasticism features fine sketches of the work of Anselm of Canterbury, Peter Abelard, Peter Lombard, and Thomas Aquinas as well as capsule summaries of the thought of Bonaventure, John Duns Scotus, and

William of Ockham. Even this familiar material is leavened with fresh insights that reflect the authors' overarching concerns.

For example, the text gives voice not only to Abelard but to his student and lover Heloise (p. 427); it notes that such women could, and some did, earn doctorates in the universities springing up across thirteenth-century Europe (p. 425); and the chapter concludes with a fine discussion of the ministry of Hildegard of Bingen, which the authors see as 'something of a summary for the entire era' (p. 439).

Among the book's other gems is its even handed description of evolving practice in regard to baptism. Baptists will take heart at the authors' observation that prior to the sixth century, 'baptismal candidates were normally in their teenage years' (p. 233; cf. p. 348); Catholics may find some consolation in the note that as early as the third century, baptism was commonly administered to infants at the point of death (pp. 105, 233, 348); Reformed paedobaptists will have to settle for the qualifying comment that the sacrament was only available on this basis to the infant children of Christian parents (pp. 105, 348).

I've taught church history for a long time, but I gained new insights from every chapter of this book. Occasionally my jaw even dropped in astonishment – for example, at this simple statement of fact: 'Within a century of the death of Muhammad, as many as half of the world's Christians were under Muslim political rule' (p. 271). Why haven't other textbooks highlighted this?

However, in my opinion, the authors miss the mark on at least a few points. For example, they seem to read Cyprian of Carthage's landmark treatise, *On the Unity of the Church*, through the eyes of

his contemporary and occasional adversary, Bishop Stephen I of Rome (p. 221), and in their discussion of Pope Nicholas II's reform of the procedure for papal elections they seem to grant an active role not only in the eleventh century but even today to 'the people of Rome' (p. 389). Still, this volume is an amazing accomplishment. Recently Philip Jenkins chronicled and celebrated the emergence of a world church in his widely read book, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*. With Irvin and Sunquist's book, that church finally has a worthy survey of its early history.

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**Jesus according to the Scriptures:
Restoring the Portrait from the
Gospels.**

Darrell L. Bock

Grand Rapids/Leicester:
Baker/Apollos, 2002,
704 pages.
ISBN 080102370X

*Reviewed by H. H. Drake Williams, III,
Central Schwenkfelder Church, Worcester,
PA*

There is no doubt that Jesus of Nazareth is one of the most important people of all time. In the past number of years there have been multiple studies on him. Many of these studies have been fairly critical, attempting to discover the historical Jesus who is not the Christ that the church has presented throughout history. Many of these studies have focused on extrabiblical documents or select sections of the Bible, attempting to discover who Jesus is from different readings of the Bible.

Darrell Bock, however, believes that insufficient attention has been given to the unified way that Jesus Christ is

recorded in the Gospels. In *Jesus according to the Scripture*, he argues that when read together, the Gospels provide a clear picture of Jesus and his unique claim to authority. His book provides a picture of Jesus from the gospels, systematically working through the passages from the Gospels and relating them to each other.

The book begins with an overview of each Gospel, surveying its structure, themes, authorship, setting, and date. Bock then moves on to consider the picture of Jesus from the perspective of the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke). He does so by considering the picture of Jesus that emerges from these Gospels with regard to Jesus' birth and childhood, his baptism and temptation, his Galilean ministry, his teaching relating to God and others, his venture to Jerusalem, and the Passion Week. His approach is to relate each of the Synoptic Gospel accounts to each other, allowing each Gospel to speak for itself but also drawing out a composite viewpoint.

He then, considers the Gospel of John separately. John has been seen as unique among the Gospel accounts throughout church history. Bock considers John in three sections: the Word incarnate (John 1), the Book of Signs (John 2-12), and the Book of Glory.

From this point he brings the main themes from all four Gospels together. It is in this section where the unified picture of Jesus from the Gospels is seen. Bock devotes extensive space to Jesus' view of the kingdom. He discusses who Jesus is from his titles, teaching, and actions. He also draws conclusions on the community that Jesus calls, the vindication to come, and Jesus' final week. Bock concludes by stating that Jesus is the uniquely authoritative revelator of God.

Bock has done a wonderful job presenting a study of Jesus that is both scholarly, yet

accessible. A student of the Gospels could easily read the account from the Bible and then consult Bock's brief but poignant insights on each section of the Bible.

Many times, Bock provides important details from the Jewish world that add valuable insights to the understanding of particular passages. For example, in his discussion of the Parable of the Ten Virgins, Bock refers to the first century custom of escorting the bride to the groom's house. It was likely to be done at night with light provided by torches or sticks soaked in oil. The virgins would have been part of this important procession that was not to be ruined. Bock emphasizes the importance of this procession by referring to Jewish literature where it is shown that rabbis would suspend lectures, and Jewish ritual obligations would be suspended for these processions. Such an understanding would probably be missed by many readers.

Jesus according to the Scripture is a suitable textbook for courses on the Life of Jesus at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Additionally, pastors, teachers, and laity who are interested in the Gospels and Jesus, will find this book beneficial. Especially helpful is the composite picture of Jesus in his concluding chapter. For example, his discussion on the kingdom and Jesus effectively summarizes in thirty pages what scholars have been writing about in many volumes.

Bock's volume could be helped by having a short section on historical Jesus studies. The influence from these studies is becoming increasingly seen in the academy as well as the church. Many pastors and laity do not understand the historical Jesus presuppositions, ones that are so different from historic Christianity. Moreover, many do not know how to identify those who are promoting this histori-

cal Jesus viewpoint. While Bock indirectly addresses the historical Jesus, a short survey that addresses these directly would aid his volume.

One final section that could be added would be a brief section on Christology from the early church's perspective. While Bock does refer to the old Roman form of the Apostles Creed as he concludes his book, a reference to the Nicene Creed and possibly the Chalcedonian Creed would strengthen his argument, for he has presented a portrait of Jesus that is in agreement with these statements.

ERT (2005) 29:4, 371-372

Lambs Dancing with Wolves: A Manual for Christian Workers Overseas,

Michael Griffiths,

**London: Monarch Books, 2001
379pp. Bibliog. Index
ISBN 1854245058**

*Reviewed by James J. Stamooolis
Wheaton, Illinois, USA.*

Michael Griffiths has produced an excellent manual for cross cultural missionaries to prepare them for what they will face in as messengers of the gospel. Using the popular film, *Dances with Wolves* (hence the title) as a thematic outline, Griffiths parallels the experience of the film's hero with the missionary task of connecting with the indigenous people to communicate the gospel. It is an innovative approach and no doubt will speak to the younger generation of recruits who are more in tune with media. While at times slightly forced in making the comparisons, nevertheless Griffiths has hit the right note in communicating what are the essential characteristics of effective transmission of the gospel.

There is a banner across the right hand

corner of the book that is printed to look like someone pencilling a note on the cover. 'Take this book with you' it reads. That was my impression as I read it because while some of the material is crucial before even applying to a missionary society, much of what the book is concerned with will not be understood by the candidate until he/she is actually in contact with another culture.

Having taught missions and having served as a mission executive, I can attest that Griffiths touches on all the relevant issues. He is focused more in this book on relationships to national Christians, a lack he notes in the introduction in his earlier book on the missionary life. The new reality is that missionaries, for the most part, are not in charge any more and the local believers are calling the shots. Therefore the stress on adapting to the culture and working in a team is a much appreciated emphasis. This is especially true as the dynamics of missions today is that most missionaries will find themselves on a multi-national and multi-racial team as God calls recruits from the non-western world into missionary service. The number of non-western missionaries is increasing and shows no sign of abating, as the zeal for spreading the gospel captures churches that were formerly missionary receiving churches.

The questions of singleness and marriage each merits its own chapter and there is a lot of sound wisdom in what is written. In these chapters as in much of the book, there is gold that can be mined for those who remain in their home country. Indeed, with the developed world becoming an increasingly multicultural scene, study of this manual would benefit stay-at-homes who find that there are opportunities for cross-cultural interaction where they work or live.

ERT (2005) 29:4, 372-374

**Asian Christian Theologies: A
Research Guide to Authors,
Movements, Sources.**
(3 vols)

**John C. England, Jose
Kuttianimattathil sdb, John
Mansford Prior SVD,
Lily A. Quintos RC, David Suh
Kwang-sun, and Janice Wickeri
(editors)**

Delhi: ISPCK, Quezon City:
Clarentian Publishers, and
Maryknoll: Orbis, 2002-2004
ISBN 1-57075-484-5
xlv + 679, xlix + 684, and xlvii + 768
pp.

*Reviewed by Amos Yong, Bethel University,
St. Paul, Minn.*

The 2200+ pages of this three-volume set represent the most comprehensive overview of Asian Christian theologies in any one venue. Volume 1, *Asia Regions, South Asia, Australasia*, provides an introduction to the history of theology in Asia as a whole, and focuses on Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Australia, and Aotearoa New Zealand. Volume 2, *Southeast Asia*, covers Burma/Myanmar, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and the Philippines. Volume 3, *Northeast Asia*, concludes with China, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea (South, primarily, but also North), Macau, Taiwan, and inner Asia (especially Mongolia). For the most part, the chapters of each volume are organized by country according to the preceding division.

As a research guide, most chapters are divided into several basic sections beginning with a detailed table of contents to the chapter and brief historical overviews

of the national history and of the history of Christianity in that country or region. This is followed, usually, by a sketch of theological reflection in that country, including historical developments, theological styles, and the roles of women theologians and of laypersons. The largest part of each chapter identifies prominent male and female theologians by name, sketching their major contributions, and providing a select bibliography of primary and secondary sources related to this person's ideas. (The inclusion of women's voices and perspectives in every chapter throughout all three volumes is one of the signal accomplishments of *Asian Christian Theologies*.) The concluding sections usually highlight distinctive themes, trends, movements, study centres, and scholarly journals produced in the country under consideration. Each section of each chapter includes a fairly developed (often annotated) bibliography (leading to some overlap), most of the time of materials published no later than the year 2000.

In addition, each volume includes extensive introductory material (Roman numbered pages), as well as paintings, illustrations, and a very helpful list of abbreviations. The supplemental indexes of persons and subjects work well with the detailed chapter tables of contents to provide multiple ways of finding information. Researchers could approach these guides variously: by focusing on regional or country studies, by exploring themes across countries or regions, by conducting diachronic or period analyses, by engaging with individual theologians, or even by using these volumes just as bibliographic resources.

The central motif around which materials were collected and considered for inclusion in the volumes was that of 'local theology'. By this, the editors mean theology

incarnated or contextualized specifically in the various regions and countries of Asia. Hence, the emphasis throughout is on Asian Christian theologies forged in dialogue with the historical, social, cultural, political, philosophical, and religious movements and traditions of Asia. This organizing principle certainly illuminates the specific character of each region's or country's theologies, but also helps account for the many different Asian Christian theologies as each responded to the distinctive challenges of its situation. For example – and the following is by no means meant as an exhaustive summary – Aotearoa theologies are those developed in terms of Maori, Samoan, and Pacific Islander categories of thought; Indian theologies have had to deal with the long history of religious pluralism of the Indian subcontinent; Burmese theologies have been influenced by the pervasiveness of folk Buddhism; Indonesian theologies have been shaped (almost literally) by its island topography and geography, somehow nourishing a certain mystical religiousness and consciousness; Filipino theologies have wrestled with the quest for political independence, and with the animistic and Muslim undercurrents; Thai theologies can be better understood when seen as apologetic efforts against the Theravada Buddhist tradition; Vietnamese theologies have responded to the Confucian-Buddhist synthesis and the recent history of Communism; Chinese theologies have been more creation-centred, perhaps under the influence of the Confucian-Daoist worldview; Hong Kong theologies have laboured under the long history of British colonization; Japanese theologies have emerged from a long history of Confucian-Buddhist-Shinto convergence, and the traumas inflicted on the national consciousness by the end of the second World War; and so on. While

these comments mislead more than they illuminate what is actually occurring in on the Asian ground, they provide some sense of the vibrancy and diversity of Christian theological reflection across the Asian-Australasian continents.

Inevitably, given the central criterion of 'local theology,' the pages of *Asian Christian Theologies* are dominated by Roman Catholic and mainline Protestant theologians, movements, and sources. I hesitate to say that this is a research guide to more liberal versions of Asian Christian theological thinking since the liberal-conservative dichotomy is a western construct which may be forced when applied to the diversity of Asian contexts. But it is surely the case that there are few recognizably 'evangelical' voices throughout these volumes. Volume 1 mentions Chris Sugden, Vinay Samuel, and Lesslie Newbigin, but not Ken Gnanakan, Ajith Fernando, or Vinoth Ramachandra. Its coverage of theology in the land 'down under' also includes neither the work of Philip Johnson (who, along with others, has attempted to bring evangelical theology into dialogue with New Age spirituality and themes) nor that of those connected to the journal *Australasian Pentecostal Studies*. Volume 2 introduces the work of Denison Jayasooria, Hwa Yung, Yeow Choo-lak, and Simon Chan, among others, but fails to note the work associated with Asia Pacific Theological Seminary (APTS, formerly Far East Asian School of Theology) in the Philippines. Volume 3 presents Jia Yuming, Wang Mingdao, and Wang Weifan in China, and Takakura Tokutaro in Japan, but ignores the ministry of David Cho Yonggi and of Pentecostal scholarship in Korea. To be fair, some of these developments in Asian evangelical theology are more recent – e.g., Philip Johnson in Australia and Wonsuk Ma at APTS –

but that Ken Gnanakan and Cho Yonggi are left out means that there are serious lacunae that need to be plugged for the second edition (if any).

Yet the scant attention to Asian evangelical theologies in these volumes should raise the question for evangelicals and readers of this journal about whether this is because evangelical theologians, churches, and movements have been less concerned with 'local' or 'indigenous' theological reflection. If so, is this a problem with the concept of a 'local theology' or a problem with how Asian evangelicals conceive of Asian or evangelical theology, or both? My suggestion is that Asian evangelical theologians need to press beyond the liberal-conservative divide. If Roman Catholic theologians do not fit neatly into either category, evangelical theologians should work more intentionally at articulating afresh an Asian evangelical theology that is not held captive by the issues stemming from the early twentieth century modernist-fundamentalist debates in North America.

Further, Asian evangelical theologians also have at their disposal the wealth of theological resources from East and West to find a way between and beyond individualistic pietism and social liberationism, literalistic biblicism and hermeneutical relativism, and this-worldly versus other-worldly orientations. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, readers of *Asian Christian Theologies* in the West should be reawakened to the realization that *all* theology is local and contextual, in which case, the editors of and contributors to these three volumes need to be thanked for helping us in the West to ask once again the important question: what is the meaning of the gospel in our own diverse western contexts and situations?

ERT (2005) 29:4, 375-376

**Daughters of Islam: Building
Bridges with Muslim Women**

Miriam Adeney

Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press,
2002

ISBN 0-8308-2345-X

Pb pp224

*Reviewed by Andrew D. Kinsey, The
Polycarp Project, Perkins School of
Theology, Dallas, Texas.*

'We stand on the edge of a great immensity when we write about ministry among Muslim women. Recognizing the god-fearing spirit of many Muslims, the sacrificial service of generations of Christians witnesses and the great grace of God, we approach humbly' (p. 7). With these opening words, anthropologist Miriam Adeney takes readers on a journey through the difficult terrain of Muslim culture, and deals with a topic of growing importance and controversy within Christian circles: the church's mission to Muslim women.

Adeney argues for a 'contextualized apologetic' to Muslim women as she elucidates a fourfold approach to the church's missionary agenda: 1) to educate Christians in the West about important parts of Muslim women's lives, 2) to share mission strategies on how the church may witness to and work among Muslim women, 3) to offer examples of Muslim women, and 4) to encourage persons who minister to women in Muslim countries (p. 8). Adeney's book offers case studies and reveals the diversity of this demographic of God's creation.

Throughout the book, Adeney shares how ministry among Muslim women must deal with specific cultural and historical factors (e.g., education level, family dynamics and relationships, financial status, ethnic rituals, to name a few). She shows

how anthropology can help the missionary come to grips with the complexity of Arab and Muslim society in general and how the gospel must become contextualized with Muslim women in particular. The whole thrust of the book is an attempt to show how the stories of Jesus can intersect with the stories of Muslim women. The task of the Christian missionary is to listen to both.

To accomplish this, Adeney looks at a broad cross-section of Muslim women. In the opening chapters, she points out the myths many people in the West have about Muslim women, and the way in which the church must minister to them, understanding how every person has unique gifts from God (p. 19). Muslim women, like all women, are created in the image of God and have been given special dignity. However, drawing a distinction with Allah, she also notes how Christianity offers the good news of Christ in personal terms, not simply as 'distant' law. Other contrasts are made with Islam as well.

Adeney's work, however, raises issues regarding the church's missionary witness among Muslim women. First, Adeney offers a model for how to do 'evangelism from below', by starting with the lives of real people. What matters is how the church understands Muslim women in their 'particularity'. For the gospel to become contextualized it must relate to Muslim women in specific ways, understanding how God liberates and redeems in concrete ways (chapter 4).

Second, Adeney wants to show how important it is for women to relate to women. There is a rich biblical texture to Adeney's missionary approach as she deals with the role of narrative (e.g., women within the narrative of Scripture and the stories of Muslim women). Important is how Jesus himself related to

women, dignifying them and, ultimately saving them. The task of the missionary is to know how to relate Scripture to person and context and vice versa.

Adeney's work provides a good starting point for persons who want to engage in a helpful study of Islam and missionary attitudes toward Muslim people. What is missing, though, is a more corporate understanding of the Christian faith and the view of the church as a living community of faithful practice. How are women initiated and sustained in Christian community over time, for example? The church must watch for the ways a gospel of individual salvation truncates the need for corporate expressions of faith to sustain Christian identity. The use of story is critical for sharing the gospel, but is there also not a fear that correlating the gospel story and a person's individual story can reduce the rich texture of both, at the expense of the church's corporate nature and witness? Adeney's work is silent here.

However, Adeney does have a thought-provoking chapter on learning. Entitled 'Singing Our Theology', the chapter evokes the different ways women come to know the truth of the gospel. At issue is the way song, liturgy, and bodily movement bring to the surface the rich texture of family memory and life. In fact, Adeney places a great deal of emphasis on pedagogy, or on performing the Scripture through debate, picture language, and memorization. Such a pedagogical praxis shows how bridges are not only built but sustained over time with women. It also shows how an 'evangelism from below' may want to proceed. Adeney and other missionaries will want to incorporate these and other ways of learning into an ongoing churchly practice as a way to build bridges with Muslim women.

ERT (2005) 29:4, 376-379

Mentoring: The Promise of Relational Leadership

Walter C. Wright

Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2004

ISBN: 1-84227-293-4

Pb, pp 160 Index

Reviewed by John Sweetman, Malyon College, Brisbane, Australia

Walter Wright's book is written to provide guidelines on the development of personal mentoring relationships for those who are not experienced in this process. It is mainly a practical book that makes extensive use of the wide experiences of its author who has made mentoring the foundation of his leadership ministry. By the end of the book, you feel that you know Wright and his priorities very well.

I couldn't help but be impressed that someone who has had such significant organizational leadership roles as, for example, the President of Regent College (Canada) for twelve years, could devote so much time to one-on-one mentoring. Perhaps the key is the way Wright perceives leadership. He states, 'Leadership is a relationship between two persons in which one person seeks to influence the behaviour, attitudes, vision, or values of another. It is always a relationship and always rests in the hands of followers.' For Wright, leadership and mentoring are two sides of the one coin; personal relationships are foundational to both and one inevitably leads to the other.

On the one hand, this book does little to augment our understanding of mentoring. However, it does provide references to other material on mentoring and leadership that display Wright's knowledge of the field of leadership, but there is no

indication of research on mentoring beyond the personal experience of the author. If you are looking for new information or critical interaction with the literature on mentoring, you will probably be disappointed.

On the other hand, it does set out to motivate and educate leaders on the importance of mentoring, and this it does extremely well. If you are unsure of the benefits of mentoring or are uncertain as to how to establish or develop an effective mentoring relationship, then this book has a mountain of helpful hints and practical advice flowing from years of experience of its author at the highest Christian leadership level.

Wright focuses on formal mentoring relationships which he defines as 'intentional, exclusive, intensive, voluntary relationships between two persons (usually with agreed on goals or objectives)'. Major chapters deal with the importance of character, what makes a good mentor, the nature of mentoring, how to build a mentoring relationship, what to look for in a mentoree and mentoring relationship, and the provocative questions that empower mentoring.

I found the most interesting chapter (entitled 'Ambiguity') explored the tensions involved in relational leadership.

Although the chapter's connection with mentoring was tenuous, since tensions in leadership make mentors vital, it was a fascinating examination of the tensions that provoke the work of leadership.

Wright's experience as a College president made his illustrations in this chapter personally pertinent to my situation as Principal of a Theological College. For those involved in leadership in theological education, the book is worth the read for this chapter alone.

Wright's heavy reliance on personal illustration is both a strength and weakness

of the book. It certainly grounds his ideas in practice and shows that leadership by mentoring is a reality. It is also strongly motivational to read the catalogue of differences that mentoring can make in a variety of practical situations. However, a number of the stories are repeated in different contexts throughout the book, which sometimes gives the impression that it is cyclical and lacking in direction. In particular, Wright's idolisation throughout the book of Max De Pree, while probably thoroughly deserved, could be seen as biased since Wright is Executive Director of the De Pree Leadership Center.

One new thought that I gleaned from the book was Wright's emphasis on mentoring as a relationship governed by the mentoree. He states, 'Mentors are resources to assist persons in their own self-directed leadership development.' This means that the mentoring agenda is driven by the mentoree not the mentor.

Let me finish with a gem I found in the book. Wright says, 'There is no best model of mentoring. What is important is trust, honesty, belonging, encouragement and hope.' This accurate and insightful statement flies in the face of those looking for a mentoring formula or system. Mentoring is about real relationship as Wright constantly emphasizes. I must say that judging from his approach and experience, I would really benefit from being Wright's mentoree.

ERT (2005) 29:4, 378-379

Recovering the Scandal of the
Cross: Atonement in New
Testament and Contemporary
Contexts

Joel B. Green and Mark D. Baker

Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2003
(reprint)

ISBN 1-84227-246-2

Pb, pp 232, Bibliog, Indexes

*Reviewed by David A. Ackerman, Nazarene
Theological College, Thornlands, Australia*

Joel Green, Dean at Asbury Theological Seminary, and Mark Baker, Assistant Professor Theology and Mission at Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary, call for a fresh interpretation of the atonement. The book has a two part goal: to show the inadequacies of the penal substitutionary theory and to urge contextualization of the message of the cross in culturally relevant ways.

In chapter 1, the authors suggest that penal substitution does not find adequate support in scripture and limits the wealth of imagery about the death of Jesus in the New Testament. Scripture does not show an angry God who needs to be appeased by an atoning sacrifice but a gracious God who initiates relationship in love demonstrated on the cross. The authors spend several chapters (2-4) surveying how the New Testament writers creatively applied and reinterpreted the significance of Jesus' suffering and resurrection for the various situations faced by the early church. Particularly insightful in this section is how the writers of the New Testament were not bound by one particular interpretation but were free to apply a variety of metaphors or terms that spoke to the needs of their audience. 'The impression with which we are left is that

the death of Jesus is an historical event of such profundity that we can only do it violence by narrowing its meaning to one interpretation or by privileging one interpretation over all the others' (p. 86).

How one views the nature of the atoning God can be incarnated in human relationships. Some feminist theologians contend that penal substitution leads to the view that 'God is the patriarch who punishes his son in order to satisfy God's own parental honor and sense of justice' (p. 91). At issue is the use of metaphor. No atonement metaphor used in the New Testament can stand alone or be taken to logical extremes. The authors suggest a two-fold task: to 'grapple with appropriating language suitable to communicating the profundity of Jesus' salvific work to people outside the Christian faith as well as those inside the church', and to do this 'in ways that do justice to the biblical representation of the work of Jesus' (p. 109). Theologians must realize that the metaphors of the New Testament may not be relevant for today and perceive *how* these writers adopted and adapted these metaphors for their own contexts. This challenges us to be creative in proclaiming the cross and not be satisfied with parochial and narrow views of the atonement.

Chapter 5 provides historical examples of how culture influences one's theory of atonement. The first is the *Christus Victor* model, advocated especially during the post-apostolic period by Irenaeus and Gregory of Nyssa, that posits the cross as a victory over the powers of evil. This model was effective because it addressed the cosmology and needs of the people of that period. The second is the satisfaction model of Anselm, where Christ's sacrificial death satisfies the human debt of sin owed to God. The strength of Anselm's approach was that it addressed the feudal

system of his day but in this lay the weakness, for it 'too easily associated God's character with practice with those of feudal lords' (p. 134). A third is Abelard's moral influence theory which sees 'Jesus' life and death as a demonstration of God's love that moves sinners to repent and love God' (p. 137). The problem with Abelard's approach is that it is too abstract, individualistic and exclusive of other approaches. The need for the cross is lost in overconfidence in the human ability to find salvation. The last is the penal substitutionary theory, the dominate model in the West. The authors look at this theory through the theology of Charles Hodge who argued that God's justice demands the punishment of sins which was placed upon Jesus who took our place upon the cross. Among the many problems with this approach include its use of terms foreign to the Bible, diminishing the significance of Jesus' resurrection, the limited concept of sin as transgression of law; it also leads to glorifying suffering and tolerance of abuse. It is too easy to conclude that 'Jesus came to save us from God' (p. 150).

In addition, the penal substitutionary theory does not adequately speak to contemporary needs, in particular non-western cultures. Using the shame-based interpretation from Japan of C. Norman Kraus, the authors show how on the cross, Jesus took upon himself the alienating shame of sin and revealed God's authentic image for humanity (ch. 6). Next, the authors dialogue with feminist theologian Darby Kathleen Ray who reinterprets the *Christus Victor* motif in an effort to correct the possible abuses from the penal substitution approach (ch. 7). The authors then survey several models that effectively communicate the power of the cross to contemporary audiences from various

parts of the world (ch. 8).

In their final chapter (9), the authors give a theological agenda for renewed appropriation of the cross for contemporary contexts. They suggest redefining sin to take seriously the complex issue of the human condition in all its facets, engaging culture with the message of the cross while remaining faithful to scripture, and realizing the limitations of any theory of the atonement.

The book is relatively easy to read with a limited use of technical terms, and carefully documented with scripture citations and occasional footnotes in conversation with the latest research. The book returns at various points to the basic theses which at times becomes repetitive but also aids the non-specialist reader. This book will especially be useful for those who minister in multi-cultural congregations or in missions settings where the gospel message needs contextualized. The authors could have expanded their thoughts at many points but provide a good introduction and catalyst for further dialogue.

ERT (2005) 29:4, 379-380

Finding the Plot: Preaching in Narrative Style Roger Standing

Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2004
ISBN 1-84227-266-7
Pb, pp 262 Footnotes, Bibliog, Indices

Reviewed by John Sweetman, Malyon College, Brisbane, Australia

Finding the Plot introduces one of the major recent developments in preaching, the use of narrative style in the presentation of sermons. Standing argues that 'using a narrative style is not only an appropriate way to open the Scriptures

for a congregation, but that it is an approach particularly sensitive to the twenty-first century culture in which we live... Adopting a narrative style is potentially an effective tool to enable us to communicate well with our hearers. It involves a completely different perspective on how to conceive, structure and deliver a sermon.'

Standing divides his book into four distinct parts. First he makes a case for the use of a narrative style for preaching based on two main premises - the importance of story in communication in our society and the fact that God is a storyteller and his book is full of stories. He also explains how narrative works as a form of literature. I found his discussion of narrative as a genre the most insightful aspect of the book.

Then he deals with the practicalities of preaching in a narrative style. While this section goes over ground that has been well travelled by numerous authors, it provides a helpful summary for those who may be new to the concept. The section concludes with a critique of narrative-style preaching which deals with such criticisms as: narrative preaching is caving in to culture; narrative preaching promotes entertainment over content, and narrative preaching does not communicate a clear theme. In the third part, Standing offers seven of his sermons as examples.

In the fourth part of the book, 'Preachers' Insights', he interviews eight preachers who have used narrative styles with varying degrees of success, and then reflects on his own experience, revealing that he has had serious misgivings about the use of first-person narratives because they involve acting, the nemesis of authentic preaching. He concludes, rather unsatisfactorily to my mind, that first-person narratives are acceptable because he has

seen God use such preaching to speak truth. The book finishes with a valuable list of annotated resources for further exploring the subject of narrative preaching.

While appreciating this well-researched book, I have two criticisms. The first is that he suggests that narrative preaching is principally about first and third person narratives. I see it differently. Issues of narrative form should pervade all our preaching with third and first person narratives being particular, but minor, examples of the use of this form. I wonder if Standing may have come to this same conclusion on pragmatic grounds. He states in his final reflections, 'For myself I have noticed a far greater ease in using the narrative form with non-narrative material in regular Sunday ministry than for opting to use a first- or third-person narrative.'

My second concern is that Standing's argument for narrative preaching is based almost exclusively on grounds of communication. If God uses stories and our society uses stories to communicate, then preachers should do the same. While this is true, there is a much stronger hermeneutical argument - if the meaning of a narrative biblical text is shaped by both form and content, then it will be most accurately preached using a narrative form. Standing touches on this issue when he says, 'In treating narrative portions of Scripture deductively it is a sobering question to ask whether our preaching actually does damage to the message we seek to proclaim.'

Overall, this book provides a useful introduction to the theory and practice of narrative sermons, and is a practical book to help those interested in this form of preaching.

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EDITOR: DAVID PARKER

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