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EVANGELICAL REVIEW OF THEOLOGY VOLUME 33, NO 3, July 2009

Evangelical Review of Theology

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



Volume 33 No. 3 July 2009



0144-8153 (200907) 33:3;1-Y



Evangelical Review of Theology

EDITOR: DAVID PARKER

Volume 33 · Number 3 · July 2009

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

Published by



for
WORLD EVANGELICAL
ALLIANCE
Theological Commission

ISSN: 0144-8153
Volume 33 No. 3 July 2009

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Typeset by Toucan Design, 25 Southernhay East, Exeter EX1 1NS
and Printed in Great Britain for Paternoster Periodicals,
PO Box 300, Carlisle, Cumbria CA3 0QS
by AlphGraphics, 6 Angel Row, Nottingham NG1 6HL

Editorial: Holistic Gospel

PAPERS FROM OUR consultation in Bangkok, Thailand, held in October 2008 in conjunction with the Fellowship of Theological Institutes of Thailand, form the lead articles in this issue. The theme, 'The holistic gospel in a developing society', was treated from biblical, theological and historical perspectives by newly appointed TC Vice-Chairman, Dr James Nkansah (Kenya) and Chairman, Dr Justin Thacker (UK). Then TC member, David Roldán (Argentina) contributed a short background paper giving insights from his own context. These papers give a valuable foundation for the words of the Consultation Statement: 'In line with the evangelical tradition, which was reaffirmed at Lausanne 1974, we understand holistic mission to incorporate the proclamation and visible demonstration of the good news which is ours in Jesus Christ. Being disciples, the point of the call of the Great Commission means loving God and your neighbour in concrete ways.' (For the Statement, see [http://www.worldevangelicals.org/commissions/tc/PDF%20\(TC\).pdf](http://www.worldevangelicals.org/commissions/tc/PDF%20(TC).pdf))

Timoteo Gener (The Philippines) presents a fascinating case study of another aspect of 'holism' as he examines evangelical and Roman Catholic relationships. This paper, which arises out of his personal experience and reflection, is a timely contribution as the World Evangelical Alliance commences another round of conversations with the Roman Catholic Church extending the previous decade of sessions (see *ERT* April 2005, 29:5,100-

130). Gener is convinced that the most important aspect of such discussions 'is Christ's holistic vision for the church for the transformation of the world'. So 'to be truly "Evangelical" is to be faithful and subservient to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and his vision for the church in the world. And to seek unity... defines the nature of such discipleship in and for our time.'

We then turn to in another direction as the long-time former chairman of the Theological Commission, Rolf Hille (Germany), discusses the significance of worship as 'the source and standard of Theology'. He emphasizes that 'Theology arose from the church assembled around God's Word, that listens to God, speaks to him, and experiences his presence in her midst'. Since 'The mystery of faith encountered in worship is celebrated with praise not just in the performance of the liturgy,... it should also be reflected upon, proclaimed, and understood anew'.

Our final paper is a Bible study from the United States which invites us to look at this message from St Paul in a new light: God 'chose us in him [Christ] before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ' (Eph. 1: 4-5). It is important not to misunderstand these profound and challenging words, but to allow the mighty acts of God in Christ to be realised in us for his glory.

David Parker, Editor

Holistic Gospel in a Developing Society: Biblical, Theological and Historical Backgrounds

James Nkansah-Obrempong

KEYWORDS: *Holism, gospel, Kingdom of God, prophets, creation, redemption, economy, environment, missions, NGOs*

struggles—spiritual, material, mental and physical.

I Key Terms

THE QUESTION OF THE gospel and its relation to the Christian's role in society has been at the centre of the perennial debate on evangelism and social responsibility. Different Christian communities have looked at the problem from diverse stand points. The thorny issue revolves around which comes first: evangelism or social responsibility? However, it seems to me that there is a consensus on the necessity to integrate the two aspects of our Christian mission without putting a wedge between the two. These two elements of our Christian mission are inseparable and must always be held together. The theological and biblical ground for this position is the very nature of the gospel. The gospel is holistic. It provides answers to human questions and

It is important for us to define the key terms in our title: 'holistic' and 'gospel' and 'developing nation/society'. The word 'holistic' carries the idea of looking at the 'whole' rather than the constituent parts. Applied to the gospel, holism means looking at the gospel in its entirety: 'undivided' or 'unimpaired,' that is, in its complete form. It means looking at the gospel in its multifaceted dimensions—physical, spiritual, political and social. This is critical because the gospel is God's answer for human sin which is the cause of all the many problems humanity is facing today—sickness, poverty, exploitation, greed, corruption and so forth. This multifaceted aspect of human problems requires a gospel that is holistic and which brings people to completeness, wholeness, and maturity.

The second key word is 'gospel'. What is the gospel? The gospel is the good news about the restoration of God's creation—comprised of human beings and the created order. It is good news for the whole person—body, soul and mind. It is good news for the present and the future and not just good news for the 'after-life'. The gospel has power to transform people to become what God intended them to be, to glorify God. It is the good news of God's salvation for humanity through faith in his Son, Jesus Christ. The gospel is often related to the kingdom of God. This kingdom has certain characteristics that govern its life and activities. The Christian community is to exhibit this kingdom ethics and to spread its justice and righteousness in the world in all its many-sided dimensions. In the biblical sense, the gospel is related to salvation. Salvation in the Bible addresses the whole human person in all his existential life. Salvation is to bring God's 'shalom' into human existence that encompasses the total well-being of the person. The gospel, therefore, brings total transformation to the whole person. This view of the gospel has enormous implications for our engagement in society.

The third key term is 'developing nation'. What is a developing nation, country or society? *Wikipedia, the free Encyclopedia*, gives this definition:

A developing country is a country that has not reached the Western-style standards of democratic governments, free market economies, industrialization, social programs, and human rights guarantees for their citizens. It has inconsistent varying human development index

(HDI) score, low per capita income, a relatively low standard of living, widespread poverty, and low capital formation.¹

From the above definition, there are certain common characteristics found in developing countries: lack of infrastructure and technological knowledge, rampant poverty, inability to satisfy basic human needs, unemployment and human underdevelopment. This is the context within which we are called to share the gospel. Has the gospel any answers to these endemic problems facing developing nations that comprise the majority of the population of the world?² The evidence we will adduce in this paper will be affirmative only if we preach a holistic gospel.

Having looked at our key terms, what then do we mean by 'holistic gospel'? By holistic gospel, we mean a gospel that recognizes the needs of the 'whole person'. Holistic gospel recognizes that people need food, clean water, basic health care, and salvation of their souls, education, economic development, and good infrastructure to sustain them and promote the well-being of the people and communities in which they live. Such a gospel recognizes the social, political and economic aspects of the gospel and does not emphasize only the spiritual dimension of the same. In order for people to grow

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¹ En.wikipedia.org/wiki/developing_country.

² The United Nations Statistics Division classifies the following countries as developing countries: Africa, Americas excluding Northern America, Caribbean, Central America, South America, Asia excluding Japan and Oceania excluding Australia and New Zealand.

into the fullness of what God designed them to be, we need a 'holistic gospel' that develops the whole person, body, soul/spirit, and mind.

Are there any theological, biblical and historical bases to advocate such a gospel? I will argue in this article that our task for engaging in a holistic gospel that addresses the whole human person is a theological one. My thesis is that theologically, biblically and historically, God has always involved himself in a holistic mission that seeks to develop the wellbeing of the whole person, and secondly that the anthropological nature of humanity as material and spiritual requires that the gospel address the entire nature of human beings.

First, I will discuss the theological foundations for a holistic gospel in a developing nation by showing the theological ground from the Scriptures, and then demonstrate this biblically and historically through God's dealings with creation and humanity. Lastly, I will provide a concrete example, using the early Christian missions in Africa who engaged in a holistic gospel that sought to develop the whole person.

II Foundations: God's Mission in the World

The Christian community's actions in proclaiming a gospel that is holistic, taking seriously the human condition—spiritual, material, social, political and economical—is grounded in God's own actions and mission in reconciling the world to himself through his Son, Jesus Christ. From the scriptures we see that God's actions in deal-

ing with humanity were always holistic; they concern the total development and wellbeing of the person. Creation, which is the first act of God, was to provide all that humanity needed to live and experience the fullness of life, 'shalom'. The reality of sin and its resultant effects, such as evil, decay, wars, ignorance, injustice, and poverty, all point to the fact that the gospel of Jesus Christ must and should address these various human needs, if total restoration of humanity is to be achieved. The gospel, if it will be transformational, must address the existential life of a person in its entire entirety. This is what God has done for humanity since the creation of humans.

Our mission as a Christian community should and must be patterned after God's actions. Our model for preaching a holistic gospel or engaging in a holistic mission in a world ravaged with poverty, unemployment, underdevelopment, ignorance, high infant mortality rate, disease, etc., is primarily a theological one and secondly, a practical concern. One cannot concentrate only on the spiritual aspect of human needs and not take seriously the grave despicable conditions in which these souls find themselves.

First and foremost, the ground for a holistic gospel is theological and it is embedded in the character and nature of God who works principally to transform the whole person, by providing the resources needed for such a person to live. God's own intention for humanity is to bless them in all aspects of their lives—spiritually, mentally, socially, and economically. We see him bless humanity when he created it in Genesis chapters 2 and 3. Again we see him blessing Abraham and his descen-

dants as well as the nations. God's promise that in Abraham all the nations of the earth will be blessed (Gen. 12) is an indication of his intentions for humanity. God promised Abraham his blessings before Abraham made any concrete decision to worship him. Such blessings are connected with creation and all the blessings creation brings to humanity—'abundance, fruitfulness and fertility, long life, peace and rest'.³ These blessings constitute the outcome of the blessings that come from the gospel, the good news of God's redemption for humanity and creation. Jesus reiterated this, when he said, 'I have come that they might have life and have it more abundantly' (Jn. 10:10). Interestingly, these blessings constitute what Africans understand salvation to mean: life in all its fullness. Both God and Jesus affirm the holistic nature of the gospel and redemption.

Recently, Christopher Wright has made a seminal contribution to the question of the mission of the church in the world. Beginning with the OT understanding of who God is, what he has called his people to be and do, he argues for holistic mission as a message or gospel that sees the multifaceted nature of our task in missions or in the world. He thinks holistic mission is the proper model for all Christian missions. God's mission, he believes, is to redeem a creation (world)—that includes the created order and humanity.

In the creation mandate, Wright points out that God gave humanity a

mission. This mission involves taking care of creation—both humanity and the created order. Wright points out,

The care and keeping of creation is our human mission. The human race exists on the planet with a purpose that flows from the creative purpose of God himself. Out of this understanding of our humanity... flows our ecological responsibility, our economic activity involving work, productivity, exchange and trade, and the whole cultural mandate. To be human is to have a purposeful role in God's creation.⁴

Wright argues that both Israel's mission and the church's mission are grounded on the 'identity of the true and living God, YHWH' and the 'true identity of the crucified and risen Jesus'. The church's mandate to preach a holistic gospel is grounded and flows from the identity of God and Christ.⁵ The true gospel must emphasize the uniqueness of the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit and that God's purpose is for humanity to come to recognize the triune God in this way; that humanity will embrace them and worship and glorify them alone and no one else. And we see this holistic nature of God's act in Christ; God in Christ is reconciling the world to himself—humanity and the whole created order (2 Cor. 5:17-21).

In light of our discussion above, the old debate on evangelism and social action regarding which comes first, is an academic rather than a practical one. In commenting on the action of

³ Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove: IL, IVP Academic), 221.

⁴ Christopher J. H. Wright, *Mission of God*, 65.

⁵ Wright, *Mission of God*, 61-66.

God, Dyrness is right to point out that 'God's active presence (in the world) grows out of and expresses the inner reality' of his actions.⁶ He argues the key to this integration, is God's Trinitarian character. Dyrness shows that our enlightenment heritage has limited our sense of how we relate creation to humanity. Our dualistic tendency to separate the material and the spiritual has blinded us to the need to integrate the two aspects of human life. We have lost our sense of appreciating the physical world and the body. More attention is given to the spirit than to the body. God himself engaged the physical creation and still does. Our work in creation is possible because of God's own work. Consequently, as Dyrness argues, 'The work of God in the world does not alienate our human work but rather makes it possible'⁷ (John 14:12). Our participation in developing humanity and giving them the abilities and the resources needed to grow and live well is grounded upon God's own engagement in creation. We become co-creators with God in managing and utilizing creation for our human, economic, political and social development.

The idea of the incarnation lays the ground for our critical engagement in creation and society to transform it. Christ revealed God in human form to transform human communities by establishing God's 'shalom' on earth and by promoting a just and righteous society where human beings are given opportunity to develop their potential,

so they may glorify God. 'In Christ, God becomes part of creation, God is embodied' in creation and identified with creation. God has always committed himself to creation. 'Christ's [coming and] work was to reveal the love of God for creation, by the Spirit, through Christ, to perfect creation.'⁸

The Exodus event is a classical example of God's own actions in holistic mission. It was the good news of salvation for his people who were oppressed, impoverished, socially and politically ostracized, and economically disadvantaged. Different Christian communities have interpreted the exodus narrative emphasizing one particular dimension of the story or another—the political or the economic or the spiritual. Very few see all three areas and hold them together. Those who spiritualize the exodus story neglect the historical context that forms the basis of the narrative, that God delivered real people who were subjected to gross injustice, oppression and violence. This reductionist approach tends to marginalize and overlook the political, economic and social nature of the exodus story. Such an approach is not holistic and it violates God's own acts of redemption. God did not ask the question, which comes first, evangelism or social action. Rather, we see God dealing first with the people's plight, before giving them any spiritual instructions. He delivered the people first from their immediate problems—oppression, economic injustice, poverty, and provided for their wellbeing—water, food, land, and safety in the desert. It was

⁶ William Dyrness, *The Earth is God's: A Theology of American Culture* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1997), xiii.

⁷ Dyrness, *The Earth is God's*, 15.

⁸ Dyrness, *The Earth is God's*, 15.

after all these that later he gave them his laws and made certain demands on them.

Moses' song in Exodus 15 celebrates this victory over the human and divine forces of oppression and injustice and proclaims the universal reign of God over the kingdoms of the world. God's actions deal with all aspects of their lives: political oppression, economic injustice, social aggression and violence, and spiritual bankruptcy. These actions become the model for a holistic gospel that addresses the entire needs of human communities. Basing his argument of the concept of Jubilee, that restores Israel's land to its individual owners, Wright points out that Jubilee was 'an economic institution'. Its focus was on the family and the land. Jubilee addressed the social (kinship system), the economic structure (Israel's land tenure system), and religious dimensions of Israel's spiritual life. At the centre of this was the land, which was the economic vehicle for the development of the people. The land, however, belonged to God and so it was to be used for the benefit and wellbeing of the entire community.⁹ Wright sums up the Jubilee concept in this way:

The primary purpose of the Jubilee was to preserve the socioeconomic fabric of multiple-household land tenure and the comparative equality and independent viability of the smallest family-plus-land units. In other words, the jubilee was intended for the survival and welfare of the families of Israel.¹⁰

⁹ Wright, *Mission of God*, 290-293.

¹⁰ Wright, *Mission of God*, 295. The emphases are his.

This economic reality of access to resources is grounded in the fact that the earth is God's and therefore humanity must be given access to it to help people develop and harness these resources to meet their basic needs. In areas where a few people own the land and the majority are landless, poverty has become the lot of many. There must be equitable distribution of and access to wealth and resources, 'especially land' in developing societies in order to 'curb the tendency of accumulation with its inevitable oppression and alienation'.¹¹ Given this theological basis for God's action, our own mission is to bring about salvation and restoration which must be holistic, one patterned after God's own actions. The gospel must transform people, socially, economically, politically, and spiritually. This in essence is what constitutes holistic development. Any development that focuses only on the material and the physical but neglects the spiritual aspect is inadequate.

In summary, God's models of redemption and restoration are holistic in nature. God's salvation of his people in the exodus narrative was holistic in nature. Wright rightly observes they scale the entire spectrum of their lives; they address the political, social and religious aspects of their existence.¹²

Secondly, the nature of humanity as both material and spiritual requires that the gospel be holistic if it would meet these dual human needs. Since sin affected the whole person, if humanity is to be restored, the restoration must affect the whole being—

¹¹ Wright, *Mission of God*, 297.

¹² Wright, *Mission of God*, 268-288.

body, soul/spirit and mind. Since most of the issues affecting people living in developing countries concern the physical being (ie, the body), the gospel must seriously address these physical needs. It is not acceptable for anyone to spiritualize these needs or to neglect them entirely. Any gospel that will not take seriously the whole human condition and address it in its entirety is inadequate and flawed. This is not the gospel Jesus preached, and it does not follow the model God has given through his own mission practice. Of necessity, the gospel must be holistic, God's mission gives us a model to follow, and the human condition gives us no other option. Having laid down the theological and anthropological foundations for a holistic gospel in developing nations, I will seek to demonstrate this with some OT and NT examples.

III Holistic Ministry in the Bible

Our dualistic and Greek worldviews have influenced our understanding of how we as humans ought to relate spirit and body, the spiritual and the physical. The Greek idea that matter is evil and spirit is good tends to push us to direct our Christian activities and ministry towards the human soul rather than to the body. Our Christian ministry fails to nurture the whole person, body, and soul/spirit. As a result of these Gnostic tendencies, human development, infrastructure and economic issues facing developing nations have not been high on the agenda of the church's mission. But for real spiritual growth to take place, we need to make sure the basic things needed for life are

provided. God is concerned about these needs in human life and he is committed to provide for all our needs. God, however, uses human beings to meet our needs. The Christian community becomes the extension of God's hand to ensure that people's needs are taken care of.

The gospel has always been holistic right from the beginning of human existence. Before God created humans, he had already created the physical world and endowed it with all kinds of resources to meet the material needs of humanity. God was concerned with human needs, and he provided for them (Gen. 1-3). The gospel must address all the needs of humanity, physical, mental and spiritual.

The Old Testament provides us with many examples. We mentioned the creation and the exodus narratives earlier as acts of a holistic mission. In those accounts God was concerned with human wellbeing. He met those needs through his providence and through his mighty acts of delivering Israel from oppression. God did not make a dichotomy between the physical needs of the people of Israel and their spiritual needs. He ministered to them holistically. He did not prioritize the needs by putting the spiritual before the physical. When he needed to feed them because they were hungry, he fed them. When they needed to be protected and delivered from oppression and injustice, he delivered them.

Wright has given a balanced position on this. In his discussion on the church's practice and priorities, he asks whether we should talk about the primacy or the ultimacy of the gospel in mission. Citing from Exodus Chapter 8, he makes this point:

God broke into the circle of Israel's need at the level of their economic exploitation and genocidal affliction at the hands of the Egyptians. Having *redeemed* them through the exodus...God went on to provide for their *physical* needs in the wilderness. Then he entered into a *covenant* relationship with them after revealing his name, his character and his law....so that they would truly *know* him as the living God and worship him alone. Then he provided the place of his own dwelling where they could *meet* with him, and finally, the system of *sacrifices* by which they could maintain that relationship and deal with sin and uncleanness through the *atonement* God provided. All kinds of elements are involved in this total experience and the narrative that describes it. But *ultimately* the goal was that God's people should know God and love him with wholehearted loyalty, worship and obedience. It is a rich and pregnant model for mission.¹³

God is a God of compassion and of justice. He calls humans to emulate his character and nature. The prophet Micah stressed this point in Micah 6:8: 'He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.'

Issues of justice, mercy and faithfulness are central to the heart of God. Issues of justice, mercy and faithfulness deal with the material as well as the spiritual. God is concerned about

this and he expects Christian to demonstrate this kind of life in society.

The prophets' ministry in the OT was holistic. All the prophets of the OT were concerned about three things: social justice, good governance expressed by political integrity, and their spiritual wellbeing. They called the people to spiritual renewal, to faith in God, and to faithful obedience to his laws and commandments. They challenged the oppressors and the powerful who took advantage of the less powerful and less fortunate in the community. They defended the weak and the poor, the orphans and the widows who were mistreated and marginalized. They protected the land of the weak from the powerful, who through their power grabbed the land and reduced them to abject poverty.

The prophets did not only preach the good news about God's salvation and deliverance for the souls of the people. They were concerned about three things: social justice; good governance and political integrity; and the spiritual wellbeing of the community. Both areas of the ministry were kept in balance. All these aspects of the prophetic ministry are patterned after God's own actions.

There is no prioritization of these in God's way of dealing with humanity in redeeming and restoring it to himself. So the question that is often asked about which comes first, evangelism or social action, is an academic one. Human needs can be categorized in four ways—spiritual, mental, physical and social. All are important to God. All must be attended to by the church. What we do first in my judgment will depend on the situation we are confronted with. We must learn from God's own example.

¹³ Wright, *Mission of God*, 319. The emphases are his.

Humanity is faced with 'a complex web of interconnected factors' that are associated with human problems and the gospel must speak to these interconnected issues and be able to address all aspects of human needs. Given the fundamental needs of humanity, any starting point in terms of ministry can be appropriate, depending on what is the most pressing or obvious need. But ultimately, we must not see our work complete until 'we have included within our own missional response the wholeness of God's response to the human predicament—and that of course includes the good news of Christ, the cross and resurrection, the forgiveness of sin, the gift of eternal life....'¹⁴

Similarly, in the NT, we see that Jesus' own ministry was holistic. The gospel he preached called people to repentance and faith in God. Luke 4:18-19 sums up the focus of Jesus' ministry:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me
Because he has anointed me
To preach the gospel to the poor.
He has sent me to heal the broken
hearted,
To proclaim liberty to the captives
And recovery of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty those who are
oppressed;
To proclaim the acceptable year of
the Lord.

This sets out the scope of Jesus' ministry. The elements that make up his ministry address both the spiritual and the physical well being of humanity. We see this in practice in Jesus'

ministry. Jesus gave equal weight to his teaching and healing ministry because he was concerned about the physical and spiritual wellbeing of the people (Mt. 8; 17:14-21; Mk. 1:21-24, 40-45). He healed the sick. He fed the hungry crowd twice in his ministry when there was need for it (Mt. 14:13-21; 15:22-29; Mk. 6:30-44). Jesus pointed out that God cares about what we eat and put on, so he would provide food and clothing for his people (Mt. 6:19-34). Scripture tells us Jesus was moved by compassion for all these people he ministered to.

Jesus encouraged us to have compassion on those who are in need around us and help them in whatever ways we can. The story of the Good Samaritan was to this effect. Sometimes religious people become so spiritual that they fail to see the needs and hurt of people around them and ignore and do nothing about them. Jesus taught that we should do what the Samaritan did; to show compassion and love to the needy and to help them.

When we are moved by compassion for the needy, we will not ask the question which comes first? Rather, we will move fast to meet their needs. Jesus makes reference to the use of resources that God has given us. These resources are to be invested so that they yield some profits. God expects us to use the resources he has given us to build up society to promote the wellbeing of the people (Mt. 25:14-30; Lk. 16:1-9).

The early Christians in the book of Acts engaged in holistic ministry. In addition to their spiritual nurture, they provided for the needs and the welfare of the people who were disadvantaged so that no person among them was

needy (Acts 6:1-7).

From our discussion so far, we can ascertain that mission or the gospel may not always begin with evangelism. But mission that does not ultimately include evangelism which calls the sinner to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ is not complete. Such mission is not holistic. It is clear from our arguments above that the gospel has wide implication for the spiritual, socio-political and economic wellbeing of the people and societies in which we minister.

In the last two sections we have demonstrated the theological and biblical foundations for holistic gospel, arguing that this is the norm for God's own acts, Jesus did it and the early church practised it. Now I will show concretely how this holistic gospel was preached in Africa by the early Christian missionaries who worked in Africa. Their holistic approach to missions had a great impact on the communities they served

IV Early Christian Missions in Africa

Historically, conservative evangelicals have seen the physical, social, political, economic and educational needs of people in three different ways—'secondary,' 'supporting' or 'related' to Christian mission.¹⁵ For instance, the early 1960s was dedicated to winning people to Christ. The church's work then, focused mainly on 'evangelizing the world' and 'disciplining the nations'.

¹⁵ David J. Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict: 10 key Questions in Christian Missions Today* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2005), 118.

However, since Vatican II,¹⁶ Evangelicals, ecumenical Protestants, and Catholics have shown great concern for the poor, the oppressed and the powerless in our world today. These Christian communities sought ways in which to help reduce the sufferings of people. In line with the developments of Vatican II, the Lausanne Congress in 1974¹⁷ tended to move the poor to the top of its agenda. Here a holistic gospel was proposed. 'Holism' came to be understood by some as ministry through 'word', 'deed', and 'sign'. Others saw holism as ministry to the whole person—spirit, mind and body, while some emphasized transformation of entire cultures and societies. There are yet others who see holism as partnership with socio-political action and evangelism.¹⁸

Hesselgrave has outlined three basic theological approaches to holistic ministry in relation to the 'poor' as understood by both conservative evangelicals and Catholic Christians. These approaches he classifies as 'liberation theology', 'holism theology' and 'prioritism theology'. The liberationist takes a radical stance, drawing on the Exodus motif showing God's own action in dealing with oppression and evil in human society. Using this as

¹⁶ Austen Plannery, O. P. *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, Revised Ed. Grand Rapids (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988). See especially Section 64, Part II, Chapter 3, 'Economic and Social Life,' and Chapter IV 'The Political Community,' 968-985.

¹⁷ *Lausanne Covenant*, www.lausanne.org/lausanne-1974/lausanne-1974.html

¹⁸ Hesselgrave, *Paradigms*, 120.

¹⁴ Wright, *Mission of God*, 319.

their theological basis, the liberationists' mission 'is to promote justice in society and establish Shalom on earth'.

Holism theology, he points out, has two strands to it; namely, revisionist and restrained. The revisionists' mission is 'to minister to society and individuals without dichotomizing between the physical and the spiritual or the body and soul/spirit'. The restrained, on the other hand, sees its mission as ministering 'to society and individuals socially and spiritually while giving certain priority to evangelism'.¹⁹

Prioritism theology holds the traditional stance that sees the mission of the church as 'primarily to make disciples of all nations. Other Christian ministries are good but secondary and supportive.' Hesselgrave seems to have problems with the first two approaches. He tends to support the third approach. Holism, he concludes, is inadequate and he argues for the priority of the gospel over all else.²⁰

The evidence we have shown so far seems to militate against Hesselgrave's conclusion. God's mission to his creation is holistic, the gospel by its nature is holistic, and it addresses every dimension of human existence. Contrary to his assertion that Jesus was primarily concerned with 'spiritual needs not with meeting the physi-

cal, material or social needs' of the people,²¹ the evidence we have given does affirm that Jesus did give equal weight to both the spiritual and material needs of the people he ministered to. If God's act is the pattern or model for our own mission work, then how should we present the gospel? This whole idea of which one comes first, evangelism or social responsibility, can be seen once again as an academic question not a practical one.

The historical context of Africa as a continent that has experienced great humiliation, through the slave trade, the colonization of the continent by western powers, the exploitation of the west for the resources of African nations, gross poverty, diseases, injustice, witchcraft and demonic oppression, and ignorance have made the theme of liberation very popular in African Christianity. This theme was championed by the early African leaders who fought for the liberation of African countries from colonial oppression. Any gospel that does not address these socio-political aspects of human life and needs will be inadequate. It is important that the whole of human life is addressed by the gospel.

A holistic gospel is critical for developing societies and especially in Africa where the African worldview does not allow a person to divide the world into sacred and secular, into physical and spiritual, body and soul/spirit. Life is seen as a whole. The gospel must address the whole of the African person and his needs. Salvation must not address only sin and the soul, but the body and the world in which s/he lives.

²¹ Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict*, 136.

¹⁹ He points out this kind of holism is espoused by the Lausanne Covenant, 1974. The architects of the covenant struggled with the issue of social responsibility but preserved the priority that in the ministry of the church evangelism is primary.

²⁰ Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict*, 120-125.

For example, salvation, which means 'life', in Africa is seen in multifaceted dimensions. Larbi observes this 'life' is not in abstraction but rather 'life in its concrete and fullest manifestations. It means the enjoyment of long life, vitality, vigor, and health; it means life of happiness and felicity.'²² Life includes possessions, prosperity—wealth, children; peace and tranquillity; and freedom from all the forces that threaten the well-being of the person—safety and security.²³ This holistic view of reality requires that the gospel message must of necessity be holistic. The message of the gospel and its implications for our spiritual, mental, emotional, social, political, and economic life must be emphasized and practised in our quest to develop our communities.

Africans have a legacy and model from the early missionaries who worked in Africa. They did not only preach the gospel to save souls but developed the whole person by establishing hospitals and schools and so forth. The preaching of the gospel in Africa and any developing nation should follow this legacy. The gospel must develop the whole person. This means that the material, mental, spiritual and physical, socio-political and the economic wellbeing of the people must be taken seriously. This holistic view of life is expressed by the African proverb that says: 'An empty sack cannot stand; or a hungry stomach has no

²² Kingsley Larbi, *Pentecostalism: The Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity* (Accra: Center for Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies, 2001), 8-13.

²³ Larbi, *Pentecostalism*, 8-9.

ears.'²⁴ This shows the importance Africans put on the material and physical wellbeing of a person. In other words, Africans believe, first things must be done first. The safety and wellbeing of a person come first before anything else. Any gospel that fails to address the stunning needs of developing nations will not reflect the character and nature of God—as one, who loves, cares and provides for the needs of his creation.

1. Early Missionaries and Development in Africa

The missionary movement of the 19th century preached a holistic gospel. Following the great model of our faith, God and the Lord Jesus Christ, they ministered to the whole person. They engaged in health services, education, social services, and vocational skills, preached the gospel and planted churches. In many cases, they met the physical needs of many of the communities in which they served before any person gave their lives to Christ. They became the hands, feet, and eyes of God to the community. They demonstrated the heart of God to provide for the needs of his people. In this respect, they built schools to develop the intellectual abilities of the people to whom they ministered. By teaching the people to write and read, many in the communities were able to read the word of God themselves. This led many to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Many of the leaders of the African independence movements in the early 50s and

²⁴ Tokunbo Adeyemo, *Africa's Contribution to Christendom* (Nairobi: AEA, nd).

60s were Christians and products of the missionary schools.

The mission agencies also built hospitals to cure the diseases that afflicted the people. They taught new agricultural techniques, and dug bore holes to provide good drinking water for the people. They built other infrastructure such as roads to provide easy travel and places for the community to meet to have recreation. They understood the social aspects of the gospel. They built high schools and established vocational schools that trained men and women in different skills; this led to the creation of jobs and employment which helped them to develop economically so that they could live a decent life and be in a position to provide for their families. We cannot deny the holistic nature of the gospel preached by the missionaries. They were seriously concerned about the development of the whole person. The gospel gave them the basis for their involvement in the material wellbeing of the people.

Unlike our protestant evangelical ancestors, the more recent evangelicals in Africa did not take the social and economic development of the gospel very seriously. That generation of Christians was more concerned with the salvation of souls and bringing people to the kingdom; so they paid far less attention to the material, psychological and emotional needs of the people. This attitude to life made some African governments criticize the evangelical church as being anti-social and anti-development in its outlook. These governments scolded the church for not taking serious interest in the suffering and plight of people.

We must overcome this dualistic attitude. The dichotomy between soul

and body, material and spiritual, must be rejected. It is rooted in Greek philosophical thinking that sees the material as evil and the spiritual as good. This dichotomy is unacceptable to the non-western minds. But more importantly, it is foreign to biblical teaching and theologically bankrupt. The body is not evil. God did not create an evil body but a good body. The body is God's design and intention for humanity. We will have bodies in this life and in the life to come. Therefore, we need to take good care of our physical bodies as we do take care of our spirits. The spirit needs the body to be a person, and the body needs the spirit to be a person. Both are indispensable. We all need bodies to be real persons. This is why God will give all humanity resurrected bodies in his 'New Creation'. Although a different kind of body, it is still a body!

This trend has changed in recent years. Protestant denominations and newer evangelical churches, especially the Pentecostals, have adopted a holistic approach to the gospel. The Pentecostal movements have played a critical role in ministering to the whole person. The so-called 'prosperity gospel' preached by the Pentecostals is an attempt to deal with these deficiencies of the past. Thus, the church has become more aware of the needs of their people. In their efforts to address human needs holistically, the churches have engaged in community development projects, established vocational training centres to provide basic trade skills for many young unemployed youths, opened homes for orphans, helped the poor and needy amongst them by providing them with basic food supplies, and given bursaries/scholarships to help needy parents to educate their children. In addition

to these, we have seen great interest by the church in developing the intellectual abilities of people. Many of the denominations have established institutions of higher learning at the tertiary level. Most of these institutions have taken seriously the social, economic and political implications of the gospel for human life and development. Christian institutions are not only concerned about theological education but are also offering courses in other disciplines to help develop the human and economic resources of their nations.

Others are engaged in giving primary health care for the poor. Churches engage in medical camps where they provide basic health services to those who cannot afford such services. The more Christians have come to understand the holistic nature of the gospel, the more they have come to realize that they cannot preach the good news and at the same time be indifferent to the needs and concerns of the people among whom they minister. How can we close our eyes to the immensity of the poverty, diseases, and sufferings we see in our world today? God never closes his eyes to human needs and suffering. True love will always respond to human needs and suffering. God responded to human sinfulness by sending Jesus Christ not only to bring salvation from sin, but also to heal our bodies and to give us abundant life, God's 'shalom'.

2. Current African Realities

The continent of Africa is endowed with many natural and human resources. Yet the continent is rated one of the poorest in the world. It is a continent ravaged by political ten-

sions, democratic struggles, wars, poverty, hunger, diseases, ignorance, high infant mortality rate, injustice, massive unemployment, unprecedented urbanization with inadequate infrastructural support, influx of refugees as a result of political instability and bad governance, moral degradation and high indebtedness to the international community.

With the current limited resources available, African Governments are stretched to the limits and cannot meet all their obligations to their citizens. Governments are calling on Christian communities to assist them and to engage in development activities that will alleviate the sufferings of their people. This call is an important one. It shows governments expect Christian communities to do more than just take care of souls. The gospel must address these challenges and plethora of human needs that confront many developing nations in the world today. A person who has the character and the compassion of the triune God or a church that seeks to follow the mission of the triune God cannot overlook the misery of people they minister to. The Scriptures calls us to take care of the needy among us. The lordship of our Lord Jesus Christ must be experienced in all areas of our lives so we can experience God's 'shalom' in our lives.

3. The Daunting Task of the Church

Advocating an holistic gospel places an enormous burden on the church. The humanitarian needs on the African continent are gigantic and can be daunting. They require a huge amount of resources to meet them. One can

easily get discouraged and easily give up. How then can this be done so that the church fulfils its mandate to preach a holistic gospel? The immensity of this work requires us to harness all our resources. This calls for partnerships. Partnerships imply that we recognize each person's gifting and utilize such gifts for the benefit of humanity and in promotion of God's mission on earth.

It is very important that the church enter into partnerships with other institutions who are doing development work. Our suggestion for entering into partnership with other stakeholders—governments, non-governmental organizations, civil rights activists, etc, to engage in collaborative ventures has its biblical basis in 1 Corinthians 3:1-15. This will help us to harness and use our resources, gifts and strengths in a more effective and productive way. This principle is also used in the early church by the apostles in Acts 6. This will help to prevent duplication of our efforts and avoid unnecessary competition within the Christian community.

In this regard, it is prudent for the church to take the lead in these efforts, as it fulfils its mandate in accomplishing God's mission to bring about 'shalom' for humanity. In being true to our Christian heritage the church in Africa must engage in the social, economic, political and human development of its people. However, all of our lives and activities must be placed under the Lordship of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (Col. 1:15-20).

a) Partnerships with Non-Governmental Organizations

We must affirm the work these organi-

zations do in bringing basic human services to communities. We must show our solidarity with them by encouraging them, visiting, praying and assisting them in any way possible. Such partnership will help meet the spiritual and material needs of the people in a balanced way. We can learn and benefit from their expertise in areas in which we are not competent.

- Christian professionals' expertise can be harnessed to help train people in all kinds of skills and fields in order to help people and communities to develop themselves and utilize the resources readily available to them for the betterment of their lives. The goal is to help people create wealth. We may need people who are experts in entrepreneurship, micro-financing and economic development to help in this training to serve as resource persons. Addressing poverty will require that we train and develop communities in the areas of micro-enterprises and entrepreneurship. Communities must be helped to develop the resources they have to create an economic environment for people to create wealth for themselves.
- Help needy communities to harness all the resources they have for the development of their communities. We must see this as part of our spirituality by engaging the world and being partners with God to make this world a better place for humanity to seek God's love and provision for their needs.
- Maintain our prophetic voice and remain the voice of the voiceless. We must remain the moral eyes of the nation and communities and

speaking against the evils and injustices done against the marginalized, the vulnerable in our societies. In addition, we must set up advocacy units or collaborate with civil societies and organizations who share the same vision as us to bring to light the evils committed against the innocent and seek to appeal to and challenge governments and influence policy makers to make policies that give basic human dignity for all to live well.

- Advocate for the provision of basic infrastructure—health facilities, good drinking water, good sanitation—that promotes the wellbeing of people. These basic amenities are critical. The church must team up with health personnel to engage and teach people in basic health care issues to help people who are vulnerable to protect themselves from some of the preventable diseases that easily kill them. All these activities must be taken as part of our spirituality. The apostle James says that, true religion is this: to show mercy, compassion, to those who are weak and vulnerable in our societies (James 1:27).

b. Educational/Social Amenities

- To address the problem of ignorance in most developing nations, education is very critical. It would be good for Christian communities to partner with national universities where there are programs for adult literacy training to teach the community to read and write. Many people would enjoy more fruitful Christian lives if they could read and study the bible themselves.

Education will give others the opportunity to explore their gifting so they can become a blessing to the larger communities in which they live and serve.

c. The Relief Model

- Relief work as a temporary measure to help needy communities might be encouraged. This model was used by the early church. The Church in Antioch sent relief to the Jerusalem Church. While this model has been used by many Christian organizations and non-governmental groups, it must be seen as temporary. Many are thinking more of permanent ways of helping people meet their own needs from the resources available to them. More of these organizations are looking to lasting development agendas that will benefit and help communities to provide for themselves. This will prevent what has often happened with relief work—the dependency syndrome. If this goes on for a long time, it causes communities to become dependent on others.

d. Advocacy

- The church must lead in advocacy for impelling governments to develop good governance systems and accountability structures so that they can raise enough resources to develop their nation's infrastructure, schools, health facilities, economic development, and so forth in order to provide for the basic needs of their people.

e. Policy Formulation

- The church must advocate and work with governments and civil societies to formulate economic development policies to foster development in all areas of the nation—economic, educational, infrastructural, agricultural, housing, health, and create a favourable environment for such activities to take place.

V Conclusion

If the church does not want to become irrelevant to society, a holistic gospel is the answer. A holistic gospel will give credibility to the message and acceptance of the church in society. The church should not be viewed as anti-development or anti-progress. Rather, the church should be concerned about human dignity. For humanity to live a dignified life, development of the whole person must be taken seriously.

A holistic gospel will also provide the way for the church to make the love of God and his concern for the wellbeing of humanity more obvious to the world. Compassion and mercy are essential attributes of God. Throughout the Bible, we see God providing for human needs whenever and wherever he meets them. He provided for individuals like Elijah, David, and groups like the Israelites in the wilderness.

Furthermore, the gospel has certain implications for our lives in society. We are called to partner with God in bringing everyone under the Lordship of the Lord Jesus Christ and God's 'shalom' to humanity. It means the message of the gospel must be holistic to address

both the spiritual and the physical needs of humanity. Both are critical for humanity to experience God's 'shalom'. We must also hold the two together.

When the church preaches a gospel that only saves the soul but does not feed the hungry, take in the stranger, or clothe the naked, it is not preaching a holistic gospel (Matt. 25:31-40). A holistic ministry also addresses creation—the issues of deforestation, pollution of the atmosphere, contamination of our rivers, and the extinction of animal species. The message of God to the Israelites was comprehensive; it addressed every facet of their lives. The prophets and Jesus accused those who made the spiritual a priority and neglected the material and physical needs of the people as not following the ways of God.

The whole debate around 'holistic' mission is a critical one. The church has followed different traditions over the years, but the issue is not 'either-or' but 'both -and'. The attempt to prioritize evangelism or social action is, I suggest, based on a western dualistic presupposition that has its root in the enlightenment tradition and has no place in non-western and biblical thoughts.

The gospel of Jesus Christ must transform the whole person. Therefore, the gospel must not be polarized by those who communicate its message. African view of life is holistic and any ministry that does not deal with its entire world view would not be effective and transformational. Jesus' ministry was holistic and he expects his followers to engage in holistic ministry. Therefore our mission must follow the pattern of Jesus.

Holistic Gospel in a Developing Society: Some Biblical, Historical and Ethical Considerations

Justin Thacker

KEYWORDS: *Lausanne Covenant, Grand Rapids, missio Dei, Micah Declaration, utilitarianism, virtue ethics, Integral Mission*

of the poor, that issues of eternal destiny are beyond our control, and our only responsibility is to demonstrate the love of Christ by our actions towards people.

According to the first of these views, Christian social action is a distraction from what should be our main activity, the verbal proclamation of the gospel. According to the second, to ignore the material conditions of people's lives is to embrace a neo-platonic Christianity that is a travesty of the actual gospel preached and practised by Jesus Christ.

Despite this polarisation, the vast majority of evangelicals now agree that both evangelism and social action are needed if we are to pursue salvation in the biblical sense. Enough academic work has taken place to demonstrate that the concept of salvation in the New Testament is not restricted to our eternal destiny, but embraces a far wider canvas. Michael Green writes,

Introduction

Lausanne 1974 and afterwards

Some controversial issues seem never to depart from evangelical shores, and the precise relationship between evangelism and social action remains one of them. On the one hand, there are those who argue that all that matters is our eternal destiny, and therefore our primary responsibility is to verbally proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ so that the unsaved might trust in him for their salvation. On the other hand, there are those who argue that in response to the biblical mandate to seek justice we need to work at improving the material conditions of the lives

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The raising of the dead, the cleansing of the menstruous woman, the healing of the sick, the opening of the eyes of the blind are all messianic activities; they are signs of the presence in the world of the promised salvation. Furthermore they make abundantly plain that the concern of Jesus was with the whole man and afford no justification whatever for the disjunction between the physical and the spiritual, the sacred and the secular, that has long typified the church doctrine of salvation.¹

The 1974 Lausanne Covenant was seminal in bringing us back to this more holistic understanding of the gospel. Its fundamental message—that evangelism and social action must go hand in hand—has been repeated ever since.² Yet having said that, there remains an inherent ambiguity in how we see these two tasks inter-relating. That they do relate is a given, but how they relate remains uncertain.

Little attention was paid to this at the time of Lausanne, but in 1982 at the Grand Rapids summit a major report was produced which explicitly addressed the issue.³ Three conclusions were reached. The first of these

was that social action was a ‘consequence of evangelism’.⁴ It is worth remembering that the command in the so-called ‘great commission’ was not that we make converts, but that we make disciples, ‘teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you’ (Matt. 28:20). Hence, if we fulfil this commission then the transformation that takes place is not merely cognitive—a new set of beliefs, but also practical—a new set of behaviours. Such reoriented praxis would presumably include a greater concern for compassion and justice, and therefore social action among the poor and marginalised.

The second form of relationship identified in the Grand Rapids document was that social action may be a ‘bridge to evangelism’. It has frequently been noted that ‘empty bellies don’t have ears’, and therefore if we want people to hear our gospel proclamation, it is imperative that they are not treated as detached Cartesian minds. As John says, ‘If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth’ (1 John 3:17). Having acknowledged this, the report goes on to stress that we must never be in the business of using our social action as a ‘bribe’ to evangelism. Our service of the poor must always be out of genuine compassion for their needs, and not because of

some ‘ulterior motive’.

Finally, the report notes the way in which evangelism and social action should be seen as partners. ‘They are like the two blades of a pair of scissors or the two wings of a bird... [Jesus] words explained his works, and his works dramatized his words. Both were expressions of his compassion for people, and both should be ours.’

This, then, is how the Grand Rapids report articulates the relationship between social action and evangelism. Since then, a number of scholars have questioned whether *Evangelism and Social Responsibility* went far enough in identifying the necessary integration between these two aspects of our ministry. In the course of these deliberations, the concept of ‘integral mission’ or ‘holistic mission’ has been adopted, and many of its proponents would argue for a stronger sense of integration than was evident in the Grand Rapids report. In particular, there is a concern amongst some that *Evangelism and Social Responsibility* continued with such a dipolar view of mission that inevitably each could be conceived as existing on its own. David Bosch writes:

The moment one regards mission as consisting of two separate components one has, in principle, conceded that each of the two has a life of its own. One is then by implication saying that it is possible to have evangelism without a social dimension and Christian social involvement without an evangelistic dimension. What is more, if one suggests that one component is primary and the other secondary, one implies that one is essential, the

other optional.⁵

In fact, *Evangelism and Social Responsibility* itself acknowledged this issue of primacy when it wrote:

Seldom if ever should we have to choose between satisfying physical hunger and spiritual hunger, or between healing bodies and saving souls, since an authentic love for our neighbour will lead us to serve him or her as a whole person. *Nevertheless, if we must choose, then we have to say that the supreme and ultimate need of all humankind is the saving grace of Jesus Christ, and that therefore a person’s eternal, spiritual salvation is of greater importance than his or her temporal and material well-being.* (Emphasis added)⁶

Yet, as Bosch has said, ‘One has to ask whether this approach is *theologically tenable*’.⁷ The 2001 Micah Declaration on Integral Mission was one attempt to address this issue by signalling a greater sense of integration without conflating evangelism and social action. It states:

Integral mission...is the proclamation and demonstration of the gospel. It is not simply that evangelism and social involvement are to be done alongside each other. Rather, in integral mission our proclamation has social consequences as we call people to love

¹ Michael Green, *The Meaning of Salvation* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2000), 120.

² *Lausanne Covenant* available at: www.lausanne.org/lausanne-1974/lausanne-covenant.html

³ *Evangelism and Social Responsibility: An Evangelical Commitment* available at: www.lausanne.org/grand-rapids-1982/grand-rapids-1982.html

⁴ ‘Three kinds of relationship’ in *Evangelism and Social Responsibility: An Evangelical Commitment*.

⁵ Bosch, David J., *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 405.

⁶ ‘The question of primacy’ in *Evangelism and Social Responsibility: An Evangelical Commitment*.

⁷ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 406.

and repentance in all areas of life. And our social involvement has evangelistic consequences as we bear witness to the transforming grace of Jesus Christ.⁸

In contrast to *Evangelism and Social Responsibility*, the Micah Declaration does not specify whether evangelism or social action should be considered as prime, and thereby it might be concluded that the Declaration is moving away from the position articulated at Grand Rapids. However, apart from that implied stance, it is not immediately clear that this declaration takes us any further beyond the Grand Rapids report. Evangelism and social action are still both necessary, and both relate to each other. The implicit questions regarding primacy and ultimate aims remain in the background.

A Paradigm Shift?

More recently, Vinoth Ramachandra has suggested that we need to develop this sense of integration even further. Referring to the paragraph above from the Micah Declaration, he writes:

This is often taken to mean that there can be no authentic Christian social action that is not accompanied *at the same time* by the verbal proclamation of the Gospel ('evangelism'), just as there can be no authentic proclamation that is not accompanied *at the same time* by social action. This approach then

tends to understand 'integral mission' as holistic practice, a strategy or methodology for our missionary outreach. The search then begins for 'models' of such 'integral mission' across the world for us to emulate.

He then goes on to suggest:

Whatever the intention of the framers of the Micah Declaration, can the lingering sense of ambiguity be dispelled if we understand 'integral mission' less in terms of the church's activities and more in terms of what the church is called to *be* (which, of course, includes its actions in the world)?...The emphasis lies, then, not so much in the practical 'balancing' of our various activities, but rather in the firm refusal to draw unbiblical distinctions. When, for instance, Jesus voluntarily engaged a social outcast like the Samaritan woman (John 4) in face-to-face conversation was he doing 'evangelism' or was he performing a 'political action' in challenging the political taboos of his society?...When the Rev. Martin Luther King confronted the white racism of American society in the name of the living God of Scripture who had declared all human beings equal and reconciled them to each other through the death of Jesus, was he evangelizing the nation or engaged in political action?...To raise these questions is to take the Micah Declaration in a direction that challenges the whole church of Jesus Christ, and not just those who are professionally involved with the poor. It is not only the case

⁸ 'The Micah Declaration on Integral Mission' in Tim Chester, (ed), *Justice, Mercy and Humility* (Paternoster: Milton Keynes, 2002), 17-23.

that...Gospel proclamation has 'social consequences' and social involvement has 'evangelistic consequences', but also that all such actions can be narrated under other, alternative descriptions with more profound implications for our lives. When Jesus was asked to sum up what God required of us, he did not answer in terms of either a set of 'projects' to be performed or a set of 'doctrines' to believe. Instead we are called to love God with our whole being, and to love our neighbour in the same way we love ourselves.⁹

I believe that Ramachandra is on to something profound here—perhaps even a paradigm shift in our concept of integral mission. For too long, we have interpreted these activities—evangelism and social action—by means of our limited frame of reference as 'activities of the church'. To use some UK based examples, we are either 'running a soup kitchen for the homeless', or we are 'doing evangelism' by running an Alpha course or preaching a particular kind of sermon. What we are not doing, however, is simply being the people of God. We have adopted the viewpoint of the strategic manager who is positioning his staff for maximum effect. Indeed, in our churches we even have the 'social action' team, and the 'evangelism' team—and we somehow conclude that because we have both, we are doing 'integral mission'. However,

⁹ Ramachandra, Vinoth, *What is Integral Mission?* available at: http://en.micahnetwork.org/integral_mission/resources/what_is_integral_mission_by_vinoth_ramachandra

as Tim Chester has said, 'The New Testament does not describe development projects or, for that matter, evangelistic initiatives. Its focus is on Christian communities, which are to be distinctive, caring and inclusive. Integral mission is about the church being the church.'¹⁰ Surely, it is time for a new approach and a new understanding.

What makes this interesting is that this new understanding is in fact an old one, and is one that was highlighted by John Stott some thirty years ago in the book published after the Lausanne congress, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*. Reflecting on his own change of understanding and in relation to the Great Commission, Stott wrote this: 'I now see more clearly that not only the consequences of the commission but the actual commission itself must be understood to include social as well as evangelistic responsibility, unless we are to be guilty of distorting the words of Jesus.'¹¹

Stott then moves on to draw attention to the Johannine version of the Great Commission in John 20:21: 'As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.' He makes the fairly obvious point that the character of our mission should be determined by the character of Christ, which he describes as one of 'service', 'authentic love' and 'sentness'.¹² He states that when we are characterised by a spirit of service expressed in love, and when, with that character, we find ourselves amongst

¹⁰ Tim Chester, 'Introducing Integral Mission' in Chester, *Justice, Mercy and Humility*, 8.

¹¹ John Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1975), 23.

¹² Stott, *Christian Mission*, 24ff.

those in need, then one consequence of being amongst them is that we will see what their needs are. We will observe their distress—in whatever form it takes. But this then is how love works itself out, as we relate what we have / are in the power of Christ to what this other person needs. He writes: ‘If I do not relate what I “have” to what I “see”, I cannot claim to be indwelt by the love of God.’¹³ And then he makes this very profound statement:

I may see spiritual need (sin, guilt, lostness) and have the gospel knowledge to meet it. Or the need I see may be disease or ignorance or bad housing, and I may have the medical, educational or social expertise to relieve it. To see need and to possess the remedy compels love to act, and whether the action will be evangelistic or social, or indeed political, depends on what we ‘see’ and what we ‘have’.¹⁴

All of this may not seem that significant or unusual, but actually it represents a paradigm shift in our thinking about evangelism and social action that has still not been entirely appropriated. For, according to Stott in these pages, the locus of evaluation is no longer the actions we are performing, and the results of those actions—the predominant ethical framework of the late 20th century. Rather, the locus of evaluation is the person doing the task. Do they have a Christ-like character? Do they display the virtues of love, humility, and service to which we are called?

One of the problems with the late twentieth century debates about evangelism and social action is that they have been paralysed by a utilitarian ethical framework in which the morality of our actions depends upon the consequences of those actions. According to such a framework—which we must not forget is fundamentally secular in origin—we evaluate what we do by its results. When applied to the evangelism/social action debate this means that evangelism becomes the only activity worthy of merit because only evangelism has eternal consequences.

In contrast, what Stott is doing is working with a virtue or deontological ethical framework. According to virtue ethics, the morality of an action is determined by whether they are motivated by the presence or absence of particular virtues. According to a deontological view, the most common Christian version of which is divine command theory, the morality of an action is determined by whether it is divinely ordained. Hence, on these paradigms, both evangelism and social action are equally necessary if they spring from the right virtues and are in response to God’s commands. The outcome of these actions does not determine their moral worth—as a utilitarian approach would dictate—it is rather their origin.

So, Stott writes:

To sum up, we are sent into the world, like Jesus, to serve. For this is the natural expression of our love for our neighbours. We love. We go. We serve. And in this we have (or should have) no ulterior motive. True, the gospel lacks visibility if we merely preach it, and

lacks credibility if we who preach it are interested only in souls and have no concern about the welfare of people’s bodies, situations and communities. Yet the reason for our acceptance of social responsibility is not primarily in order to give the gospel either a visibility or a credibility it would otherwise lack, but rather simple uncomplicated compassion. Love has no need to justify itself. It merely expresses itself in service wherever it sees need.¹⁵

As we have already seen this is precisely the conclusion that Ramachandra reached much more recently. For Ramachandra, the locus of evaluation is no longer the activity—Ramachandra speaks of ‘projects’—and the necessity of then deciding whether its evangelism or social action and how they relate, or which is important. Rather the locus of evaluation is the character of the whole person doing the action, the extent to which they are characterised by a spirit of love. Ramachandra calls this ‘alternative descriptions’, and I think what he is articulating here is simply the fact that what is required is an alternative ethical paradigm. Such a paradigm was always there for us in the Scriptures, but in the West at least we have missed it because our cultural blinders have hidden it from us.

Paul’s Integral Mission

Moreover, this is precisely the kind of approach that we find in the letters of Paul to the early churches. In those letters, we do not particularly see him

emphasizing their duty to go out and do ‘evangelism’, nor do we find him carping on about their welfare programs. And yet, both of these things are precisely what the early church was particularly effective in. They did go out and spread the word, and they were known for their care and compassion for the communities around them.¹⁶ Paul’s emphasis in letter after letter is simply this. ‘Be who you are in Christ.’

So, in Ephesians, the turning point of the letter is this: ‘I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received’ (Eph. 4:1). He has spent the previous three chapters spelling out in detail the wonderful salvation that is theirs in Christ, and the following three chapters are consumed with what this means in terms of practical obedience, and so the pivot is what we find in 4:1: ‘(B)ecause of all you are in Christ, go now and live in the light of that.’

A similar theme is evident in Romans, where repeatedly Paul’s mantra is that ‘now because God has done this, we should live like this’ (chapters 6 through 8, and 12 onwards). Similarly, in Colossians 3:12 Paul states, ‘Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.’ And again in Philippians 2:1: ‘If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.’

¹³ Stott, *Christian Mission*, 28.

¹⁴ Stott, *Christian Mission*, 28.

¹⁵ Stott, *Christian Mission*, 30.

¹⁶ See Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004).

Paul's strategy, then, in encouraging 'evangelism' and 'social action' was not so much to mention them, let alone spell out particular programs, but rather to encourage us to reflect on what it means that we are the children of God, and then encourage us to consider how that might work out in relation to those around us. If we think about it, this of course makes sense. The mission in which we are engaged is not *our* mission, but *God's* mission. Hence, it will be effective only if we understand our own identity in terms of God's identity. In God there is a perfect unity between words and deeds, character and action, and so to the extent that we are truly united to

Christ, our lives will similarly display a consistency between everything we are and do.

It is not *our* compassion that is relevant, but *God's* compassion flowing through us. It is not *our* evangelism or social action that matters, but *God's* work in the world exercised through us. That is why knowing who we are in Christ, reflecting on God's perfect character is what enables us to become integrated people. It is *Christ's* integral mission we join in rather than our own. Hence, it is not about dividing up particular *activities*, labelling them as one or the other, and then making sure we have a healthy mixture of both. Rather, it is about being the people of God in light of a world in need.

Holistic Mission Revisited: Theological insights from Argentina

David A. Roldán

KEYWORDS: *Integral mission, political theology, mission Dei, mega-church, education*

Míguez Bonino² and Richard Shaull were prominent theologians, and the Liberation Theology movement, where theologians such as Juan Luis Segundo,³ Gustavo Gutiérrez,⁴ Enrique

I Theoretical Backgrounds

In Argentina we have been talking about 'integral mission' since the 1980s, with the first (and main) publication of René Padilla,¹ and the various works of the Fraternidad Teológica Latinoamericana (FTL, Latin American Theological Fraternity). Although this was one of the most relevant contributions of FTL, it must be said that the biblical and theological foundations of this approach were inaugurated and developed in many cases in movements such as Iglesia y Sociedad en América Latina (ISAL, Church and Society in Latin America), where José

² José Míguez Bonino, *Christians and Marxists* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976); José Míguez Bonino, *Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975); José Míguez Bonino, *Toward a Christian Political Ethics* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983); Paul Davies, *Faith Seeking Effectiveness: The Missionary Theology of José Míguez Bonino* (Netherlands: Boekencentrum, 2006).

³ Some selected works are: Juan Luis Segundo, *¿Qué mundo? ¿Qué hombre? ¿Qué Dios?* (Santander: Sal Tarrae, 1993); Juan Luis Segundo, *El hombre de hoy ante Jesús de Nazaret* (Madrid: Cristiandad, 1982); Juan Luis Segundo, *Liberación de la teología* (Buenos Aires: Carlos Lohlé, 1975); Juan Luis Segundo, *Teología abierta para el laico adulto, 5 vols.* (Buenos Aires: Carlos Lohlé, 1968)

⁴ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Teología de la Liberación: perspectivas*, 15^o ed. (Salamanca: Sígueme [orig. 1971], 1994); Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Hablar de Dios desde el sufrimiento del inocente: Una*

¹ René Padilla, *Misión integral. Ensayos sobre el Reino y la Iglesia* (Buenos Aires: Nueva Creación, 1986).

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Dussel⁵ and José Porfirio Miranda⁶ were the 'founding fathers'. We could also look back to European Political Theologies, like those of Jürgen Moltmann and Johann Baptist Metz, or even the Social Gospel (of Rauschenbuch) and the German Neo-Kantian theologian Albrecht Ritschl from the XIX Century (and his concept of 'building the Kingdom of God on Earth').⁷

One of the main efforts to develop a new anthropological approach to the Bible and Christian Theology in Latin America was the set of three books of Enrique Dussel, written in the late 1960s.⁸ The books are: *El humanismo*

reflexión sobre el libro de Job (Lima: CEP, 1986); Gustavo Gutiérrez, *El Dios de la vida*, 3^o ed. (Lima: CEP, 2004); Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Beber en su propio pozo: en el itinerario espiritual de un pueblo* (Lima: CEP, 1983); Gustavo Gutiérrez, *La fuerza histórica de los pobres* (Lima: Centro de Estudios y Publicaciones, 1979).

5 Enrique Dussel, *Destrucción de la Cristiandad de Indias* (Salamanca: Sígueme, 1978); Enrique Dussel, *Ética comunitaria* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Paulinas, 1986); Enrique Dussel, *Las metáforas teológicas de Marx* (Caracas: Fundación Editorial El Perro y la Rana [orig. 1983], 2007); Enrique Dussel, *Religión* (México DF: Editorial Edicol, 1977); Enrique Dussel, *Teología de la Liberación y ética. Caminos de liberación latinoamericana, II* (Buenos Aires: Latinoamericana Libros, 1972).

6 José Porfirio Miranda, *Marx y la Biblia: crítica a la filosofía de la opresión* (Salamanca: Sígueme, 1972); José Porfirio Miranda, *El ser y el mesías* (Salamanca: Sígueme, 1973).

7 Albrecht Ritschl, *The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1902).

8 These books were prohibited by the dictatorial military government in Argentina when they were published. In a recent interview with him, Dussel told me that the three books of anthropology were the result of research in

semita (The Semite Humanism), *El humanismo helénico* (The Hellenistic Humanism) and *El dualismo antropológico de la Cristiandad* (The Anthropological Dualism in Christianity).⁹ In these books, Dussel demonstrates how the Hellenistic conception of the 'soul' over the 'body' was introduced into Christian anthropology, and then he claims to recover not only the unity of the person in the semitic concept of the human being, but also the Hebrew concept of *basar*, (flesh-hood, corporeality).¹⁰ Even though this analysis of Dussel—made in relation with his professor Paul Ricoeur in La Sorbonne, Paris—was scarcely known for many years, it represents a more satisfactory foundation for Integral Mission and Holistic mission than some other possibilities. As Hans Küng said, 'The problem of God is the problem of man, and the problem of man is the problem of God'.¹¹ To think about man in a dif-

1960. Enrique Dussel, 'Conversación sobre la actualidad de la teología y filosofía de la liberación (entrevista personal)', entrevista, México DF, February 15, 2008

9 Enrique Dussel, *El humanismo semita. Estructuras intencionales radicales del pueblo de Israel y otros semitas* (Buenos Aires: Eudeba, 1969); Enrique Dussel, *El humanismo helénico* (Buenos Aires: Eudeba, 1975); Enrique Dussel, *El dualismo en la antropología de la cristiandad. Desde los orígenes hasta antes de la conquista de América* (Buenos Aires: Guadalupe, 1974).

10 Later, Dussel made clear the relationship between the concepts of *Leiblichkeit* and *lebendige Arbeit*, and of Karl Marx in his main work, *Das Kapital*; Cf. Dussel, *Las metáforas teológicas de Marx*, 252, 264.

11 Hans Küng, *La encarnación de Dios. Introducción al pensamiento de Hegel como prolegómenos para una cristología futura*, trans. Jimeno Rufino (Barcelona: Herder, 1974), 14.

ferent way is to think about God in a different way, and his calling to a mission on earth.

II Mission concepts revisited

Since Johannes Verkuyl¹² and Charles van Engen¹³ taught us about *Missio Dei*, our understanding of the central role of God in *his* mission has changed forever. He wants to invite us to *his* mission on earth. Using Verkuyl's approach, van Engen summarises these classes of mission:

1. *Missio Dei*: the mission of God
2. *Missio Hominum*: God's missional use of human instruments
3. *Missiones Ecclesiarum*: God's many missions through the People of God
4. *Missio Política Oecumenica*: God's missional action in global civilization
5. *Missio Christi*: God's messianic mission through Jesus Christ
6. *Missio Spiritu Sancti*: God's mission through the Holy Spirit
7. *Missio Futurum/Adventus*: God's 'already/not yet' Kingdom mission in predictable future and through the surprising advent.¹⁴

Let me share some reflections about holistic mission in Argentina under

12 J. Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology*, trans. Dale Cooper (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978).

13 Carlos van Engen, *El pueblo misionero de Dios* (Grand Rapids: Libros Desafío, 2004); Charles van Engen, *Mission on the Way: Issues in Mission Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996).

14 These are categories that van Engen uses in his courses in the PhD program called PRODOLA (Latin American Doctoral Program).

some of these categories.

In relation to *Missio Hominum* we may recognize that God is using people to increase his Kingdom through 'mega-churches' (churches of 20,000 people or more) and through Pentecostal pastors such as Carlos Annandonia, Claudio Freidzon, Osvaldo Carníval, Bernardo Stamateas and Guillermo Prein. We could also recognize here other categories like *Missiones Ecclesiarum* and *Missio Spiritu Sancti*. This model of mission and the practice of sharing the gospel by increasing local churches was prominent from 1980 to the first years of the twenty-first century. However, we can now identify some concerns with this 'hegemonic model'. Even though one of the most important church associations of Argentina (called ACIERA) follows this model of mission and ministry, there are other models that could offer useful insights gained through many years of refinement, as seen in the experiences of the Protestant churches generally. Unfortunately, the problems are not simple; the Protestant model has deficiencies too.

The hegemonic model has the following problems: First, the ministry is centred on an individual, not in the community; next, concern about the soul is much greater than the concern about the bodily and material aspects of life; finally, psychological problems are the centre of care (mainly in Bernardo Stamateas' model of ministry), and the gospel is offered mainly to solve psychological problems—along the lines of what might be called 'self-help', and 'self-care'. One important contradiction in this hegemonic model must be stated clearly: even though we talk a lot about self-help or

self-care, it has nothing to do with developing the autonomy of individuals but instead pastoral ministry is carried out in an authoritarian manner. The people in these churches live subject to the will of the pastor.¹⁵

The excessive authoritarianism which characterizes the hegemonic model provokes some people to leave these mega-churches, most with bad feelings about future engagement with other local churches. This exodus signals a problem in this style of ministry. It is not holistic, nor concerned for the whole person, and it is not concerned to invest in the development of the person as a disciple of Christ. This should be a serious concern of the 'holistic mission': to care for people abused in 'mega churches'. This is one of the key issues in redefining mission in the Presbyterian Church of Argentina (San Andrés), and other churches, like the Mennonite and some Baptist churches.

III Choices in the way of transforming reality

Not all the aspects with hegemonic model are bad; there are some things

¹⁵ Cf. Hilario Wynarczyk et al., 'Héctor Aníbal Giménez y Carlos Annacondia', in *Nuevos movimientos religiosos y ciencias sociales* (Buenos Aires: CEAL, 1993), 49-96; Pablo Semán, 'Los filtros populares en la recepción de la Teología de la Prosperidad', in *XXII Reunión Anual de ANPOCS* (Caxambu: Mimeo, 1998); Pablo Semán, 'La recepción popular de la teología de la prosperidad', *Scripta Ethnológica* XXIII (2001): 145-162; In Sik Hong, *Vino nuevo en odres nuevos: la búsqueda de las pautas misiológicas ante los desafíos posmodernos (estudio de campo de la Iglesia Evangélica Bautista del Centro)* (Buenos Aires: Tesis Doctoral, ISEDET, 1999).

that the people (and pastors) of this model are doing well. In saying this, I am rejecting parts of the theory of Jean-Pierre Bastian who is one of the most important scholars in Protestant contemporary history in Latin America.¹⁶ But the principal interest of my reflections is the problem of time and history. Philosophically stated by Wilhelm Dilthey, Martin Heidegger, Ernst Bloch, Hannah Arendt and Paul Ricoeur, the key problem of human actions is the problem of time, the historical condition of our existence, and the necessity to objectify our subjectivity.¹⁷

In this approach, symbolic reality and the objectification of our beliefs are central, mainly in institutional

¹⁶ Jean Pierre Bastian, *La Mutación Religiosa en América Latina* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1997); Jean Pierre Bastian, *Historia del protestantismo en América Latina*, 2° ed. (México: Ediciones CUPSA, 1990). The Swedish scholar, Jean Pierre Bastian, recently received the prestigious Carnahan Chair at ISEDET; we do not see evolution in his research in last 15 years; there is some lack of update, mainly in Pentecostal approach, but also in new sociological approaches, like Michael Löwy's work, *Guerra de Dioses. Religión y política en América Latina*, trad. Josefina Anaya (México DF: Siglo XXI, 1999). Our reflections try to enrich Bastian's approach, and that of his colleague, our friend, Norman Rubén Amestoy.

¹⁷ The well known sociologist Peter Berger explains this theory, under the influence of Husserl's phenomenology, and his fellows Martin Heidegger and Alferd Schutz; Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise on the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Anchor Books, 1966); Spanish translation, *La construcción social de la realidad*, trad. Néstor Míguez, 14° ed. (Buenos Aires: Amorrortu, 1968), 52 ff.

spheres. According to this view, the way we share our faith and the gospel in the public sphere is a key issue. Some Pentecostal pastors, like Claudio Freidzon, seeing this lack in his ministry—or a general lack in Pentecostal ministry in Argentina—started a process to create a Christian university. This is an important sign that we must recognize in theological reflection about holistic mission which scholars like Bastian are not watching: relevant impact on Argentinean society will be done through institutional efforts.

At the popular level in Argentinean society, it is true that Catholic people and institutions are taken seriously; the same can be said for the Adventist Church,¹⁸ as well as Jewish people and institutions. However, everybody knows that the evangelical movement, its pastors and its institutions are not taken seriously. As my father, Alberto, says, today if a pastor has a bad pronunciation of verbs, the people don't care about what he is saying. In other words, after 30 years of a revival led by Pentecostal Churches—and the growing mega-church model—now the form (how we do the things, and how we say the things) is as relevant as the content (what we do or say).

We need to make a distinction between how people relate to other individuals (as persons), *prochain*, and how they relate to others in their social or institutional function, *socius*. In this vein, if we look back to philosophers

like Hannah Arendt¹⁹ and Paul Ricoeur,²⁰ we can be challenged to think seriously in regard to our institutional commitment. The 'short' relation with the other (the second person, 'you') does not exclude the 'long' relationship with the other as that one represents a social role (frequently in the third person, 'he'). And Ricoeur—the Protestant philosopher—has the courage to say that love, *caritas*, can be expressed not only in short relationship (*vis-à-vis*, face to face), but through institutions!²¹

IV The Importance of the Education

Summarising my position, I suggest the following thoughts to increase the integral value of the whole person in the ministry:

As Plato indicated, the key to transform future is the *paideia*, the educational movement of founding a new kind of society. As Werner Jaeger said,

¹⁹ I want to emphasize her apology for the 'public and political sphere' over the existential project of Martin Heidegger, in Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1958); Hannah Arendt, *The Life of Mind* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978). Her remarks against the failure of existentialism must be applied also to theology.

²⁰ In most of his work, but especially in the article 'El yo, el tú y la institución', in Paul Ricoeur, *Educación y política* (Buenos Aires: Docencia, 1984).

²¹ Paul Ricoeur, 'El socius y el prójimo,' in *Política, sociedad e historicidad*, trans. Néstor Corona, Ricardo García, and Mauricio Prelooker (Buenos Aires: Docencia, 1986), 33-44.

¹⁸ They have one of the most important universities outside of Buenos Aires city, in Entre Ríos.

Plato thought that the goal was to build the ideal State into the soul of future rulers.²² Even with a critical approach to Hellenistic anthropology (for example, with Dussel), we cannot reject the idea of building a better society through the education of young people, as Psalm 37:31 suggests: 'The law of his God is in his heart; his feet do not slip'. So, holistic mission must have in mind how to educate young people. In Argentina, we must start to think in increments of 5, 10 and 20 years' time. We are not doing that now, but some hopeful signs are beginning to emerge.

Religious experience needs to be communicated well to young people. We must recognize that all religious experiences are expressed in some kind of language; and religious experience is articulated in symbolic language.²³ So, we must pay attention not only to *what* we do, but *how* we do it: educational formation of our leadership is crucial here. The problem of how we communicate a religious experience, the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ, is related to our historical conditions as human beings. Here in

²² Werner Jaeger, *Paideia. Los ideales de la cultura griega. Tomo II*, trans. Joaquín Xirau (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1942), 446.

²³ Paul Ricoeur, *Finitude et Culpabilité. II La symbolique du mal* (Paris: Aubier—Éditions Montaigne, 1960), 11 ss, 323 ss; Paul Ricoeur, *Fe y Filosofía: problemas del lenguaje religioso*, trans. Juan Carlos Gorlier and Néstor Corona (Buenos Aires: Docencia—Almagesto, 1990); José Severino Croatto, *Los lenguajes de la experiencia religiosa. Estudio de fenomenología de la religión* (Buenos Aires: Docencia, 1994), 35 ff.

Argentina, even people like me, growing up in the early 1990s, are being challenged to make our language and symbols accessible to young people. For example, young people do not pay attention to a sermon if it exceeds 20 minutes (or even worse: they don't pay attention at all).

V The Gospel in the Public Sphere

Today, in the twenty-first century, many Pentecostal pastors and leaders of mega-churches think that 'reason' is opposed to 'spiritual action' or 'faith'. I cannot reproduce other works here, but there are several models of articulating faith and reason in a more constructive way.²⁴ In these models, categories like *Missio Política Oecumenica*, *Missio Christi* and *Missio Futurum/Adventus* become central. In regard to *Missio Política Oecumenica* we, in Argentina, must learn how to develop a better way of sharing the gospel in the public sphere. Even when some efforts are made through an evangelical political party, or when some political officials are evangelical, the problem still is the 'public theological discourse'. In many cases, these evangelical brothers that represent evangelicals in the public sphere do not respect personal freedom of conscience or do not reject manipulation of people. The traditional Latin American concept of '*clientelismo político*' (political patronage, the ability of political actors to have uncondi-

²⁴ David A. Roldán, 'Modelos históricos de articulación entre la fe y la razón,' *Mnesis* 2 (2006): 111-114; and *Teología y cultura* 6 (2006): 47-56.

tional support from their constituents) is often a reality in evangelical churches or in pastoral leadership. So, non-evangelical political actors find evangelical leadership 'a good target' (because they may represent many votes).

VI The Gospel in the Church

In relation to *Missio Christi*, the challenge is to know the consequences of the 'historical Jesus' in Christology. The pastor may not be able to take on any longer 'a messianic role'. Rediscovering the historical Jesus can challenge the pastoral abuse of power in many evangelical communities: humility, power-service leadership, rejecting the popular acceptance of seeking the first places (Mark 10). Today, in Argentina, we can say that pastoral abuse of power is an obstacle to holistic mission. Many people cannot receive pastoral care because they have been abused by their pastors,²⁵ or because they assume there are no other options. In Argentina, if we were able to incorporate the theological reflection of the historical Jesus in our pastoral role, our preaching would be different and better (challenging our people to a deep change in leadership and in society at large).

²⁵ In these subjects, we have to learn from theories like Leonardo Boff, *Igreja: carisma e poder. Ensaio de Eclesiologia militante* (San Pablo: Editora Ática, 1994); Jon Sobrino, *Jesus in Latin America* (Eugene OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2004); Jon Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth*, trans. Paul Burns and Francis McDonagh (Maryknoll NY: Hyperion Books, 1993); Jon Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation: Toward Political Holiness* (Orbis Books, 1988).

With this we arrive at the final point of my argument: knowing the limits of the minister, pastor or local church. In most of the books concerning integral mission, the question about the social responsibility of the church is central, but it is based on a misunderstanding: in the context of Modernity and the Enlightenment, the State has the function of guaranteeing social justice or social welfare. Only when it fails to work does the church intervene. According to this conception, the main task of the church is to challenge the State to fulfil its commitment, because our main activity, as the church, is to preach the gospel. In contrast to this idea, we can learn from Liberation Theology, that it is necessary also to have a good political theology; we can also learn from Karl Barth that our main responsibility is to preach a transforming gospel.²⁶

The choice we have to confront in holistic mission is this: either we try to get as many people into heaven, despite manipulation and power abuse, or we try to make disciples who are able to have autonomy and real freedom. Freedom is not the main subject of our preaching in our churches. Nonetheless, we have to think of ways to make it happen.

²⁶ To try to find a possible relationship between these two different traditions is part of my theological project. A beginning can be read in David A. Roldán, *Teología crítica de la Liberación. A propósito de Iván Petrella* (Buenos Aires: Mimeo, 2008). The task is to find a way to articulate a relevant theological discourse in the realm of 'interiority' (Barth and existentialist tradition) and 'exteriority' (Marxism, political theology and Liberation Theology).

Evangelicals and Catholics Together? Issues and Prospects for Dialogue and Common Witness in Lowland Philippines

Timoteo Gener

KEYWORDS: *Fundamentalism, evangelicalism, charismatics, compromise, cooperation, dialogue, separatism, salvation, authority*

THERE IS TRADITIONALLY a divide between Catholics and Protestants [in the Philippines]. This has been lessened by ecumenical relations between liberal elements of both. Among Protestants of the evangelical type, Catholicism is still viewed as virtually irredeemable.¹

In Manila, the walls between Protestants and Catholics are slowly crumbling, but they must come down more rapidly. It requires a unity strong enough to engage the whole population.... If cities with their burgeoning population are to be served, the church, the Body of Christ,

1 Lorenzo Bautista, 'The Church in the Philippines' in Saphir Athyal (ed.), *The Church in Asia Today* (Singapore: Asia Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, 1996), 198.

Evangelicals and Catholics, must unite and bring together entire cities.²

As a young pastor and theological student in the late 1980s, struggling to make sense of my Fundamentalist Evangelical heritage, yet somehow drawn to the theological renewal in post-Vatican II Catholicism,³ one of the things that encouraged me to engage critically with the new developments in Philippine Catholicism (especially, inculturation and liberation) was the example of irenic dialogue shown by

2 Lorissa Socorro Acorda de Boer, 'Creative Planning for Urban Transformation: The Experience of National Coalition for Urban Transformation' (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Southeast Asia Interdisciplinary Development Studies, Antipolo, Rizal, April 2000), 15-16.

3 I was born an evangelical. My parents were two of the first Baptist converts in our town. On my pilgrimage as an evangelical, see Gener, 'Reimagining Conversion in Lowland Philippine Setting: The Perspective of Gospel Re-rooting', in *Journal of Asian Mission* 3/1 (2001), 53-56.

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the Evangelical-Roman Catholic Dialogue on Mission (ERCDOM) spearheaded by John Stott.⁴ The Evangelical movement was not monolithic, after all, in its assessment of Roman Catholicism.⁵ I could go beyond the prevailing stereotypical, rejectionist stance toward Catholicism. Dialogue was also a worthy option to take. While in the Philippines the general mood among Evangelicals was one of suspicion and judgmentalism toward the Catholic Church, it was refreshing to see in the ERCDOM an impetus for genuine dialogue and cooperation between the two churches. Within such a framework, church unity negotiations were not the goal, but rather mutual understanding and common ground in pursuit of obedience to Jesus Christ and his mission in the world.⁶

In this paper, I will revisit the relationship between Philippine Evangelicals and Roman Catholics with a view toward deeper dialogue and understanding. Here I make use of the term 'Evangelical' primarily in an institutional sense of referring to Protestant

4 Cf. Basil Meeking and John Stott, *Evangelical-Roman Catholic Dialogue on Mission* (1977-1984) (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986). The document is also available in W. G. Rusch and J. Gros (eds.), *Deepening Communion: International Documents with Roman Catholic Participation* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1998), 425-78. According to Timothy Dudley-Smith, aside from Stott, there were two others who conceptualized the ERCDOM: Msgr. Basil Meeking and David Hubbard [John Stott: *A Global Ministry* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2001), 207].

5 Note that I use the qualifiers 'Philippine' and 'Filipino' interchangeably.

6 W. Rusch and J. Gros (eds.), *Deepening Communion*, 429-30.

groups in the Philippines that identify themselves as such, but especially focusing on the churches that belong to the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches. I hope to go beyond the lingering impasse between Filipino Roman Catholics and Evangelicals. In the spirit of ERCDOM, I will aim for dialogue understood here as having a threefold agenda: (1) *witnessing to* others and pointing them to Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour of the world (2) *cooperating with* them for the health and transformation of society, and (3) *learning from* them on issues of public life and spiritual matters.⁷ Note, however, that included in such dialogical posture is a missional perspective which in reality is an evangelical commitment—witnessing to Christ—that could revitalize institutional Evangelicalism.⁸

To redirect evangelical attitudes on dialogue vis-à-vis Catholicism, I will begin with a retelling of the history of the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches (PCEC) through the eyes of Agustin Vencer Jr., formerly PCEC General Secretary and World Evangelical Fellowship (WEF, now World Evangelical Alliance) International Director. This will form the bulk of the first section.⁹ In the succeeding section, I will enumerate the major issues Evangelicals raise against Roman Catholicism. Finally, I will employ a

7 See my 'What Evangelicals Can Learn from Folk Catholicism: *The El Shaddai* as a Test Case', in E. Acoba et al, *Naming the Unknown God* (Mandaluyong: OMF Literature 2006).

8 On this point, see the Conclusion.

9 I have preferred to use Vencer's account because it highlights the challenges of Christian unity in PCEC life and history.

recent typology of Evangelical attitudes toward Catholicism to uncover the range of contemporary responses that may be found.

I Philippine Evangelicals

As a religious group, Evangelical Christians are generally known through the banner of the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches (PCEC).¹⁰ According to its National Director, Bishop Efraim Tendero: 'The Council is the largest network of Evangelicals in the country with 65 denominations, 130 missions organizations, and more than 20,000 local churches.'¹¹ While the Roman Catholic Church remains the dominant religion in the country, in a country of about 90 million people, recent estimates show Evangelicals numbering about 10% of the total population.¹²

¹⁰ The Mainline Protestants have a separate council formed in 1963 known as the National Council of Churches of the Philippines.

¹¹ 'Evangelical churches urge vigilance in May 2007 elections,' *The Manila Bulletin* Friday, March 23, 2007. Available online <http://www.mb.com.ph/issues/2007/03/23/MAN2007032390272.html> (accessed 23 March 2007). According to the National Statistics Office, however, based on the official May 2000 census of the Philippines, while Roman Catholics number about 81.04% of the population, Evangelicals and Protestants constitute a combined total of 6.5%. See Manfred Kohl, *The Church in the Philippines, A Research Project with Special Emphasis on Theological Education* (Mandaluyong City: OMF Literature, 2005), 12.

¹² The Philippines was Spain's colony for three hundred and fifty years, followed by forty five years under American rule, and three ravaging years under the Japanese Military occupation.

Established in July 1965 through a National Assembly of 73 delegates from different Protestant churches, the original name of PCEC was Philippine Council of *Fundamental Evangelical Churches* (PCFEC). The starting member-churches were pioneered just after the Japanese occupation (1942-45), mainly by 'faith missions' from North America and thus, forming younger Protestant denominations. One can say that the formation of this council of churches paralleled the earlier establishment of the National Association of Evangelicals in the United States.¹³

The joining of the qualifiers 'Fundamental' and 'Evangelical' in PCFEC was part of an effort to unify Fundamentalists and Evangelicals together into one Christian body. 'The members were aware of the historic and theological differences but they prudently avoided the issues that would have divided them, and explored the areas that would unite the group.' It was an experiment that would last only very briefly. In the Second PCFEC General Assembly held on 1 May 1968, a schism took place precisely on the issue of dropping either 'Fundamental' or 'Evangelical' in the name of the Council. Here is how Vencer described the event:

Rev. Fred Magbanua, then president of the Philippine Council of Fundamental Evangelical Churches (PCFEC), described the issues in a question: 'Will PCFEC be a

¹³ The National Association of Evangelicals in the United States was established in 1942. A brief history of the NAE is available online: URL <http://www.nae.net/index.cfm?FUSEACTION=nae.history>.

Fundamentalist separatist Council of an Evangelical ecumenicity?'...In his address to the General Assembly on May 1, 1968, Rev. Magbanua made clear the position of the Evangelical camp when he said, 'We are seeking for a "oneness" that will enable its member bodies to more effectively proclaim the Gospel message.' It was not just oneness in proclamation but also in social ministries. It could be that the 1966 Wheaton Congress of the Church's Worldwide Mission influenced the outcome. Many of the delegates were related to the Denominations and Mission Organizations that met in Wheaton. The Congress also reaffirmed the call for confessional cooperation, commitment to evangelism and mission, and recognition of social concerns as a biblical ministry. The Assembly voted unanimously to retain the term 'Evangelical'.¹⁴

Thus, the label 'Fundamental' was dropped, setting the stage for a more open evangelicalism: away from being a 'separatist Council' to one of 'Evangelical ecumenicity'.¹⁵

1 Versus Separatism and Liberalism

It might be useful at the outset to recall the separatism and liberalism that PCEC rejected at its beginnings. Aside

¹⁴ Agustin Vencer, 'The Evangelicals in the Philippines: A Brief History of the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches' Part II, in *Evangelicals Today & Asia Ministries Digest*, Vol. 2 No. 9 (September 1994), 17.

¹⁵ Vencer, 'The Evangelicals'.

from identifying the particular newness of Philippine Evangelicalism vis-à-vis Fundamentalism and Liberalism, this proffers a window for dialogue especially with Roman Catholics.

Separatism was a stance that could not tolerate differences in doctrine, even in the non-essentials of the faith. For instance, while Evangelicals would find Billy Graham as a worthy representative, Fundamentalists find his views objectionable. For, according to them,

[Billy Graham] has been a catalyst in bringing together Liberals [by 'Liberals' are included members of the National council of Churches and Roman Catholics] and Evangelicals... [And these] alliances and fellowships [are] essentially unscriptural and dishonouring to God.¹⁶

Not surprisingly, because of such rigid separatism, Fundamentalists find it hard uniting even among themselves.¹⁷

In terms of its outlook on socio-cultural issues, the Fundamentalist lost interest in, and even became suspicious of, global and ecumenical efforts toward unity and peace (e.g., United Nations, improvement of labour relations, or the solving of cultural/ethnic conflicts). A silence concerning social injustice among Fundamentalists is noticeable. They often stress the vertical relationship of man-to-God to the neglect of the horizontal relationship

¹⁶ Rev. Fred Magbanua used these distinctions, Vencer, 'The Evangelicals'.

¹⁷ Bautista, 'The Church in the Philippines', 198.

of humankind, especially in relation to social transformation.¹⁸

Philippine Evangelicals rejected separatism early on. They have also stood against liberalism perceived to be prevalent within the mainline churches. Indeed, Vencer sees the formation of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP) and its membership in the World Council of Churches (WCC) as a crucial background to the development of Evangelicalism in the Philippines.

Liberalism happens when the church blends in or accommodates (uncritically) to values and practices of culture and society, even though they are unbiblical. The church may then simply mirror already existing cultural beliefs and practices, without challenging them biblically. We can cite two examples of the kind of liberalism that evangelical Christians (including Philippine Evangelicals) often reject. One group of Christians, often from among mainline churches, would tend toward reducing the gospel to a moral program of social betterment and brotherhood with its centre in the example of the man Jesus, rather than the proclamation of the earth-shaking fact that God has come in the person of Jesus Christ ushering in the new creation. For other churches, the uncritical synthesis happens when tradition or reason becomes the supreme authority rather than the Bible. Philippine Evangelicals often criticize traditional Roman Catholicism precisely on this point. For the Roman Church, tradition has become a source that has been made equal to the Bible. The teachings of the Roman Church are defended and justified even if they are not found in the Scriptures. The unbib-

lical emphases on the assumption of Mary into heaven and the Immaculate Conception remain long-standing inflexible dogmas existing alongside their admission that these are not taught in Scripture. Church tradition overpowers the witness of the Bible.¹⁹

In sum, while Philippine Evangelicals were committed to the proclamation and embodiment of the gospel, they were critical of prevailing practices and theologies which lead to separatism and liberalism. These excesses are rejected but an exclusivist stance on salvation through Christ alone remains as a primary distinctive. Vencer puts it this way: 'The Evangelicals rejected the Catholic concept of salvation by good work, the Liberal's social gospel and the Fundamentalists' sectarianism. They also took issue with the Dispensationalist's position that the world is going to get worse and therefore a Christian's sole duty is to preach the Gospel.'²⁰ It remains to be seen if PCEC will move toward greater emphasis on holistic mission and evangelical ecumenicity. The perception remains that PCEC is more evangelistic than holistic and ecumenical in its thrusts.²¹ Be that as it

¹⁸ Bautista, 'The Church in the Philippines,' 198.

¹⁹ Cf. Adonis Gorospe, 'Towards an Evangelical Protestant Mariology', *Phronesis* 11 (2) 2004: 68-78.

²⁰ Vencer, 'The Evangelicals in the Philippines' Part III, *Evangelicals Today & Asia Ministry Digest*, October 1994, 27. For an introduction to Dispensationalism, see Michael Vlach, 'What is Dispensationalism?' Available online <http://www.theologicalstudies.org/dispen.html> (accessed 30 May 2007).

may, its history shows the way from a separatist outlook towards an openness to mission in unity.

2 Evangelicals as Fundamentalists? Clarifying a Misunderstanding

While in the 1980s ERCDOM opened new doors for mutual respect and understanding between the two churches, during that same period, Philippine Roman Catholicism was on the offensive against Fundamentalist Protestants. Unfortunately, this has affected recent Roman Catholic views on Evangelicalism as a whole.

The publication of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), *Guidelines on Fundamentalism* in 1989 sent shockwaves to the Evangelical front.²² It opened the door to greater suspicion and even persecution of evangelical Christians (in some Catholic schools and universities).²³ While as a rule the *Guidelines* did not equate Fundamentalists with Evangelical Christians and even noted some PCEC individuals initiating conversations with Roman Catholic leaders on a

semi-official basis, it stated quite explicitly that 'several members of the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches (PCEC) are either fundamentalist or strongly leaning towards Fundamentalism'.²⁴ It went on to lump together Youth for Christ, Campus Crusade for Christ, Inter-Varsity, Teen Challenge and the Navigators as fundamentalist youth organizations that were deceiving Catholic young people to convert to a fundamentalist faith.²⁵

It is true that there are PCEC member-churches which are either fundamentalist or strongly leaning towards Fundamentalism. But as we have seen through its history, PCEC stood its ground against radical fundamentalists who are rigid separatists and likewise dissociated itself from churches that have catapulted to theological liberalism. Regrettably, while the *Guidelines* were quick to point out the presence of fundamentalist-leaning churches within PCEC, it was weak in acknowledging evangelical diversity within the Council. The diversity within Evangelicalism was never explored, much less identified in the *Guidelines*. One could argue, indeed, that even within PCEC and the wider evangelical movement in the country, there are other kinds of Evangelicals aside from Fundamentalist-Evangelicals.²⁶ These other groups would be wary of being labelled Funda-

²¹ Personal Conversation with Bishop Cesar Punzalan, PCEC Vice Chairman, 12 June 2007.

²² Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, *Catholic Guidelines on Fundamentalism* (Manila: CBCP, 1989).

²³ In the early 1990s, many 'born-again evangelical' students were not allowed to enroll in Roman Catholic universities in Metro Manila because they had openly declared their religious affiliation as Evangelicals. In a recent conversation, I was told by a colleague in the Seminary (Dr. George Capaque) that up to now many Catholic universities abide by these *Guidelines* in dealing with evangelical youth organizations.

²⁴ *Catholic Guidelines*, 15.

²⁵ *Catholic Guidelines*, 16.

²⁶ Note too that even within Fundamentalist Evangelicalism, there are both separatist and open groups of fundamentalists. See Rodrigo Tano, *This Complicated and Risky Task: Selected Essays on Doing Contextual Theology from a Filipino Evangelical Perspective*, Romel Regalado Bagares (ed.) (Quezon City, Philippines: Central Books, 2006), 266.

mentalists: Justice and Peace Evangelicals, New (Progressive) Evangelicals and Ecumenical Evangelicals.²⁷ The unsatisfactory portrayal of evangelical diversity in CBCP's *Guidelines* can be seen further in its somewhat careless labelling of key evangelical youth organizations as Fundamentalists. Most, if not all, of these youth organizations do not identify themselves as such.

Interestingly, a close reading of the celebrated 1997 *Catechism for Filipino Catholics* (CFC) shows that the Catholic misunderstandings about Filipino Evangelicals remain unchecked. The CFC frequently uses the term 'Fundamentalist' and its cognates instead of Evangelical. The Glossary does not even contain entries for terms such as 'Born Again,' 'Charismatic' or 'Evangelical.'²⁸ If ever the Roman Catholic Church would initiate formal dialogue with Philippine Evangelicals, this misunderstanding must be addressed and rectified by its leadership.

²⁷ I have adopted these varieties of evangelicalism from Gabriel Fackre, *Ecumenical Faith in Evangelical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 22-23. For instance, the Institute for Christian Studies (ISACC) is a PCEC member-body strongly oriented to justice and peace advocacies. On the list of various PCEC member-bodies, see *Evangelicals Today*. Special Centennial Issue. Vol. 25 (4) August-September 1998, 84-100. For a related typology of contemporary evangelicalism drawn from Robert Webber, see Rodrigo Tano, *This Complicated and Risky Task*, 264-67.

²⁸ Ernest Manges, 'Using *The Catechism for Filipino Catholics* in the Evangelical Seminary Classroom,' in E. Acoba et al., *Doing Theology in the Philippines* (Mandaluyong City: OMF Literature, 2005), 215.

II Evangelical Issues with Roman Catholicism

The disagreements are mainly theological or doctrinal, and they can be traced back to the Protestant Reformers' assessment of Roman Catholicism.²⁹ (As we will see, however, they seem to go deeper than the theological because of the imposing presence of the Roman Catholic Church in the country.) They are:

- Of equal authority: the Bible and tradition. In Roman Catholicism the Bible and tradition have equal weight as sources of revelation. While Evangelicals do not deny the existence or value of tradition, they do not view the two as equal sources of revelation. For them, when the Scriptures and tradition come into conflict, the authority of the Scriptures is given pre-eminence. An example here is the doctrine of the purgatory.
- Good works as the means of salvation. Evangelicals claimed that while the Reformers insisted on salvation by grace through faith in Christ Jesus, salvation for the Roman Catholic continues to be through the Church and Sacraments. Baptism is still the means of entrance to the Church. The practice of indulgences is still a church-sanctioned system.
- Papal Infallibility. On the basis of Jesus' words to Peter in Matthew 16:18, Roman Catholicism has

²⁹ The doctrinal points that follow are drawn mainly from Vencer's 'The Evangelicals in the Philippines' Part II, *Evangelicals Today & Asia Ministry Digest*, September 1994, 15-16.

made Peter the first Bishop of Rome and from him, the authority was passed on to the other bishops in a hierarchical manner. Rome then became the geographical centre of the faith and the Roman See could utter judgments infallibly while sitting on the chair of St. Peter.

- The role of the Virgin Mary. For Evangelicals, the veneration of Mary becomes her deification in the teachings and practices of Roman Catholicism. Mary is known as the Mediatrix. She was viewed as sinless—she was immaculately conceived. She also did not die. Instead she had a bodily assumption. While Protestants insist on honouring Mary as the mother of Jesus and as a model for discipleship, they reject the deification of Mary in the Roman Catholic Church.

In all of the above theological issues, a standard reference often used by evangelical leaders and pastors is the work of Anthony Pezzotta, a former Salesian priest turned evangelical who still works in the country as a Baptist missionary.³⁰ It is good to have a handy, accessible reference such as Pezzotta's—one that clearly defends Evangelical faith vis-à-vis RC—but in a way, this reveals a major weakness within PCEC. With its more than forty years of existence, and equipped with its own Theological Commission, PCEC has not really gone deeper to re-

examine Roman Catholicism in light of the changes brought about by Vatican II. It has not taken stock also of the gains of the many intra-Christian dialogues between Protestant (Mainline, Evangelicals, Pentecostals) and the RC in the last thirty years.³¹

Yet the problem does not lie simply on the theological or doctrinal plane. Evangelical disagreements with Roman Catholicism become coloured with the religio-political because of the position of dominance and institutional privilege enjoyed by Roman Catholicism over any other religion in the country. Here is how this plays out in everyday practices. This is from my personal experience.

Every waking hour, before six o'clock, I can hear the voice of the liturgist or the priest from the nearby Roman Catholic chapel even if the chapel is about five hundred metres away from our house. Why so? Because the church employs two loudspeakers to publicly broadcast every liturgical celebration of the Mass. This is an acceptable

³¹ This has been confirmed to me by Bishop Cesar Punzalan, Vice Chairman of the PCEC Board of Trustees. Personal Conversation with the Author, 12 June 2007. As an introduction to new developments in Evangelical-Roman Catholic dialogue, I find most helpful John A. Radano's 'International Dialogue Between Catholics and Evangelicals Since the Second Vatican Council,' in *That the Word May Believe*, M. W. Goheen and M. O'Gara (eds.) (Lanham, MD: UPA, 2006), 173-85. See also the relevant documents in W.G. Rusch and J. Gros (eds.), *Deepening Communion: International Ecumenical Documents with Roman Catholic Participation* (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1998) and Noll and Nystrom, *Is the Reformation Over?*

³⁰ *Truth Encounter: Catholicism and the Holy Scriptures*. 2nd Edition, with a foreword by Agustin Vencer Jr. (Makati City: Foreign Mission Board, SBC), 1999.

practice throughout the country and to complain about it would only irk the local officials, who are mostly Roman Catholics. I feel powerless that I could not change such practice. But I feel all the more for my sister-in-law and her family who live just across the road from the chapel itself!

Thus, the suspicion that the Roman Catholic Church would simply exert its power and dominance, and not really listen to the voices of the 'other' (in this case, Evangelicals and Pentecostals) is not unwarranted. Such imposing, even domineering, presence could be felt in the inaccurate labelling of evangelical youth groups as Fundamentalists, which could lead to their potential exclusion from Catholic schools and universities. Or this un-dialogical posture can be felt in a recent complaint by an Evangelical against the labelling of Evangelicals as Fundamentalists: 'When I discussed this with the faculty [of a Catholic Seminary], they were quite surprised that evangelicals would object to being called "Fundamentalist".'³²

III From Antagonism to Partnership

What are the prospects for dialogue if Evangelicals generally view Catholicism as 'virtually irredeemable' and if traditional Catholics see Evangelicalism as tantamount to Fundamentalism?³³ At first glance, the gap seems

unbridgeable. But there are fresh initiatives on the ground, which chart new paths for rapprochement. I will explore these initiatives through the use of Noll and Nystrom's recent typology. While Noll and Nystrom developed this with specifically the U.S. churches in mind, the typology helps us to identify actual Evangelical attitudes to Catholicism 'on the ground'. It uncovers ecumenical impulses 'from below' beyond the basic strategy of the more formal (doctrinal) dialogues. In this way, too, we hope to refocus the encounter beyond doctrinal differences toward building up Christian ecumenical *practices* of dialogue, mutuality, and common witness.

According to Noll and Nystrom, evangelical responses to the Catholic church vary from antagonism to moderate criticism to partnership and, finally, to one of conversion.³⁴ The *first* attitude (antagonism) is one of total rejection of Catholicism, exemplified by, among others, Jack Chick of the infamous *Alberto* comics. The *second* reaction is that of moderate criticism, represented by critics of the 'Evangelicals and Catholics Together' (ECT I) document published in 1994.³⁵ This stance reckons with the (positive) changes in Roman Catholic since Vatican II but remains sceptical about engagement with Catholics. The *third* approach, though aware of theological differences, moves beyond being a critic toward partnering with Roman

Catholics on several fronts: socio-political advocacies (also known as 'co-belligerency' or 'ecumenism of the trenches'), advancing orthodoxy or 'mere Christianity', ecclesial continuity with pre-Reformation Christian roots, ministry and mission, and spiritual formation. This is represented by the signers of the ECT I document, which included Charles Colson and Bill Bright. The *final* attitude is one of conversion, of Evangelicals making the next big step of converting to Roman Catholicism. Scott Mcknight has chronicled this contemporary development in U.S. Evangelicalism.³⁶ Noll and Nystrom's typology provides the impetus for the succeeding survey of reactions to Catholicism.

1 Surveying the Field Afresh

This is an attempt to re-present ongoing initiatives and practices that call toward a de-centering of a rejectionist mindset toward Catholicism. On the one hand, this is to distinguish and to deepen a dialogical posture in contrast to a separatist mentality fostered by Fundamentalists. Even if Evangelicals insist on evangelizing nominal Catholics, this does not necessarily mean disavowal of the importance of Christian witness through unity and reconciliation. As the Lausanne II Manila Manifesto declares,

Evangelism and unity are closely related in the New Testament. Jesus prayed that his people's one-

ness might reflect his own oneness with the Father, in order that the world might believe in him, and Paul exhorted the Philippians to contend as one person for the faith of the Gospel. In contrast to this biblical vision, we are ashamed of the suspicions and rivalries, the dogmatism over non-essentials, the power-struggles and empire-building which spoil our evangelistic witness.³⁷

On the other hand, and related to the previous point, this is to recognize that separatism (here expressed in rabid anti-Catholicism) is not immune to doing the very thing it hates—behaving unbiblically and dishonouring the name of Christ.³⁸ Ecumenical openness and spirituality may actually become an antidote to the self-righteousness of rigid fundamentalists. We turn now to contemporary reactions and attitudes crucial to relaxing the antagonism between the two churches. We begin with the claim of evangelical experience of regeneration among Roman Catholics.

a) Catholic Charismatics and the rise of 'born-again Catholics'

Born-again pertains to a Pentecostal-

³² Ernest Manges, 'Using *The Catechism for Filipino Catholics*,' 215.

³³ Cf., the opening comment from Lorenzo Bautista.

³⁴ Mark Noll and Carolyn Nystrom, *Is the Reformation Over?: An Evangelical Assessment of Contemporary Roman Catholicism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 185-208.

³⁵ See note 50 for documentation.

³⁶ Scott Mcknight, 'From Wheaton to Rome: Why Evangelicals Become Roman Catholic', *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 45 (September 2002), 451-72.

³⁷ 'Manila Manifesto', 1989, in *New Dimensions in Mission and Evangelization 1: Basic Statements 1974-1991*, James A. Scherer and Stephen Bevans (eds.) (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1992), 292-305.

³⁸ A classic case in point is the exposé on Jack Chick's fraudulent anti-Roman Catholic *Alberto* comic book. See 'Jack Chick's Anti-Catholic *Alberto* Comic Book Is Exposed as a Fraud', *Christianity Today*, March 13, 1981, 50-53.

Evangelical experience of regeneration. It is not a common term for traditional Catholicism but it is now widely adopted by Catholic Charismatics in the Philippines. This is to say that some Catholics claim they have made a personal decision to accept Christ as Saviour and Lord and have experienced renewal through regeneration—something Evangelicals insist as crucial to Christian identity. The history behind this phenomenon goes back more than three decades. The period of the 1970s marked a surge in the growth of Charismatic fellowships in the Philippines. One could say that it is in this context of extraordinary charismatic vigour that the experience of ‘born-again Catholics’ could be understood. Pentecostal scholar, Wonsuk Ma, describes the charismatic fervour of the period in the following way:

Many house prayer groups mushroomed in the 70’s throughout Metro Manila and other major provincial cities. Considering the dominant Catholic population... enthusiastic seekers opened their homes, offices, factories, restaurants and schools for Bible Studies and prayer meetings. Unlike the Classical Pentecostals who ministered among people in lower socio-economic strata, these new seekers were business people, educated professionals, corporate executives, government employees, teachers, and army officers including many generals. They prayed regularly for healing and spiritual gifts. As small Bible studies grew rapidly, hotel ballrooms and big restaurants were rented for regular Sunday celebrations. These neutral

locations were particularly conducive for Catholic believers who did not wish to be identified with ‘born again’ people. Likewise, groups did not call themselves a ‘church’ but a ‘fellowship’.³⁹

In 1969 and 1972, two (pioneering) Roman Catholic Charismatic groups convened their prayer meetings. They were started by Brother Aquinas, FSC and Mother Marie Angela (of the Assumption Convent Sisters) respectively.⁴⁰ Both nestled themselves in the middle and upper class vicinity of Metro Manila (La Salle, Greenhills, and the Urdaneta and San Lorenzo Villages of Makati). The *Ligaya ng Panginoon* (Joy of the Lord) Community of Manila, a branch of the Word of God Community in Michigan, was also established during this period.⁴¹ A Charismatic confer-

³⁹ Wonsuk Ma, ‘Philippines’, in *The New International Dictionary of Charismatic and Pentecostal Movements*. (revised and expanded edition), S. Burgess and E.M. van der Maas (eds.) (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002, 2003), 204.

⁴⁰ Ma, ‘Philippines’, 206. Brother Aquinas, FSC attended a retreat and prayer meeting in Pecos, New Mexico where he had a charismatic experience. Upon his return to the Philippines in June 1969, he began the first charismatic prayer meeting which was attended by the La Salle Brothers and a nun. This is credited as the beginning of the Catholic Charismatic Movement in the Philippines [Prospero Covar, ‘Pagkatao at Paniniwala’, *Reading Popular Culture* ed. Soledad Reyes (Quezon City, Phils: Ateneo de Manila, Office of Research Publications, 1991), 195-196].

⁴¹ Wonsuk Ma’s account does not mention the establishment of *Ligaya ng Panginoon* (Joy of the Lord) Community. Dr Leonardo Mercado asserts the prominent role of the Word of God Community in the beginning of the Charismatic Movement in the Philippines [See Mer-

ence sponsored by the World Missionary Assistance Plan (World MAP) held in 1973 brought together the *ecumenical* presence of around ‘two thousand pastors, priests, nuns, missionaries and lay leaders’. Organizationally, this conference may have been a major factor in the intensified growth of various Catholic and independent prayer and Bible study groups all over the country. By 1978 there were about 30,000 who counted themselves as Catholic Charismatics. Recent estimates of Catholic Charismatics number about 5 million, if not more.⁴²

Mariano ‘Mike’ Velarde, founder of the Catholic Charismatic indigenous movement known as the *El Shaddai*, also describes his conversion during the same period. A geodetic engineer turned prominent businessman, he was scheduled for an open-heart surgery in 1978.⁴³ While in hospital, he claimed he was visited by an angel who handed to him a small-sized *Good News Bible*.⁴⁴ This became the source of his

cado, *Christ in the Philippines* (Tacloban City, Philippines: Divine Word Publications, 1982), 71-73]. In this, he was dependent on the work of Ted Gresh, *New Ministries in the Church, A Philippine Perspective* (Manila: n.p., 1976).

⁴² Ma, ‘Philippines’, 207.

⁴³ Interestingly, 1978 was also significant for the beginning of what is touted as the largest non-Catholic Charismatic church in the Philippines, *Jesus is Lord Fellowship*, founded by Brother Eddie Villanueva [Elisabeth Farrell, ‘Paying the Price to Reach Manila’s Millions’, *Charisma*, January 1996, pp. 46-49].

⁴⁴ It was ‘an angel in the guise of a nurse’. Cf. English version of the history of the *El Shaddai* available online: http://www.geocities.com/elshaddai_dwxi_ppfi/ (accessed 31 March 2007).

strength and instant healing. After this momentous experience, his aspirations and spiritual outlook in life were fundamentally changed.⁴⁵ In 1981, Velarde professed to have become a ‘born-again Catholic’. He wanted to share the miracle that happened to him as well as God’s goodness in his life so he linked up with a number of middle-class Catholics (who professed to have had a similar charismatic experience) to form the *Quezon City Catholic Charismatic Renewal Secretariat*.

One should note that the TV program *700 Club* was also a significant influence in the dramatic (Charismatic) conversions of Filipino middle and upper class Catholics. For instance, in their early years as Charismatic believers, Celso and Agnes Roxas and the group they have formed, the *Catholic Christian Community*, drew guidance from and adopted some of the teachings of Pentecostal and Charismatic television programs such as the *700 Club*, and those of Morris Cerullo as well as the writings of Kenneth Hagin.⁴⁶ Other Catholic Charismatic groups which are evangelical-like in their emphasis on regeneration and Scriptural teaching include Shalom International Charismatic Foundation led by Fr. Archie Guiriba as well as the popular Couples for Christ movement.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Velarde recounts this part of his testimony in his address at the Vatican City [*El Shaddai God Almighty Miracle Newsletter*, Vol VIII, No. 3, p. 6].

⁴⁶ Cf. Personal (taped) interview with Celso and Agnes Roxas, 6 July 1999.

⁴⁷ On Shalom, see http://www.geocities.com/shalom_international. Couples for Christ also has a website of its own, see <http://www.cfcglobal.org.ph/> (accessed 31 March 2007).

b) Critical of Roman Catholicism but there could be Christians within the Catholic Church

This stance is one of critical openness. Responding to a question about church membership and salvation, popular evangelical preacher Ed Lapid has this to say about salvation within Roman Catholicism.

*Naniniwala ako na meron tayong mga kababayang nasa loob ng Roman Catholic church na saved. Baka nga hindi pa nila alam na saved sila kasi hindi conscious ang pagtuturo, eh. Yan ang pinagkaiba ng Protestant churches sa mga Catholic churches. Sa karamihan ng Protestant churches, itinuturo nang malinaw ang salvation. Hindi ko sinisiraan ang sinuman. Pero ang point ko, hindi ko nakikita sa Bible na formal, actual, and legal membership ang nagliligtas, kundi yung spiritual belongingness to the family of God. This happens when you accept Jesus into your heart as Savior and Lord, no matter what religion you belong to. Kaya lang, pag nasa save na kayo at kilala na ninyo si Cristo, meron naman talagang mga religious systems na lalago kayo. Kaya mahalaga rin yung church membership—kung ligtas ka na!*⁴⁸

[I believe that there are countrymen of ours inside the Roman Catholic Church who are saved. It might even be that they do not know they are saved because they

do not teach about this consciously. This is the basic difference between Protestant churches and Catholic churches. In most Protestant churches, salvation is clearly taught. I am not criticizing anyone. But my point is this: I do not see it being taught in the Bible that formal, actual and legal membership [in a church] saves, but rather spiritual belongingness to the family of God. This happens when you accept Jesus into your heart as Savior and Lord, no matter what religion you belong to. But if you're already saved and you know Christ personally, there are indeed religious systems [we should join] where we can truly grow. That is why church membership remains important—but only after you've been saved!]

Compared to thirty years ago, many Evangelical Christians these days would more probably identify and agree with Lapid's comments. Probably because of the changes brought about by Vatican II and also the increasing number of born-again Catholics, Evangelicals have increasingly become more accepting of the fact that salvation within Roman Catholicism may indeed be a possibility.

One might say that a precursor to the above stance is the standard mainstream Evangelical reply on conversion and church membership. When asked by Roman Catholics who have had a 'born again' experience if it is right to stay in the Catholic Church or move out and join a 'born again' fellowship instead, a common reply among conservative Evangelicals is: 'We are not suggesting that you leave

your church. But make sure that it's really teaching the Bible and it is also Christ-centred, a community where you can really grow spiritually and serve the Lord.⁴⁹ As such, it is not really an anti-Catholic posture. It betrays an understanding that individual Catholics may still be saved within, or even in spite of the Roman Catholic belief system.⁵⁰

Echoing the voices of Philippine Evangelicals in general, Vencer's reaction towards the 1994 statement, 'Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium' (ECT), follows a similar (conversionist) stance toward Roman Catholicism.⁵¹ Vencer points out that the context of the ECT is too culture-specific (that is, the United States) and must not be generalized as applicable to other contexts like the church situation in the Philippines. Roman Catholic

relationships with Evangelicals vary from country to country. Vencer resists isolationism but also doctrinal compromise with Catholicism, especially in the area of salvation. United action against societal evils may indeed call for critical collaboration with other religious faiths, including Roman Catholicism. But it does not follow that Roman Catholics are exempted from being prime targets of evangelization, considering that a great percentage of Catholics in the Philippines remain nominal Christians.⁵²

c) A 'Quiet Dialogue': Collaboration and Partnership with Roman Catholics

In February 1998, the National Coalition for Urban Transformation (NCUT) was established by key Evangelical and Roman Catholic pioneers after a series of consultations with leaders from various religious, political, business and education sectors. They agreed to address a common concern: the welfare of the city of Metro Manila. Corrie Acorda de Boer, one of its pioneers describes NCUT in this way:

The NCUT is an emerging movement of Catholic and Protestant leaders and organizations who

⁴⁸ E.g., Ed Lapid, *Isang Tanong, Isang Sagot*, 19. The English translation that follows is my translation. See also Isabelo Magalit, *Who is a Real Christian?* (Mandaluyong City: OMF Literature, 1990, 2006), 13-14. (This was originally published in 1973 by the Intervarsity Press, Philippines.)

⁵⁰ When I say mainstream or conservative Evangelicals, I am not including Fundamentalist Evangelicals who would advocate total rejection of and exodus from the RC church. Gerald Bray reports that this folk evangelical reply is also common among U.S. Evangelicals ['Evangelicals, Salvation, and Church History', in *Catholics and Evangelicals: Do They Share a Common Future?* ed. Thomas P. Rausch (Downers Grove: IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 92-93, quoted by Noll and Nystrom, *Is the Reformation Over?*, 191].

⁵¹ The ECT document is available online: <http://www.leaderu.com/ftissues/ft9405/articles/mission.html> (accessed 31 March 2007).

⁵² See W. Harold Fuller, *People of the Mandate: The Story of the World Evangelical Fellowship* (London and Grand Rapids: WEF in association with Paternoster Press and Baker, 1996), Appendix H. For an extended discussion of the conversionist approach in relation to nominal Catholics, see 'The Thailand Report on Roman Catholics: Christian Witness to Nominal Christians Among Roman Catholics', *Lausanne Occasional Papers*. (Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, 1980).

⁴⁸ E.g., Ed Lapid, *Isang Tanong, Isang Sagot: Frequently Asked Questions on Doctrinal Issues and Practical Applications of the Bible* (Makati City: Kaloob, 2003), 18.-19. My translation follows.

envison to transform cities into Christ-centred urban centres of faith, hope and love; they are cities which uphold peace, justice, stewardship and the integrity of creation. An aggrupation of Christian leaders, churches and Christian Development organizations, NCUT endeavours to work in partnership with others, through the power of the Holy Spirit, for the transformation of our cities by proclaiming and incarnating the Gospel of the Kingdom of God.⁵³

For de Boer, ecumenical partnership with Roman Catholics is vital for planned change in renewing the city.

In Manila, the walls between Protestants and Catholics are slowly crumbling, but they must come down more rapidly. It requires a unity strong enough to engage the whole population, government, business, education, professionals, manual labourers, and those in the trade and services. If cities with their burgeoning population are to be served, the church, the Body of Christ Evangelicals and Catholics, must unite and bring together entire cities.⁵⁴

She calls this form of unity 'a quiet dialogue, characterized by cooperation'.⁵⁵ Such cooperation and collaboration go against the reigning ideology of competition as the foundation of activity. Cooperation is not fuelled by competitiveness between or among

churches, but rather, mutual ideals to bring about planned change.⁵⁶

Prior to NCUT, early ventures into social justice advocacy which featured Roman Catholic and Evangelical cooperation happened through the later work (1980s) of World Vision, originally established in the Philippines in 1957.⁵⁷ Still earlier than both NCUT and World Vision's efforts, Evangelicals cooperated with Roman Catholic and other Mainline churches in the late 1960s to produce vernacular Bibles, especially the ecumenical *Magandang Balita* (Good News Bible), under the auspices of the Philippine Bible Society. Daniel Arichea reminisces: 'Our translation teams were a miracle themselves. In those days the coming together of people from different denominations was a rarity. But as a result, today there are interconfessional translations of the Bible in eight major languages spoken in the Philippines. This represents more than 95 per cent of the population.'⁵⁸ More recent RC-Protestant-Evangelical collaboration in social justice advocacy includes *Kaalagad Katipunang Kris-*

tiyano, formed in December 2000 as a prophetic movement against the corruption of the (former) Estrada government.⁵⁹

One could say that collaboration without doctrinal compromise was also the general reaction among Philippine Evangelicals to ECT. In Vencer's mind, however, it must be a very cautious and critical collaboration, one which strongly pushes for the role of evangelism and conversion of Roman Catholics. The reigning assumption seems to be the prevalence of nominalism within the RC Church.

A different (but perhaps complementary) approach to Vencer's—also engendering a collaborative stance—is the proposal that Roman Catholicism and Evangelicalism offer two different religious imaginations, even spiritualities—the one is iconoclastic and Word-centred (Evangelicals), the other very visual and sacramental (RC).⁶⁰ This is reflected, for instance, in their respective styles of worship. Evangelical liturgy has its high point in the sermon or the Word while in Catholicism, the Eucharist is the pinnacle of worship. One is socialized or enculturated into these imaginations by growing up in a typical Catholic or Evangelical family and being raised in their respective churches. Arguably, both orientations have grounding in Scripture and both

need continuing conversion to Christ, but they should not be viewed as oppositional, but rather complementary. Or more specifically, they can be complementary but Scripture remains primary over both orientations.⁶¹

d) Renewed doctrinal engagement from Evangelicals

Since 2005, Asian Theological Seminary (ATS) has sponsored an Annual Theological Forum which has become a venue for an academic dialogue of some sort between Evangelicals and Roman Catholic scholars. Two books have already come out from the annual forum: *Doing Theology in the Philippines* and *Naming the Unknown God*.⁶² Representative Catholic theologians contributed lectures on theological inculturation and inter-religious dialogue respectively. Both books included fresh assessments of Roman Catholic beliefs and practices from an evangelical viewpoint. In the first, a review and evaluation of the Catholic Catechism was offered, while in the succeeding volume, the readers were presented with an evangelical engagement with folk Catholicism.

Moreover, members of the ATS community have advanced new perspectives on what are often viewed as explosive theological issues between Catholics and Evangelicals. Topics

⁵³ Lorissa Socorro Acorda de Boer, 'Creative Planning for Urban Transformation', 18-19.

⁵⁴ de Boer, 'Creative Planning', 15-16.

⁵⁵ de Boer, 'Creative Planning', 17.

⁵⁶ de Boer, 'Creative Planning'.

⁵⁷ de Boer, 'Creative Planning'.

⁵⁸ 'The Bible Overcomes Divisions in the Philippines,' *World Report* 352. Available online: http://www.biblesociety.org/wr_352/352_asp.htm#Bible. The official sanction to this Roman Catholic-Protestant venture in Bible translations can be traced back to the 1968 joint declaration of United Bible Societies and the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity on 'Guiding Principles for Interconfessional Cooperation in Translating the Bible'. See Radano, 'International Dialogue Between Catholics and Evangelicals Since the Second Vatican Council', 174.

⁵⁹ Available online <http://www.gary-granada.com/Communitarian%20Democracy/CD%20Text.htm> (accessed 31 March 2007).

⁶⁰ Timoteo Gener, 'The Catholic Imagination and Popular Religion in Lowland Philippines: Missiological Significance of David Tracy's Theory of Religious Imaginations', *Mission Studies*, Vol. 22, No.1 (2005), 25—57.

⁶¹ See also my 'What Evangelicals Can Learn from Folk Catholicism', 166-70.

⁶² See E. Acoba et al., *Doing Theology in the Philippines* (Mandaluyong City: Asian Theological Seminary and OMF Literature, 2005) and E. Acoba et al., *Naming the Unknown God* (Mandaluyong City: Asian Theological Seminary and OMF Literature, 2006).

such as the role of Mary and the saints, idolatry and the role of images, and the relationship between faith and good works were engaged afresh with biblical-theological depth and contextual sensitivity. The following offers a brief survey of the results of these studies:

- The Old Testament prohibition against the making of images was a consequence of the prohibition against idolatry, of having a god other than Yahweh, who is a spirit being. Relics, symbols, and other aesthetic forms may aid in the worship of God but they must not become objects of worship. Compared to God the Father and the Holy Spirit, only Jesus Christ had a physical manifestation. He lived as a *historical* person (not spirit) and represented Yahweh in human form. Being a historical person, representations of *Jesus* in various forms—icons, paintings, even video productions—may be warranted by an acceptance of the reality of God in creation, especially expressed in the Incarnation.⁶³
- The language of good works as opposed to faith needs re-examination from a biblical perspective. Careful exegesis of Pauline texts reveal that Paul opposes ‘works of the law’ in particular, but not necessarily ‘good works’ in the broader sense. There is no Pauline antithesis between faith and the generic phrase called ‘good works.’

⁶³ Francis Egenias, ‘What’s Wrong with the Crucifix? A Second Look at Certain Roman Catholic Practices?’ (Paper delivered at the 3rd ATS Theological Forum, Asian Theological Seminary, February 2006).

In the same vein, justification through faith in Christ is not threatened by the practice of good works. Interestingly, official Catholic teachings on the merit of good works offer fresh points of dialogue. The recent Catechism of the Catholic Church attributes the merit of good works to the grace of God.⁶⁴

- There is a need to develop an Evangelical Protestant Mariology—mature and critical, and always christocentric and biblical. An evangelical assessment of Catholic teaching on Mary must be informed by the Catholic distinctions between dogma and non-official teaching on Mary. Popular Marian devotions should also be approached as part of the phenomenon of folk Catholicism in the country. Related (local) church documents should then be consulted to fairly represent internal criticism within Catholicism itself.⁶⁵

As we can see from these studies, an evangelical concern for doctrinal orthodoxy based on the Bible remains primary. But such concern can be dealt with in a spirit of critical openness and dialogue in pursuit of God’s revealed truth in Scripture. Moreover, the dialogical posture of listening with

⁶⁴ Annelle Gumihid and Christopher Sabanal, ‘Faith and Works: Revisiting a Key Theme for Catholic-Evangelical Dialogue’, (Paper delivered at the 3rd ATS Theological Forum, Asian Theological Seminary, February 2006).

⁶⁵ Adonis Gorospe, ‘Towards an Evangelical Protestant Mariology’, *Phronesis* 11 (2) 2004:68-78.

integrity—not bearing false witness against the other (Ex. 20:16)—serves as an evangelical requisite in the exchange.

IV Conclusion

Evangelical churches in Asia must draw from the gains of ERCDOM and the continuing Catholic-Evangelical dialogues. This brief study is an effort in that direction especially focused on the Philippine context. One could say that a Filipino Evangelical rethinking of Roman Catholicism is really in order in light of the new developments within the Catholic Church. Roman Catholics claiming ‘born-again experience’ have increased in the last twenty years. Moreover, Philippine Evangelicals have already done work together with Roman Catholics in critical areas of ministry (e.g., urban transformation, Bible translation). And these have come about in spite of doctrinal differences. As we have seen, such cooperation in spite of doctrinal differences is not totally negated, considering the very history of the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches. One can be open for social cooperation without sacrificing doctrinal orthodoxy and evangelism.

In seeking to be true to the Gospel, Philippine Evangelicals (as represented by the PCEC) dissociated themselves from both rigid separatism and liberalism toward fulfilling Christ’s holistic mission in the world. To embody and fulfil such task, it seeks ‘fellowship in the gospel’ (Phil. 1:5). This holistic vision is one motivation

for re-assessing contemporary Roman Catholicism and renewing the body of Christ in the Philippines. Stott suggests that Christ’s holistic vision for the church is fourfold: Jesus’ prayer in John 17

is a prayer for the church’s *truth* (‘keep them in your name’), *holiness* (‘keep them from the evil one’), *mission* (‘sanctify them... I have sent them into the world’) and *unity* (‘that they may be one’).... Truth, holiness, mission and unity belonged together in Jesus’ prayer, and they need to be kept together in our quest for the church’s renewal today.⁶⁶

Throughout this paper, I have made ample use of the term ‘Evangelical’ in its institutional sense. In the end, however, the institutional or the establishment use of that term will not be the last word. Rather, it is Christ’s holistic vision for the church for the transformation of the world. For, indeed, to be truly ‘Evangelical’ is to be faithful and subservient to the gospel of Jesus Christ and his vision for the church in the world.⁶⁷ And to seek unity—along with truth, holiness, and mission—defines the nature of such discipleship in and for our time.

⁶⁶ John Stott, *The Contemporary Christian* (Leicester, UK: IVP, 1992), 268-69 (emphases added).

⁶⁷ On this point, see Gener, ‘Re-visioning Local Theology: An Integral Dialogue with Practical Theology, A Filipino Evangelical Perspective’ in *Journal of Asian Mission* 6/2 (2004), 139.

Worship—the Source and Standard of Theology

Rolf Hille

KEYWORDS: *Creator, Imago Dei, space, time, history, buildings, communication, culture, covenants, sacraments, lex orandi, lex credendi, Spirit, truth, Sabbath*

I Perspectives on the Theology of Worship

People who hear the term ‘Theology of Worship’ may feel like asking: ‘Do theologians really have to make theological problems out of everything, this time, even out of worship? Isn’t worship, in its practical Sunday form, just a simple and basic practice of the Christian faith from which we should exclude all the complex and controversial discussions of experts, and just celebrate joyfully together?’

At first glance, this objection is understandable. But, when we look again more carefully, we can make some very amazing discoveries. Theology is not something that was ‘invented’ somewhere on the desk of a

lonely scholar. Instead, it has its origin in worship. Theology arose from the church assembled around God’s Word, that listens to God, speaks to him, and experiences his presence in her midst. Because Christian worship is not just a celebration of an unclear and undefinable religious feeling, but is shaped by God’s clear and intelligible Word, theology comes about as the reflection on the Word proclaimed beforehand as a result of the celebration of worship. The mystery of faith encountered in worship is celebrated with praise not just in the performance of the liturgy, but it should also be reflected upon, proclaimed, and understood anew.

Moreover, the worship service also proves itself to be the internal core of theology and its critical measuring rod. All important parts of the faith reflected on by theology are the subject of the worship service. What is confessed as faith in the worship service and preached as God’s Word must be seen in relation to theological dogma. According to the apostle Paul, doctrine

should be ‘sound, or healthy’ for the faith (see, for example, 1 Tim. 1:10; 2 Tim. 4:3; Tit. 1:9,13; 2:2,8). That means that spiritual life is purified and stimulated by scriptural theology. Doctrine must then be examined as to whether or not it is suitable for worship in the sense of being according to Scripture, whether or not it proves itself to be healing and fruitful in public preaching and whether or not what it says fits into the already given confession of faith and all other parts of worship service formed liturgy, such as worship and praise, prayer and petition, Scripture readings and the benediction.

Therefore, when we share some foundational systematic thoughts on the theology of worship in what follows, we are dealing totally with a matter about which we have been called to be attentive. It is about the inner relationship between theology and worship with a mutual objective. Theology is tested by the reality of worship, whether or not it stays with its centre, namely, with the living God and his church. Conversely, worship, in its concrete historical form, is constantly called to spiritual responsibility through ‘sound doctrine’. This is possible because God serves the church in worship through Word and sacrament.

In this reciprocity, it is evident that all the great themes of the faith that are systematically reflected upon in Christian dogmatics and ethics can be exhibited in the liturgical elements of worship. Liturgical performance proves itself to be a content-structuring principle of theology and vice versa.

II The Anthropological Basis of Worship

People on the street who have long followed post-Christian ways just shrug their shoulders when they hear the words, ‘worship service’. For them, worship services are very abstract events and relevant only for people who are really religious. They mean nothing to a modern person who lives totally in the realities of this world. The basic question then arises here: Does worship alienate people from the true essence of being a human being because it leads people to God? The Bible says the very opposite. People find their true humanity for the first time when they meet God. We find a reference to this biblical fact already in the unique ambivalence of modern humanity, which stands quite aloof from the Christian worship service, as noted above, yet, on the other hand, shows interest in different religions and esoteric experiences.

1. Human Dignity and the Need of God

We find one of the most fundamental theological statements about man on the first pages of the Bible: ‘God created man in his image, in his likeness he created him and created him male and female’ (Gen. 1:27). People have God’s creative work to thank because they come from God’s hand. People who enquire about the essence of humanity are really asking about their origins. The person who looks at the basis of humanity sees the handwriting of God in the same way as when a person sees a water mark on a bank note as a sign of its authenticity. That does not mean

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in any way, however, that people today, i.e., fallen humanity, has a relationship with God by nature, but, rather, as creatures, people bear the image of their creator as a deep longing in them. Without reconnecting with their origins, they are abandoned to a loss of orientation and they have lost their centre.

Worship as a meeting with God is, therefore, a very human thing. People find themselves when they go out of themselves and meet God anew. A person is totally true to himself, his deepest longings and wishes, when he arises and says: 'I will go to my father!' (Lk. 15:18). People in the image of God (*imago Dei*), are completely interrelated to God, so worship of God is essential for their life. They find in it the air to breathe. The person who takes worship away from people robs them of an important element of life. It is not, then, the alienation of people from their essential needs, but rather, the fulfilment of such that one experiences in worship. Worship is therefore not a special niche of some strange church subculture, but is a universal expression of fulfilled humanity. It is and remains from the sixth day of Creation on, the dignity of people to need God.

2. Worship Performed in Space and Time

Immanuel Kant analysed space and time as the two apparent forms of human existence which are presupposed in relation to our perceptive ability. Whatever takes form in this world bears in itself the structure of space and time. Space and time describe the dimensions in which worship occurs physically and concretely.

a) The House of God

From the very beginnings of human culture the architecture of buildings built for the purpose of worship has played an important role. Whether they are primitive altars erected in special places or simple houses of prayer, or immense Medieval cathedrals, the place where people together sought the face of God is also always a special room that exudes a special dignity. The church building and the artistic decoration of the sanctuary embodies this longing for God. In the way they set up the house of God, people give expression to the need to lift up their hearts through worship and liturgy and to meet God outside the mundane aspects of life. The basic truth—notwithstanding that we should 'worship God in spirit and in truth' (Jn. 4:24) which we will discuss later—is that human spirituality does not do away with people's connection to space and time, which is part of creation. Worship takes place in space and time as long as the earth still stands and remains tied to space and time.

Therefore different architectural styles and changing interior designs of houses of worship give expression to different styles of piety. A specific theology of worship finds its physical character echoed in wood and stone, in images and worship utensils—even when the way the room is set up is very simple. From their own experiences and by looking at different houses of worship, everyone can get a clear picture of how the architecture of the building with its individually respective artistic interior design embodies the conditions of the atmosphere of the service. Every pastor knows all too

well how much the conditions imposed by a church building or a church fellowship hall will influence the possibilities of spiritual development of the local church congregation.

b) Rhythm of Time and the History of Salvation

The time of human life is structured time. It has its rhythm that corresponds to creation, which is confirmed for all epochs in God's covenant with Noah as follows: 'As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease' (Gen. 8:22). Worship takes place in time and also moves with the rhythm of created time. The change of day and night affects the experience of worship, whether it is on a Sunday morning, or afternoons at the hour when Jesus died, or for harvest prayer, or Saturday evening in preparation for a new week, or before an important holiday such as Christmas Eve; whether it is at midnight or at daybreak celebrating Easter, worship is affected by the time of day or night.

The temporal dimension of worship proves to be even clearer in certain holidays that have to do with God's plan of redemption and which give the seasons with their changes a special inner dynamic. The festivals of the ecclesiastical year affect the experience of time in the rhythm of the year and they do this by giving time a perspective related to God's history of salvation. Beginning with the Christmas festal cycle from Advent to Epiphany to the Passion and Easter season and even on to the special topics of the individual Trinity Sundays and concluding with the eschatological perspective at the

end of the ecclesiastical year, time on earth is surrounded by God's history with humanity. This is completed and learned anew every year in the course of the liturgical calendar.

As beings created for space and time, people are invited holistically in this way by the church building and the church calendar to a concrete encounter with God in worship. Building upon these kinds of basic facts of anthropology related to the theology of creation, further aspects of man's ability to worship also become apparent.

3. Fundamental Anthropological Elements

Worship always takes a physical form. It is always the concrete person who stands before God, kneels, sits, rises, falls down, etc. Individual voices, movements and gestures allow others to have a part in what is taking place in the inner movement of the person himself. The body is the expression of the soul, which is shaken by God's wrath, moved by his holiness, touched by his love, and surrounded by his grace. All the senses are brought into the worship event: a person hears the Word, listens to the instruments and voices and takes an active part in it. They gaze at pictures and walls, the light of the candles and the form of the building. They are touched by baptismal water and blessing hands. They taste bread and wine. In Catholic and Orthodox worship, they are also engulfed by the fragrance of incense. God, who has created people as a physical (corporeal) counterpart, accepts them in his corporality and in service. Therefore, worship is a very physical, experiential, perceptible reality. This kind of

corporality possesses an aesthetic quality of its own, a beauty by which worship becomes a celebration and people, created and desired as sensory living beings, also experience and worship God's presence with all their senses.

'Then God said: "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let him rule over the fish of the sea".' (Gen. 1:26). From the Word, the reasonable Logos of God, people were created in God's image. The gift and ability to reason, to hear the Word and to speak it, make people a counterpart of God in a special sense and set them apart from all other creatures. Reason comes from hearing and people should and can hear God's Word and thus take part in reasonable worship (cf. Rom. 12:1). God speaks to people in many ways in worship through his Word, and the man who is moved and renewed by God's Spirit is also able to understand this speech of God. In so far as the person celebrating worship as a sensory being perceives the beauty and glory of God in physical form, so the Word is every bit as much directed to the inner person. Such a person is honoured to understand God's own thoughts as he expresses them in his Word: that is, he allows them from the outside to penetrate his ear. In this way, the thoughts of the person are enlightened, his conscience is spoken to, and his will is set.

But this reasonable person, in this isolated, individual ability to reason, is not yet the image of God, but, rather, he first becomes the being destined and enabled for fellowship on the basis of the Word. The triune God who acts and speaks in creation: 'Let us make man' (Gen. 1:26), this God speaks to the person relationally, that is, also as a being

created for fellowship. Language marks off not only the limits of our thinking, but it is, at the same time, that instrument of communication between the hidden spiritual nature and the visible-corporeal form of the person. Through the word, the person can understand the person, through language one is able to express oneself as a spiritual being.

On the level of human interpersonal relations, this communicative expression of self occurs in an exemplary way between husband and wife. In worship, this occurs as the relationship between the Creator and the creature. In the interplay of conversation, the Word of God and the response of the person prove to be a deep expression of human communicative ability. In the worship encounter, all human desire for fellowship finds its fulfilment. This emphasizes once again, then, that, since the Fall, our original ability to reason and to communicate needs to be fundamentally renewed by the Word and Spirit of God.

4. The Diversity of Worship

A wide diversity of concrete forms of worship results from the physical world and the variety of human cultures, languages, customs, and the styles of architecture, art, and music. This diversity reflects the geographical and ethnic spread of the gospel in the course of the history of missions. In the various cultures that have been reached, the inner unity and continuity of the source of the faith in the Bible has been expressed in various ways in these diverse cultures.

Accordingly, worship music and architecture, liturgical objects and

clothing all look different, for example, in places such as Japan, the United States, black Africa, or northern Europe. This diversity is necessary for the local church members and it is also desirable for the church as a worldwide fellowship; furthermore mutual exchange between them is enriching. Worship is therefore the critical touchstone for successful contextualization of the gospel.

III Where Heaven and Earth Intersect

Let us now turn our focus and think about the phenomenon of the 'worship service' from a special theological perspective. That is, let us ask how God, the Creator, acts as Redeemer in history and how through his acting to save and his incarnation in Jesus Christ he unites himself with people in the world. In the worship service, God serves people both through his physical coming in the incarnation through the inspiring presence of his Spirit which surrounds, fulfils, and enlightens our horizon of understanding.

1. Israel's Worship Service

The complete and universal self-revelation of God in Christ finds its preparation and, in the literal sense, its exemplary representation in the special election and the covenant history of Israel. With respect to its content, and concretely, in its liturgical elements, the worship service of Israel celebrated in the Old Testament influences and fundamentally defines the form of Christian worship.

One must first be reminded of the drama of the history of God and human-

ity in the context of the Old Testament. The point of departure here is the story of creation with its paradisiacal conditions in which fellowship with God is complete and ever-present. The Lord walks about in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:8). There is no differentiation between the profane and the sacred. All of life proves to be worship of God.

However, with the rebellion against God and the break of that original fellowship with God, Adam finds himself outside of Eden on cursed ground in a world of suffering and death. Through this, the earth becomes a very profane place indeed. Thus worship first became impossible despite humanity's continuous need for God. Therefore, it is God's mercy, not to completely give this world up to profanity and secularity, but to reveal himself on this earth in historical acts of his words and actions and thereby to create places and times of worship under the conditions of the fallen world.

By divine election, which is not humanly based, Israel becomes the 'bridgehead' of the worship of God in the profane world. Over against that, the rest of humanity, by reason of purely natural and therefore pagan religiosity, has perverted worship into idolatry, as Paul writes summarily in Romans:

For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and rep-

tiles (Rom. 1:21-23).

In worshipping and praising the only one and true God, Yahweh, who revealed himself to Moses on Mount Sinai, Israel's worship becomes the original form of worship with respect to the history of salvation. In the history of the revelation of the Old Covenant, the human answer follows God's call each time like an echo in more and more comprehensive forms of worship, which finally experience their ultimate low point and cleansing through the prophets' criticism of worship.

The Bible reader notices a clear line of tradition beginning with the altars of the primeval period and in the age of the patriarchs. This finds its continuation in the epoch of the wilderness wandering with the Tabernacle and the first places of worship in the Promised Land. With the erection of the Solomon's Temple as the central sanctuary, the history of Israel's worship experiences its splendid high point. Finally, worship under the conditions of the Babylonian Exile prepares for the synagogal worship of the Jewish Diaspora, which then becomes the connecting point for Christian mission.

2. The Logos Becomes Flesh

The reason and goal of all worship is the complete, eternal and universal fellowship of God with people. This is a reality in the story of the Garden of Eden (Gen. 1-2) and, after the long interim of worship on earth during the history of God's redemptive plan, it finds its eschatological completion in the heavenly Jerusalem. John the Revelator prophesies concerning the latter as follows:

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away' (Rev. 21:3-4).

With this worship of the triumphant church, the Pauline vision is fulfilled: 'When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all' (1 Cor. 15:28).

Through judgment and grace, the creation, as the new creation in the heavenly Jerusalem, has arrived at a complete worship in which the contradiction between the profane and the sacred is removed. In the completed new creation, all creaturely existence is fulfilled as existence for worship.

But this eternal finality and exclusivity of worship already experiences its anticipatory fulfilment in history through the incarnation of God in Christ. The hem of his garment even touched Israel's worship symbolically, so to speak, in God's words and the revelation of his glory (cf. Isa. 6:1-4). With the incarnation, God's becoming a man in Christ, the original worship in the Garden of Eden is surpassed and, in the incarnation, ultimate worship, which is celebrated in the heavenly Jerusalem, is also anticipated.

In Jesus' becoming flesh and 'dwelling' among us as the eternal Word, as John expresses it (cf. Jn. 1:14), the Kingdom of God begins in space and time. In Christ, meeting God

is no longer arranged by mediators at a sanctuary, but is accessible and able to be experienced directly. God himself lives as a man among men and this is more than the fellowship Adam had with God in the Garden of Eden. The heavenly experience of God physically enters into the historical present. That is why Christ does not just say: 'The Kingdom of God is near' (Mt. 3:2), but he confesses about himself as a person: 'The Kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, "Here it is," or "There it is," because the Kingdom of God is among you' (Lk. 17:20-21).

Christian worship is based on the event of Christ, that is, on the history of the Incarnation of God. In Christ, it finds its legitimation and form, its content and its goal. The church's Sunday worship is the celebration of the Resurrection and the festivals of the ecclesiastical calendar are feasts of Christ. The Gospel readings and their interpretation in the New Testament in the apostolic letters define the preaching which the church assembled in Jesus' name hears, believes and confesses.

The Christian worship service exhibits in a palpable way the essence of the history of salvation. It is grounded in space and time by historical facts. Its connection to the story of Christ makes this clear: the birth, life, suffering, and death of Jesus as well as his resurrection and ascension mark uniquely unrepeatable events right in the midst of secular history. These events manifest in an unsurpassable way the salvation of God in and through the person of the Son of God.

Yet, simply pointing to the historicity of the Christ events 2000 years ago should not be misunderstood so that,

like other historical facts, it fades away into the dust of history more and more as time passes. If this were the case, Christian worship in general and the great Christian holidays in particular would be only about memorial services, to remember a once glorious past. Instead, worship is recalling Christ's salvation. What occurred on Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, and Ascension Day is still at work here and now in worship to save and offer salvation directly by following after Christ as worship requires.

It is not purely for pedagogical and psychological reasons that this story of Jesus as represented in the Christian holy days is included by church tradition in the course of the natural year. People as sensory beings in space and time need the repeated realization of the one-time historical salvation, which, as something that has occurred as a factual event, is eternal by reason of its eschatological significance. Moreover, it is exactly this combination of historical uniqueness and eternal validity that characterizes the essence of the history of salvation. The basic difference between the history of salvation and world history becomes manifest in this.

Worship is therefore nothing less and nothing more than the current presence of the history of salvation in space and time. Because worship points to eternal salvation in a mediating fashion, its celebration in time is an anticipation of eternity. Time is touched and changed by eternity because Christian worship celebrates the Lord in whom the absolute paradox occurred: Christ. In him Creator and creature, time and eternity, have melded into a unity which will define

the completion of creation. With it are opened also the pneumatological and the ecclesiological dimensions of worship.

IV Worship in Spirit and Truth

The question necessarily arises out of what has been said already of how the event of salvation, which seems to recede into history as an historical event, is still recognized as present and experienced, and as something that saves people who are limited by space and time.

1. The Power of the Word

The intersection between the biblical history of salvation and the beginning of church history occurs at Pentecost. The Spirit of God, poured out upon all flesh at Pentecost, creates the church through the preached and sacramentally imparted Word. The church is therefore *creatura verbi* (a creature of the Word). The Word constitutes the church and it remains her normative and critical counterpart in the form of the canon, i.e., the Holy Scriptures. This means implicitly that it is not the church that has determined and authorized the canon as an institutionalized doctrinal body. The canon, the origin and standard of all preaching and teaching, has prevailed and authenticated itself as the truth of revelation over against the church, and the place where the Scriptures prevailed was the worship service of the early Christian church.

Through the collection of the gospels and the apostolic writings and their reading in worship, the canon

imposed itself as such upon the local and regional churches. Next to the Old Testament scriptures, the Bible of Jesus, it was active in the church as the founding document of the New Covenant. Its binding form could only be recognized and accepted as the given authority by the church.

2. Worship as Means of Salvation

The Scriptures are read and preached in the worship service. The Holy Spirit brings about faith through the sermon wherever and whenever it pleases God (*ubi et quando visum est deo*). Through the Law and the Gospel, the preaching of the Word of God brings God's message close to the heart of the hearer and the Holy Spirit creates faith in the heart. In prayer, song, confession of sin, and in the confession of faith that brings justification, the congregation responds in the worship service to the Word present to her.

This Word that creates faith becomes physically perceptible in a special way in its visible form through the two sacraments, baptism and the Lord's Supper. This is where Christ is met in a physical way. In baptism, he calls people to become parts of his body and to become children of God. In the bread and wine he shares himself as a person. Eternal salvation, achieved by the cross and the resurrection, is granted concretely as the forgiveness of sins in the service and promised as the presence of eternal life here and now.

Worship creates therefore space and time for the recalling of salvation by administering in it the visible and invisible Word of God as means of salvation and by communicating it in its

power to create anew.

3. Worship Defines the Content of Faith

A Latin phrase that aptly describes what this is all about is: '*lex orandi, lex credendi*', which means: the form of worship liturgy determines the content of faith. Literally translated, this means: The order of how one should pray is the rule of what one should believe. In doing so, we come back again to the fundamental connection of theology and worship which we mentioned at the outset of this article, as well as to the special connection of canon and worship.

Theology is the deeper reflecting and systematizing investigation of the Word administered and confessed in the worship service. With this, the Scriptures are already ahead of the service as the reason for making it possible. It is understood in the service as divine address and reflected upon as a response by theology through comprehending, not speculative reason. Theological reason reflects upon the Word, therefore, that it has heard beforehand in the worship service. In doing so, the liturgical celebration defines the form of faith as regards to content, upon which theology reflects further. This is exactly what is meant by the phrase: '*lex orandi, lex credendi*'.

With regard to the history of doctrine, this is very evident in the wording of the early Christian creeds—the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. The question rightly posed by Jews to Christians was why in their services they confessed and worshipped the man Jesus of Nazareth as Lord and God. In the

process of further theological reflection, this critical question led to Christological understanding, the result of which can be summarized as follows: In the person of Jesus Christ, the divine and human nature is connected inseparably and unmixed in an unfathomable unity.

The question of the Trinity follows quite necessarily from this. If Jesus is called upon and worshipped together with the God of Israel, then the problem of the unity of God results. But it was always clear to the church assembled in the name of Jesus that it was not worshipping two different gods. The exclusive worship of Yahweh, the God of Israel, is the central point of the first commandment which may not, by any means, be broken. From the insight in worship that only the one and only God may be worshipped, grew therefore theologically the understanding that, while the Father and the Son represent two different persons, they are still one divine being or essence. With respect to the Holy Spirit, it was also apparent in the same way that, as the Spirit of God, he belonged to the Creator and was not of the same nature as the creatures. The Spirit as *creator* in Creation and in the New Creation is, before time began, the *vivicans* (life giver), from whom all created life arises.

Christian worship is, therefore, necessarily trinitarian because God has revealed himself as the Trinity in the history of salvation. The worship service is the worship of the triune God and recalls the salvation given by him. The Christian worship service is therefore begun and celebrated also in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Among all the church confessions,

the Orthodox churches are mostly deeply and directly aware of this fundamental connection between *lex orandi*, the worship service, and *lex credendi*, i.e., theology. For the Orthodox tradition, theology developed almost exclusively by reflecting on the essence and form of the worship service. However, because of a failure to understand many relevant questions of faith in all their respective challenges, the limits of theological thinking in Orthodoxy were also evident.

4. Physical Spirituality as the Feature of Worship

The familiar words, 'Worship in Spirit and Truth' summarize the pneumatological and ecclesiological insights explained here. This phrase goes back to Jesus' discussion with the Samaritan woman, where in the discussion about whether worship should take place in Samaria or Jerusalem, Jesus says:

Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in spirit and truth (Jn. 4:19-24).

Jesus' statements can easily be misunderstood in a spiritualistic sense. This would mean that the Christian church would no longer need the external form of worship in space and time and in its concrete corporality. All worship services would then take place in the inner being of the individual. The church would become a *civis Platonica*, a form of the Platonic state, that is, she

would, in the end, consist only of ideas without any 'feet on the ground'. The Greek philosopher Plato tried to form the state according to a purely theoretical ideal and failed with this experiment because of the political realities.

However, the goal of all of God's ways is and remains concrete and involves a physical form in the new creation. Therefore, the external, that is, the Word that is audible and legible is necessary for salvation. This is why the Christian church, right after Pentecost, assembled together in the Temple as well as in their homes for worship to be taught by the apostles there, to pray, and to celebrate the Lord's Supper.

Furthermore, 'in spirit and in truth' also indicates that the Holy Spirit is directly active from God and to God in people through the concrete and physical form of worship. Fellowship with God is based on the inward working of the Spirit, who sets in motion anew and allows the history of salvation to become present as a saving and healing story for each individual person. According to Protestant Lutheran understanding, no other specific rites are needed besides the Word and the sacrament in the meeting of the Church assembled together in the name of Jesus. In addition, the freedom of the individual Christian and the congregation of Christians as a whole is also evident in worship.

This freedom finds its full and unlimited expression in the abundance of spiritual gifts which the members of the body of Christ also bring into the worship service. The gifts of the Word and practical service work together for the edification of the entire church congregation in worship and exemplify

impressively the priesthood of all believers. Paul describes without any inhibition the spiritual diversity of New Testament worship both in its spontaneous and in its defined liturgical elements:

What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church' (1 Cor. 14:26).

In the same way admonition is included in the following:

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him' (Col. 3:16-17).

It is clear from all of this that worship in itself is the history of salvation taking outward form. It reflects the cultural diversity of humanity and the diversity of spiritual gifts. The unity in this diversity is based on the story of the one Christ who is present through his Spirit in the midst of the church here and now. This worship lives through the creative love of the *proton*, that is, the beginning, and is directed toward the goal of the completing love at the end in which God will be all in all.

V From Sunday Worship to Daily Worship

Jesus commands us to 'worship the

Father in spirit and truth'. The spiritual presence of God, the realization of the history of salvation and the immediacy of the personal encounter with God are, therefore, one side of Christian worship. The 'in truth' part is the other side. It points to the dangers to worship from human hypocrisy and insincerity. It is talking about idolatry and false worship of God and, positively expressed, the central question of the spiritual fruits which should grow out of worship. How does worship manifest itself ethically in the world of daily life?

1. Criticism of False Worship

The Bible knows that humanity is fundamentally religious. On the one hand, this is seen positively as a chance to be connected to the preaching of the gospel. On the other hand, though, religiosity also proves to be a hindrance and a danger to true worship. This danger affects in different ways both the pagan and the one who already knows and worships the true God.

The pagan danger is one of perverting worship into idolatry. This occurs when that Creator and creature, and God and the gods are confused or interchanged with one another. We have already mentioned this by referring to the classical criticism of ancient Hellenistic idolatry by Paul in Romans 1:18-32 with its fatal consequences for morality.

Every bit as grievous is the second problem, when worship is misused by apparently pious people for selfish ends. God serves people in worship through his Word and sacrament. But, God wants this service to have an effect in practical life and to produce

fruit. At this difficult point it becomes evident whether a person celebrates true worship or if he is only selfishly enjoying false worship for himself.

Regarding the danger of worship caused by human sin, natural religiosity plays a key role. When religion basically shows a human need, then the satisfaction of this need can turn into the misuse of a purely spiritual aestheticism. In art, aestheticism is understood as a purely superficial, uncommitted enjoyment of works of art which does not allow itself to be challenged and which has no serious consequences for real life. The same is also true in the area of religion. The 'beautiful worship of the Lord', which is rightfully praised in Psalm 27:4, is then enjoyed, purely as a theatrical show, and misused, without any inner commitment.

With respect to the youth scene of today, this means, for example that a person is looking for the exciting spiritual experience and goes from one great worship event to the next. Love for one's neighbour, social justice, devotion to Christ, and serious discipleship fade away behind the facade of worship in all its splendour. Speaking for God, the prophets protested sharply against this, as is evident in these words from Amos:

I hate, I despise your religious feasts; I cannot stand your assemblies. Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them. Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of our harps. But let justice roll on like a river,

righteousness like a never-failing stream! (Amos 5:21-24).

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus continues the criticism of the prophets and directs it against the externalized worship of his day, such as, for example, against a hypocritical piety that looks only for the applause of men, but does not seek the approval (good pleasure) of God, when he says:

Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. So, when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honoured by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full (Mt. 6:1-2; cf. also Mt. 6:5.16).

And Paul even warns his Gentile Christian congregation in Corinth against selfish misuse of worship, when he writes:

In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good.... When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, for as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry, another gets drunk. Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you for this? Certainly not! (1 Cor. 11:17,20-22).

2. Keeping Sunday Holy

In this short section, we make a brief

reference to the meaning of the day of rest for the celebration of worship in the Christian church. The misuse of worship that we have already mentioned does not, of course, do away with the correct use of it. On the contrary, one of the gifts of paradise left to us by God after the Fall was the day of rest, which God himself, as Creator, set apart at the end of his days of work.

There should be a day of recovery, indeed a day of festive joy, first for mankind in its specially appointed dignity, but also then for all creatures. Martin Luther summarises very nicely in his explanation of the Catechism on the 3rd commandment what this means for the Christian church and her worship, which she celebrates on the first day of the week, that is, on the Day of the Resurrection as the beginning of the new Creation, when he writes: 'We should fear and love God so that we do not disregard the preaching and His Word, but consider it holy, and enjoy hearing and learning.' In this context, two things become clear with respect to the day of rest: The Christian church shares with the Old Testament keeping a day of rest in the week. But, in contrast to Judaism, it is very flexible in determining the concrete day of the week for it.

3. Calling Upon the Lord

Worship is, by no means, a harmless trivial matter, not even politically. In the battle against idols and the ideological claims to power by men and systems, the worship service becomes itself a battleground. The person who speaks the basic early Christian confession '*Kyrios Jesus*' (Jesus is Lord), is thereby calling into question the total

claim to domination of foreign gods and human potentates. The early Christian churches in the Roman Empire, despite all their loyalty to the Roman Emperor as citizens, refused him every form of worship, even to the point of giving up their own lives.

The Confessing Church in the Third Reich in Nazi Germany clearly rejected the ideology of National Socialism (Nazi ideology) with its clear condemnations in the Barmen Theological Declaration of 1934 in the following statement:

We condemn the false doctrine as if the Church could and must recognize as the source of her proclamation other events and powers, personalities and truths as God's revelation apart from and alongside this one Word of God.... We condemn (reject) the false doctrine that there are areas of our lives in which we do not belong to Jesus Christ, but to other masters, areas in which we do not need justification and sanctification through Him.¹

During the difficult times of suppression by the Communist government of East German, Evangelist Theo Lehmann very aptly expressed this attitude of worship in his song 'Wer Gott folgt riskiert seine Träume' (Following God Means Risking Your Dreams) with the following lyrics:

Und lehrt eure Kinder das eine,
dass über Gott keiner mehr steht,
dass auch der Größte klein
begeben muss, wenn Gott kommt

1 A. Burgsmüller (Ed.), *Die Barmer Theologische Erklärung* (Neukirchner Verlag: Neukirchen, Germany, 1983), 34f.

und alles vergeht.

(And teach your children this one thing: Nobody is above God. Even the greatest person must give in when God comes and everything perishes.²)

4. Worship of the 'Chambermaid'

It is especially noteworthy that, in the comprehensive systematic doctrinal treatise, the Epistle to the Romans, Paul, after all the basic teaching on sin, justification, and the history of salvation, once again makes clear in chapter 12 that this knowledge is in no way simply theoretical, but that it means far-reaching changes in lifestyle. He does this by presenting to them a new worship in everyday life:

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will (Rom. 12:1-2).

Worship should permeate all existence and transform everything. It is not about consumerism or cheap religious edification, but about renewal of everyday life. In this world with its sinful patterns and ways of life, the

church should become an important counterculture that rises above it in a beneficial way. Worship should become a way of life and the hallmark of Christians in their professional and daily occupation.

Martin Luther also took a clear-sighted view of this important section in Romans. He questioned the whole professional ethics of the Middle Ages with its ideals from monasticism in the retreat to life in the monastery and he ordered it anew. It is not a special spiritual class with its particular vows of poverty, celibacy, and obedience which is true discipleship of Jesus, but, rather, making something of one's life in the daily occupation. It is not the life behind cloistered walls, secluded from the world, but, rather profession and family, society and public life are the practical fields in which the Christian should show his faith through love of his neighbour. Luther expressed this insight concerning everyday worship, which he poignantly referred to as: 'the chambermaid'. This is exactly what it is.

VI The Eschatological Horizon of Worship

Worship on earth is surrounded by the cloud of witnesses (Heb. 12:1). It mirrors the heavenly reality of the eternal worship of God, which has neither beginning nor end, but, rather, occurs beyond space and time as *nunc aeternum*, as eternal presence. In its theophanies, the Bible gives insight into this celestial worship with the *Trishagion* (three times holy), which the seraphim sing: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full

of his glory' (Isa. 6:3).

This wide horizon of the eternal worship of God which the righteous will have a part of in the end is seen in new visions again and again in the last book of the Bible, the Book of Revelation, as follows:

And he said: 'These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore, they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes (Rev. 7:14b-17).

Understanding worship as the epitome of heavenly reality emphasizes once again impressively the fact that worship on earth is participation of mortal men in the eternity and glory of God. Horror concerning one's own sin before God, however, necessarily precedes all exaltation, joy, and worship of man as is expressed in the following:

'Woe to me!' I cried. 'I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty' (Isa. 6:5).

The gesture of humbly bowing down before the throne of God and of the Lamb is attested in Revelation as an important characteristic of eternal worship, as follows:

And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song: 'You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation (Rev. 5:8-9; cf. also Rev. 7:11-12).

Neither angels nor patriarchs, neither apostles nor martyrs nor any other perfected righteous person will grow beyond this attitude of humility and reverence in worship. Yet, still each one who has a part in this celestial worship, will, above all, experience the unending joy of God's eternal love and will be filled with his grace, which leads again to worship.

² Printed in the German contemporary Christian songbook, *Feiert Jesus* (Holzgerlingen Germany, 1995), song no. 201, stanza 5.

The Predestination Principle: A Bible Study

John Boykin

Keywords: Predestination, Free will, Choice, Salvation, Reformation, Criterion, Elect

THEOLOGIANS HAVE argued for centuries over one of the most fundamental questions in Christianity. The Bible¹ itself seems to give two radically different answers. Some Christians may try to embrace both answers, with little thought for the problems between them. Theologians, by contrast, have given the problems between the two answers a great deal of thought. They have tended to devote themselves to whichever answer they find most compelling while putting little stock in the other. I believe that a groundless assumption has kept the two sides from seeing the elegant reconciliation of the two answers.

The question is, What is God's criterion for determining who goes to heaven? Let's call the first answer the

predestination view. Let's call the second answer the free-will view.

The predestination view says in essence that before the earth or people were even created, God chose certain individuals to wind up in heaven and all the rest to wind up in hell. Advocates of the predestination view quote passages such as Ephesians 1: 4-5:

For [God] chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ.

They also point to Romans 8:29-30:

For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

The free-will view, by contrast, says in essence that God created us with a free will to make our own choices, to obey or to disobey. God holds us accountable for our choices, but does

not coerce us in the choosing. Advocates of the free-will view emphasize passages such as John 3:16 (KJ):

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Another key passage they cite is Romans 10:13:

Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

John sums up the free-will view as Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him (Jn. 3:36).

The conflict between these two concepts, the predestination view and the free-will view, cuts to the heart of the nature of God and the nature of humans. If God is sovereign, how can we be free? If we are free, how can God be sovereign? Theologians, historians, ecclesiologists, debaters, and logicians have been loading their respective canons in the defence of their own personal convictions since the time of Jesus.

I Reformation articulations of the predestination view

The issue came into sharpest focus in the Reformation. One of the foremost issues of the Reformation was the choosing of mutually exclusive sides between the concepts of predestination and free will. The two most outspoken advocates for predestination were Martin Luther and John Calvin.

Kenneth Scott Latourette summarized Luther's view this way: 'Man, so

Luther held, does not have free will. Man's will is like a beast of burden. It is ridden either by God or by the Devil and does whatever the one who is in the saddle directs.'²

Calvin defined predestination as

the eternal decree of God, by which He has determined in Himself, what He would have to become of every individual of mankind. *For they are not all created with a similar destiny; but eternal life is foreordained for some and eternal death for others. Every man, therefore, being created for one or the other of these ends, we say he is predestinated either to life or to death.*³

Luther and Calvin saw the hand of God in every event in history and in all the workings of physical nature, so that the world was the complete realization in time of the eternal ideal. They believed that the world as a whole and in all its parts and movements and changes was brought into a unity by the governing, all-pervading, all-harmonizing activity of the divine will, and its purpose was to manifest the divine glory. While their conception was that of a divine ordering of the whole course of history to the smallest detail, they were especially concerned with its relation to salvation.

Picking up Luther's and Calvin's theme, the Westminster Confession

¹ All citations are New International Version unless noted otherwise; King James (KJ).

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² Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1953), 724.

³ Loraine Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1932), 14-15, italics added.

expressed the predestination view thus:

Some men and angels are predestinated to everlasting life, and others are foreordained to everlasting death. These angels and men, thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed; and their number is so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or diminished.... God hath appointed the elect unto glory.... *Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only.* The rest of mankind, God was pleased...to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonor and wrath for their sin, to the praise of His glorious justice.⁴

II Erasmus and the free-will view

The most outspoken Reformation advocate of the free-will view was Erasmus, who became Luther's opponent in the field. Erasmus held, as Latourette summarizes it,

God would be unjust and immoral if He were so to order the universe that man could not of himself fulfill the conditions which He had ordained for salvation and then were arbitrarily to choose some to be saved and by doing so condemn others to hell. Luther admitted that natural reason was offended by the doctrine of man's helplessness in

sin and by a conception of God which, while holding Him to be good, taught that by His mere will He hardens and damns men whom He has not chosen to save. He confessed that at one time the apparent contradiction had so driven him to the abyss of despair that he wished that he had never been born. Luther stood in awe of the majesty and inscrutable justice of God. God, he maintained, is inaccessible to human reason.⁵

Even today, centuries after the Reformation, this dualism of doctrine continues to bring confusion. I am convinced that predestination is a fact reported in the Bible. I am also convinced that free will is a fact reported in the Bible. But how can we ever reconcile these seemingly opposite doctrines?

III Reconciliation?

Our search for a reconciliation must begin with a recognition that the problem lies not in the Bible, but in our understanding of it. Since both predestination and free will are presented clearly in the Bible, there can be neither conflict nor contradiction between them. So we must do more than paper over the problem. We must find a genuine reconciliation.

Let me propose an axiom: *Truth is not related to what we believe. Truth is truth, whether anyone believes it or not. If what you believe is true, that is good. But it is not true just because you believe it.* Nor is it untrue just because you do not believe it. If we want to know truth, we

will find it in the Bible—not in what someone says about the Bible, but in what the Bible itself says.

1. Using our will to choose new birth

The problem of predestination and free will turns on the role of the will. What is the will? It is one of the functions of the soul. God created us as three-part beings: body, spirit, and soul. The body is familiar enough. The spirit is the capacity to walk with God, to communicate with God, to enjoy his presence, to learn from him without any barrier or hindrance to his fellowship. The soul is itself three parts: mind, emotion, and will. The will is the capacity to discern, to decide, to choose, and to take action. A person's mind and emotion wait before the door of the free will. Here alone are decisions made.

If there were any question that God equipped us with a free will, we need only look at the Bible's many stories of people exercising their free will. The story of Adam and Eve makes it clear that God equipped them with a will that was free to choose to obey or disobey their Creator. God told Adam that a certain tree was forbidden to him and said, 'When you eat of it you will surely die' (Gen. 2:17). Adam processed this prohibition through the decision-making equipment that God had given him. His intellect knew God's order about that tree. His emotion responded to Eve's invitation to eat. Then his free will chose to disobey God.

His free decision had real consequences. God separated Adam and Eve from himself. Adam passed his sin and separation to his offspring, who would be born in sin and 'shapen in iniquity'

(Ps. 51:5, KJ). All were born with a full-functioning body and full-functioning soul, but without the indwelling Spirit of God who alone is able to assist us in making decisions that correspond to the will of God. Without the Spirit, our will acts under the control of our own fleshly desires.

The responsibility for and the consequences of our decisions therefore lie at our own feet. God acknowledged our free will from creation, conditioning our relationship with him on how we exercise our free will. We can either choose to 'believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved' (Acts 16:31), or we can choose to continue in unbelief and stay lost. No change can take place until we exercise our free will.

The story of Adam and Eve is just the first biblical account of people exercising their free will. Cain chose to kill his brother. Noah chose to obey God and build the ark. Abraham chose to obey the call of God and became his friend. Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses (think of all of the decisions he made!), Saul, David, and the prophets all faced many challenges to use their free will to obey or disobey God.

The gospel presupposes our free will. When Jesus began to preach in Galilee, his first message was, 'Repent, for the kingdom of God is near' (Mt. 4:12). The Greek word for *repent* that he used was *metanoiete*. This is the imperative meaning, 'change your mind'. The thing that people need to do more than any other is to change their minds. Our conduct is wrong because our creed is wrong. Our thoughts are wrong because our hearts are wrong. So Jesus said, 'change your mind'. About what? The kingdom of God.

⁴ Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, 84, italics added).

⁵ Latourette, *A History of Christianity*, 724.

What is the kingdom of God? Any kingdom is a relationship between a sovereign and his subjects in which the king demands obedience and his subjects obey. Likewise, the kingdom of God is a relationship between God and his people.

Adam lost this relationship in the Garden. As his heirs, we natural men can do nothing to establish a position with God. But Jesus promises to restore the relationship by bringing a new birth to anyone who will trust him. As he told Nicodemus,

No one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again..., unless he is born of water [a natural birth] and the Spirit [the spiritual birth].... For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. (Jn. 3:3-17).

Jesus required that Nicodemus 'believe.' Believing is an action of the free will. At this point the relationship stands and waits at the door of our will. If we decide to trust Jesus, we are given a new birth of the Spirit. That which Adam lost in the garden can be restored to the one who will receive Jesus as Saviour and Lord. That person will then be in the kingdom and have a relationship with the King. Then, like Adam before the fall, that one will have access to the Father for communication and fellowship. So the new birth waits upon the action of our free will.

Conversely, the essence of sin is the action of that free will to reject Jesus: The Holy Spirit, Jesus said, 'will con-

vict the world of guilt in regard to sin...because men do not believe in me' (Jn. 16:8-9). The Holy Spirit also teaches us that the 'prince of this world now stands condemned' (Jn. 16:11). Satan has already been judged. His condemnation is settled. Those who choose to follow Satan and reject Jesus are already condemned.

In other words, God takes very seriously the action of the free will in making decisions concerning Jesus. We are always held accountable for our decisions. We have no one else to blame.

2. Reconciling predestination and free will

In short, the Bible leaves no doubt about the decisive role of our free will in determining who goes to heaven. Does that mean that the predestination view is wrong? No, but it does mean that a groundless assumption leads the predestination view astray.

The essence of the error is crystallized in John Calvin's statement that 'Predestination we call the eternal decree of God, by which He has determined in Himself, what He would have to become of *every individual of mankind*.'⁶ But Calvin cannot find a single syllable in the Bible that teaches that any individual person has been predestined to either heaven or hell.

The Bible certainly teaches that in eternity past God predestined some to go to heaven and others to hell. Scripture leaves no doubt about that. The question is what criterion he applied in making that judgment. To this critical

⁶ Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, 14-15, italics added.

question, the predestination theologians have no answer. They say he just went by the secret council and good pleasure of his will. But that does not answer the question, *Why this individual and not that one?*

The solution to the predestination/free will problem is simple: *Predestination is not personal. It is a principle.*

Nobody's name is on predestination except God's. What criterion does God use in determining who goes to heaven and who goes to hell? The answer comes from the free-will view: Jesus. He is the one by whom God judges us.

Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son (Jn. 3:18).

I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me (Jn. 14:6).

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him (Jn. 3:36).

God chose us in him [Christ] before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ (Eph. 1: 4-5).

In short, God did not choose us as individuals. 'He chose us *in him*.' In other words, he chose Jesus and, by extension, those who are 'in him'.

So what God predestined was not that individual A would go to heaven and individual B would go to hell, but that salvation is for whosoever believes in Jesus.

3. Calvin and Luther miss the mark

Why do we assume that predestination has to be personal? I suspect that human egotism keeps us from accepting the idea that God may not have to deal with us personally. Since he has already provided all that is required for the redemption of any and all souls, there remains only our choice to receive or reject what he has done. Continued separation from him or acceptance by him waits only upon the free choice of the individual.

Why does the doctrine of predestination and election as presented by Calvin and Luther and their progeny miss the mark? It seems to be based on an Old Testament concept of God. That concept is not wrong; it's just incomplete. It places great emphasis on Old Testament legalism.

Somehow, I wish that I could drag the men who wrote the great books of Reformation times into the New Testament and introduce them to Jesus, who is the final, complete, and perfect revelation of God. In him we find the fully developed teachings that unveil the very heart of the Creator.

Though God never changes, across the ages the Sovereign Lord has chosen to reveal himself progressively. He has revealed himself finally, completely, perfectly, and totally in Jesus Christ. For us to know the complete revelation of God, we must look to Jesus. Therefore, if we want to know God, we must know Jesus Christ.

The predestination view holds that 'none have this will and desire [to come to Christ and persevere in his service] except those whom God had previously made willing and desirous; and that He

gives this will and desire to none but His own elect.’⁷ But this view conflicts with the Bible’s statement that salvation is for ‘whosoever will’.

The Reformers’ doctrine of predestination, if followed to its ultimate conclusions, leaves me with a god in whom I cannot believe. It portrays a capricious God who deals with his creation without considering the nature that he himself created in us. Everything in the predestination view is based on an unbending application of his will without any room for the changing nature of his creature.

But God’s sovereignty is not static. It is dynamic. In the New Testament we find the nature and will of the God who is real, present, and involved in the affairs of men. In Jesus we see God showing us his eternal character. So, if I want to know God, I need only to look at Jesus. All of the powerful attributes of God presented in the Old Testament (as Sovereign, Judge, and exalted Ruler) are confirmed in the New. However, the New spotlights the clearer revelation of his heart as love, compassion, mercy, and grace.

III Faith has been God’s criterion since creation

The predestination view is correct that God made his determination before creation. But that view omits the critical point that God’s determination was that belief in Jesus would be his standard of judgment, the criterion by which he would judge the individual.

‘Whosoever believeth in him....’ In describing Jesus as the ‘Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world’ (Rev. 13:8), John shows Jesus to be the redeemer of mankind before we were created.

Faith in the Word of God—by this are we judged. Faith has always been the only way to God. ‘Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness’ (Rom. 4:3). Faith in the Word of God, taking him at his word, relying on his word—this is the attitude that opens the gates of God’s audience chamber.

The righteous will live by faith (Rom. 1:17).

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith... (Eph. 2:8).

Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved (Acts 16:31).

Adam, by contrast, did not believe what God had said, so he ate of the forbidden fruit. It was a wilful act of disobedience to God’s word that brought death to all of us who have inherited his sinful, unbelieving nature.

God set boundaries around his creation within which his sovereignty is absolute. The Greek word for *predestination* is *prohoridzo*. *Pro* means before. *Horidzo* is to define, to mark out the boundaries or limits. The English word *horizon*—that which limits sight—is lifted from this Greek word. So *prohoridzo* simply means before horizoned, preset limits. Nothing within his creation can go beyond his governing hand. It is all surrounded, circumvented, enclosed, prelimited, and controlled by the absolute will of the sovereign. Our God reigns!

Within those boundaries, he created us with a free will with which to choose

obedience or disobedience. We therefore are wholly responsible for the outcome and consequences of our decisions. We are free to choose.

But God has the last word. Either ‘enter thou into the joy of thy lord’ (Mt. 25:21 KJ), or ‘depart from me, all you workers of iniquity.’ (Lk. 13:27 KJ). Neither of these conclusions is the result of predestination. One does not

enter the joys of the Lord just because God had predestined it. Nor does one depart from him because one was predestined to that. The outcome of this assignment in eternity is the result of our choice to accept or reject the grace of God. The position of God is always very clear: Believe or perish—your choice!

⁷ Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, 215.

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Who's Afraid of Postmodernism?

James K. A. Smith

Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006

ISBN: 978-0-8010-2918-9

Pb, pp 156, bibliog., index

Reviewed by Rob Haskell, Senderis, Washington, USA.

Although the ideas of Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault—the 'unholy trinity' that founded postmodernism—are often seen as radically antichristian, James K. A. Smith argues that a serious look at what they said is actually very helpful for those who are seeking to be faithful followers of Christ today.

Smith tells us that in order to understand the ideas through which postmodernism 'slouched out of Paris' it is necessary to overcome the bumper sticker summaries that circulate among Christians. In Derrida's case, the bumper sticker summary is that 'there is nothing outside the text', where this is taken to mean that nothing controls the meaning of a text. Everything is interpretation. But Smith argues that although Derrida did teach that everything is interpretation, he did not deny that there are real things out there in the world that we bump into, nor did he think that all interpretations were equally valid. Derrida's core insight was that we cannot appeal to anything that is uninterpreted. Smith welcomes this insight and sees Derrida in light of the Reformed notion of epistemological bias. He further suggests that if everything is interpretation, this should lead us back to scripture as our guide to interpreting the 'text' of the world.

Lyotard is famous for defining postmoder-

nity as 'incredulity towards meta-narratives', as a kind of opening salvo against modernity. This bumper sticker phrase is usually taken to mean that postmodernity is against overarching stories that explain our world. Understood in this way, the statement is essentially a denial of the legitimacy of worldviews and would be inimical to Christian faith. If the Bible is anything, it is an overarching story about the past, present and future of creation. If big stories are out, so is Christianity.

But Smith points out that for Lyotard a meta-narrative is a uniquely modern phenomenon. It is not the overarching story in itself that is under criticism by postmodernism, but the rationally justified story. The modern fallacy is to think that a worldview can be legitimized by appeal to reason. It follows then, that the Christian meta-narrative is not the biblical panorama itself, but rationalist apologetics in its claim to legitimate the Christian story by an appeal to reason. Smith thinks we would be right to reject the rationalist apologetic and commends a presuppositionalist approach in which rather than attempting to prove Christianity through a misguided appeal to reason we instead proclaim the Christian story in the power of the Spirit. Finally, Smith arrives at Foucault's study of modern institutions and the way in which they embody the principles at work in the society at large. Foucault argues, for example, that for the last 300 years prison systems have been instances of society and ought not to be compartmentalized as if they operated on a different level. The principle at work in all modern institutions and thus in all society is the principle that *power is knowledge*. This does not mean that the two are identical,

but that they are integrally related.

Smith highlights the controversy over what Foucault intended to accomplish by his analysis. Did he describe power-knowledge relations in order to encourage a Nietzschean will to power? Or was he critiquing the dehumanizing aspects of power/knowledge in modern institutions in order to bring about change? Smith argues that the latter is the case and that it points to an inherent modernism in Foucault: his critique of modern institutions is to be placed in the same category as modern liberalism's obsession with the freedom of the individual. And yet, argues Smith, there is still much we can learn from Foucault, for he has highlighted the importance of power as a formative and disciplinary force and he can help us understand the need for spiritual discipline in the formation of Christian character and community.

A final chapter works out what a church that listens to these postmodern insights might look like. Here Smith makes the valuable distinction between being postmodern and being 'relevant'. The two are often confused in outreach parlance, but a postmodern approach rejects the pragmatism implied in attempts to focus church life around 'relevance'. Rather, it pulls towards localization, attention to church tradition and a liturgical outlook on life.

Smith is a philosopher who works hard at staying accessible, effectively mining such films as *Memento*, *The Little Mermaid* and *Whale Rider* to expound ideas. But at times his applications are problematic, or perhaps just underdeveloped. One is left disconcerted at the claim that there can be no rational legitimization of Christianity. I suspect that Smith is not meaning there are no good reasons to believe the Christian story, but merely that there are no ontologically infallible proofs for Christianity. But he does not work this

out very well and I wish he had, because the uninitiated reader could come away with the message that there is no reason to prefer one religion or worldview over another, except perhaps by who tells the better story. This is an important question: Can we determine whether one worldview is better than another in the absence of rational legitimization?

His application of Foucault is also problematic. Foucault turns out to be a modernist anyway, so Smith applies his insight backwards: although Foucault was critical of the use of power for social discipline, we Christians can recognize that discipline is good thing for spiritual formation. But this begs for a discussion of the nature of power in and outside the church. Surely, there is much about the power that Foucault describes which the church ought to reject; so much so that one wonders if we ought to accept the insight at all. Also, is it really appropriate to dismiss appeals to the rights of individuals as mere radical modernist individualism? We run the danger of confusing individualism with basic human compassion.

Many Evangelicals see postmodernism as just another wave of relativism without fully understanding the issues that are at stake. Smith had done a tremendous job of getting the ideas of postmodernism on the table for a wide audience to interact with. Even if one might disagree with some of Smith's applications, his expositions of Derrida, Lyotard and Foucault are very helpful for understanding the relationship between postmodern thought and Christianity.

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The Theology of John Wesley: Holy Love and the Shape of Grace

Kenneth J. Collins,

Nashville, Tennessee, USA: Abingdon
Press, 2007

ISBN: 978-0-687-64633-3

Pb, pp 423, bibliog, index.

Reviewed by Philip A. Gottschalk, Tyndale
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Dr. Collins' book *The Theology of John Wesley* is a masterful and exhaustive study of Wesley's thought. As Collins himself admits, Wesley's theology was mainly practical theology, i.e. theology done with a view towards ministering to particular situations and individuals. Thus there is no 'theology' of John Wesley which he himself left. However, Collins has succeeded in drawing together from Wesley's pastoral letters, sermons, essays and treatises a comprehensive, full-orbed systematic theology. As well he has succeeded in presenting Wesley's systematic theology with much more subtlety than his predecessors.

Collins suggests that rather than simply identifying Wesley as an 'Arminian' and calling his system 'synergistic', Wesley was a blend of Protestant and Catholic emphases. In Collins' view, Wesley was as Protestant as Calvin with regards to the need for God to make the first step resulting in justification. Yet the Catholic influence (Wesley's reading of the Eastern and Western Fathers) resulted in his view that 'entire sanctification' of which justification was a part, was a process. Justification was 'instantaneous' while sanctification was a 'process'.

In Collins' estimation most Wesley schol-

ars (as well as detractors) have missed Wesley's subtlety. In order to correct this problem he presents two 'axial themes' by which he endeavours to present Wesley's thought. Both of these axial themes allow for a more precise understanding of what Wesley actually intended to say, rather than what others have interpolated.

Collins gives diagrams to help readers understand the 'conjunctive' nature of Wesley's thought. He also uses similar diagrams in subsequent chapters which help clarify ideas in them.

The Axial Theme of Wesley's Practical Theology	
Holiness	Grace
Holy/Love	Free/Cooperant

The first half of the axial theme is Holiness as Holy Love by which Collins explains how Wesley saw holiness as a combination of God's holiness and love, and the responding sinner's need for holiness and love. God's holiness requires obedience to the law, but through his love he provides a satisfaction for the penalty of transgressing that law.

From the recipient's standpoint, holiness is what God desires of her but which, without love for God, she cannot obtain. Thus, God gives that love to the respondent which results in a desire for holiness.

The second half of the axial theme, the Conjunction of Grace, has a much more complicated structure, but shows more intricately how Wesley included various influences from his own spiritual growth: his Anglican heritage, that of Reformation

figures, Moravian, German Pietists, and his reading of the Eastern and Western Fathers.

The Conjunction of Grace	
The Work of God alone	Co-operant Grace (Responsible) Synergism
Highlights Favour	Highlights Empowerment
Receiving	Responding
Instantaneous	Process
Protestant Emphasis	Catholic Emphasis

As an illustration of how this conjunction works we will focus only on the issue of 'entire sanctification'. From the standpoint of justification a sinner cannot obtain salvation without God's work. Justification is the work of God alone. However, Wesley saw justification as a part of a larger process. God does the work of justifying; the 'new birth' is 'instantaneous'. On the other hand, as with sanctification more 'broadly understood', the new birth is a 'process' which requires the respondent's active involvement.

Through these axial themes then Collins attempts to overcome past oversimplifications of Wesley's thought. After having set up his interpretative framework, Collins then goes on to present a complete systematic theology of John Wesley. He begins with God the Father and proceeds through every area of theology ending with eschatology. In each chapter he first attempts to present Wesley's own views from his own works, then he responds to other interpreters of Wesley attempting to answer their views and

explain why his view is preferable; finally he attempts to apply Wesley's thought to questions of the 21st century. While the third section of each chapter is interesting, in some instances his attempts to apply Wesley's ideas to the 21st century seem a bit forced.

There are only two other potential difficulties for the reader. First, his axial themes and explanations are quite complicated and take some careful reading to understand. Still they do allow Collins room to make his case for Wesley's subtle theology. Secondly, for those from outside the Wesleyan tradition there may be just a bit too much internecine jousting.

Still, it is a book well worth reading. Collins' task is a huge one, but he greatly succeeds in it. His book is a fresh look at systematic theology in general, not only for Wesley scholars or Methodists. It represents another approach to most other current Evangelical theologies which are generally more reformed in nature.

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God's Continent: Christianity, Islam, and Europe's Religious Crisis

Philip Jenkins

The Future of Christianity Trilogy
New York: Oxford University Press, 2007

ISBN: 978-0-19-531395-6
Hb, ix + 340 pp., index

Reviewed by George W. Harper,
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Croatia.

Demography is destiny. Most European nations' birthrates are far below what would be needed just to maintain their current populations, while their Muslim communities are steadily growing, thanks

to continuing immigration as well as flourishing fertility. It is easy to see why some Turkish women living in Germany are said to taunt their nominally Christian neighbours: 'We're going to outbirth you!'

According to one projection, by the end of this century the majority of Europeans will be Muslim. Already new names are being coined, perhaps partly in jest but also by way of intended prophecy: 'Eurabia', 'Belgistan', and so on. Abandoned church buildings litter the continent's landscape, while new mosques, some of them truly colossal, rise in Córdoba, Paris, London, and elsewhere. Perhaps the thirteen centuries since Charles Martel's victory over Abdul Rahman al-Ghafiqi at the battle of Tours will prove to have been nothing more than an enormous historical parenthesis. But perhaps not. Caution is always necessary when extrapolating from short-term tendencies to long-term trends. Mark Twain once made the tongue-in-cheek suggestion that since the Mississippi River grows shorter at the rate of more than a mile per year, it must once have been millions of miles long and within a few centuries will have disappeared entirely. Philip Jenkins, in his new book, *God's Continent: Christianity, Islam, and Europe's Religious Crisis*, argues that fatalistic forecasts regarding the future of Europe's Christian community belong in the same category.

Jenkins offers three reasons for this. First, though Muslims in their home countries as well as the European diaspora have indeed maintained higher birthrates than have old-stock Europeans, this is beginning to change. Today, for example, Albania, 70 percent of whose people are Muslim, has a fertility rate only slightly higher than that of France, and the fertility rate of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 40 percent of whose people

are Muslim, is comparable to that of Germany (p. 21). Thus, though the demographic bulge of young people born to the previous generation of European Muslims will take several decades to work its way through the system, it will probably be precisely that—a one-time bulge—thanks to what Jenkins calls 'the spread of sub-replacement fertility' (p. 22). By the middle of this century, he suggests, about 15 percent of Europeans will be Muslim; this is surely 'a historical and cultural fact of vast importance' (p. 119), but at the same time it belies the projected advent of 'Eurabia'.

Second, Jenkins notes that most European Muslims have already absorbed many of the cultural values of the societies within which they have put down roots. In particular, though they remain culturally Muslim, they are generally as lax in their practice of Islam as are most old-stock Europeans in their practice of Christianity. For example, only a third of French Muslims pray daily, only 15 percent of them observe Islam's five 'pillars', and only 5 percent of them worship regularly in a mosque (pp. 122, 158). And while residents of Muslim-majority countries commonly have a negative view of Christianity, European Muslims feel 'overwhelmingly positive about Christians in general' (p. 20). The force of assimilation cannot be denied.

Third, Jenkins observes that it isn't only Muslims who are migrating from the Third to the First World. With birthrates declining in countries like Algeria and Egypt, more and more of those arriving on Europe's shores are from countries like Nigeria and Uganda where most people are Christians and most churches are experiencing rapid growth (pp. 22, 87-102). Inevitably, these Christian migrants bring their faith with them and affiliate with or, if necessary, help to establish

churches like those they left behind, making a mark on the host culture as distinctive as that made by Muslim migrants before them.

Already Ukraine's largest Protestant church is the Embassy of the Blessed Kingdom of God for All Nations, led by Sunday Adelaja, a Nigerian. London's largest Protestant church is the Kingsway International Christian Centre, led by another Nigerian, Matthew Ashimolowo. Thousands of missionaries representing scores of African, Brazilian, and Korean denominations serve throughout the continent. And European Roman Catholics have responded to their own critical shortage of priests by facilitating the influx of clergy from across the global South. In short, far from collapsing, European Christianity is being 'south-ernized' and thus revitalized (pp. 88-91).

Do the naysayers have a point? What of the homegrown terrorists who have already staged attacks in Madrid and London? What of the disaffected North African youths whose rioting has devastated working-class suburbs of Paris? Jenkins is not naïve. He grants that Europe's Islamist radicals are dangerous, but he stresses that they are relatively few in number (pp. 162-166, 205). Civil liberties give them the chance to organize and pursue their agendas, at least up to a point, something that they generally lack in their home countries (pp. 205-232). But those same liberties also make possible the emergence of a kind of 'Euro-Islam' that accepts religious and cultural diversity, values tolerance, and respects the rules of civil society (pp. 139-147). Jenkins thinks the future lies with the latter rather than the former. We can only hope that he is right.

This is an important book. With it, Jenkins concludes the trilogy he began with *The Next Christendom: The Coming of*

Global Christianity (2002) and continued with *The New Faces of Christianity: Believing the Bible in the Global South* (2006). It is not perfect. For example, it has far too little to say about contemporary renewal movements that are transforming European Christianity from the inside out. But at least it decisively refutes the infamous 'obituary' for God that appeared in the 23 December 1999 'millennium' issue of the *Economist*. Even in Europe, as Jenkins demonstrates, God is alive and well.

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The Sacred Anointing: Preaching and the Spirit's Anointing in the Life and Thought of Martyn Lloyd-Jones

Tony Sargent

Milton Keynes: Paternoster 2007
ISBN 978-1-84227-478-1
2nd Ed (1st edition Hodder & Stoughton 1994)
Pb., pp 271, indices

And

**Gems From Martyn Lloyd-Jones
An Anthology of Quotations
from "The Doctor"**

Tony Sargent

Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2007
ISBN 978-1-84227-474-1
Pb, pp 320, bibliog.

Reviewed by Lynn Wales, University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia.

This second edition of a well-received book should prove interesting to theologians and preachers not previously familiar with the work of Martyn Lloyd Jones, but concerned with issues of pneumatology, missiology, revival and the role of preaching. It is a searching, reflective

introduction to many issues in these areas, through the examination of a remarkable 20th century preaching ministry which continues to exert significant influence upon the contemporary international church through recordings and publications. Ample references, and information on obtaining recorded sermons, allow for further reading and listening.

In a preaching workshop in Melbourne in the 1980s Dr D.A. Carson arrived at the topic of sermon delivery, focusing on the vital factor of the Holy Spirit's unction upon the preached Word, without which, as the Puritans put it, one delivered 'honest weak ministry'. This expression describes preaching that is staunchly loyal to Scriptural truth but which lacks the Holy Spirit's power, as it was experienced, for example, in the early Church following Pentecost, in revivals such as those in the 18th century, or in individual ministries such as that of Spurgeon.

A prime example, Dr Carson stated, of a preacher on whom this power was observable was Martyn Lloyd-Jones (LJ): 'He had unction. Oh boy, did he have unction! Even when I didn't agree with his exegesis, he had unction.' In common with Dr Carson, with many other evangelical church leaders (note the testimonies in the book) and with thousands of Christian people all over the world, Dr Sargent, when living in London, personally witnessed Lloyd-Jones's powerful preaching ministry, exercised for thirty years in Westminster Chapel (also throughout the UK and in North America).

The book explores Lloyd-Jones's teaching on the work of the Holy Spirit in the proclamation of the Word, and describes the plainly observable impact of this teaching upon Lloyd-Jones's own life and ministry. Dr Sargent, currently Principal of International Christian College, Glasgow, following substantial preaching

and pastoral ministries, developed the research basis for the book in a doctoral program at Westminster Theological Seminary, California.

Primary evidence consists of the very large extant body of Lloyd-Jones's recorded sermons, his sizeable publication list (some deal specifically with the Spirit's direct witness, and with preaching) and personal recollections from Dr Sargent and others. Other works on Lloyd-Jones's ministry are discussed and, noting the controversy aroused by some aspects of his teaching on the Holy Spirit, Sargent gives references to both favourable and critical comments in journals, and to passing comments in other works.

Sargent hopes that, with the invention of audio-recording by Lloyd-Jones's day, today's preachers will learn principles of preaching by listening as well as reading, being thus enabled to 'feel the power of God in a Lloyd-Jones sermon', as Dr J.I. Packer puts it, and helped to become more powerful preachers themselves.

Chapters 1-3, and also chapter 7, introduce the concept of the unction of the Holy Spirit upon the preached Word, biblical and historical evidence supporting Lloyd-Jones's teaching on unction, and his own experiences of Spirit baptism, personally and in his ministries in Wales (1928-38, when his church experienced revival) and in England (1938-68). Lloyd-Jones stood in the preaching tradition of experimental Calvinists such as Edwards, Whitefield, Simeon or Spurgeon, ie, reformed in theology but with a strong belief, confirmed by experience, in the active power of the Holy Spirit upon preacher and congregation.

The authority of Scripture and the power of the Spirit are major themes in the book. For Lloyd-Jones the Scriptures, inspired by the Holy Spirit, were the supreme authority for all Christian

preaching and he found his doctrine on the Spirit's work within the Scriptures themselves. Chapters 8-12 thus explore the consequences of this firmly-held relationship for Lloyd-Jones' approach to preaching, treating such diverse topics as his use of systematic and also historical theology or the value he placed on overviews, sermon series or word study. These chapters should be particularly stimulating to contemporary preachers.

Crucially, chapters 4-6 explore Lloyd-Jones as a man of God—in chapter 4, his unflinching belief in the sovereignty of God, and utter dependence upon the Holy Spirit for all aspects of preaching, making him before all else a man of prayer; in chapter 5, the immense Pauline influence upon his preaching, in content, argument, strong Christ-centredness (and the freedom of the Spirit as the enormity of the message moved his heart); and in chapter 6, a moving, perceptive exploration of the preacher as a godly man first and a preacher second, one who lives close to God whether or not he is preaching.

Sargent's rich work leaves the overall impression that Lloyd Jones, who keenly felt his own inadequacy as a preacher, was nevertheless enabled by God's manifest power to deliver one of the most authoritative, profound and effective ministries of the 20th century. His life and teaching honoured God and God smiled upon his preaching—an inspiration for all concerned with the preaching ministry.

Gems From Martyn Lloyd-Jones An Anthology of Quotations from "The Doctor", is an unusual book, and is intended as a companion volume to *The Sacred Anointing*. In his research Sargent studied the many published works that have ensued from the taping and transcribing of Lloyd-Jones' preaching and teaching ministry. These include major preaching series on books such as Romans as well

as doctrinal and pastoral topics. Sargent began to compile an anthology of noteworthy passages or sentences and over time categorized these extracts by subject matter, presenting the subjects alphabetically in the resulting text.

This book is aimed in the first instance at preachers, as was the companion volume, and it follows up with samples of actual content of Lloyd-Jones' extraordinary and authoritative ministry. The author does not want to encourage preachers to copy Lloyd-Jones, but to seek in their own way to expound the Scriptures 'with clarity and passion'. A second consideration on the author's part is that non-preachers will also benefit greatly by reading the text since it gives a good indication of the profound theology that underpinned Lloyd-Jones' preaching. (It has been noted that even theological students have been known to emerge from one of these sermons [or lecture] observing how much they had learnt in one brief hour.)

The alphabetically organized Index shows the enormous range of Lloyd-Jones' preaching and teaching ministry. Major themes can often be discerned in terms of space allotted: the entry *Atonement*, for example, extends for two to three pages, and there are two pages on *Evangelism*, amidst many short paragraphs or one-sentence entries such as those on *Choirs* or *Education*.

How best can one use this book? It has clearly been well received by a range of reviewers, as shown by the comments on the back cover. As a reviewer I read the text from cover to cover, and this is certainly one way of approaching it, albeit one which is cognitively fragmenting at times. An advantage of this approach, however, is that it enables the reader to perceive the comprehensiveness and balance of the ministry, which offsets the possible appearance of imbalance if one

just reads one strong statement presented in isolation from its context. In his foreword to the book Professor J. I. Packer notes the difficulty of culling extracts from the preaching ministry of one 'whose stock-trade was lawyer-like cumulative argument' but acknowledges the valuable contribution that the author has made in providing this anthology.

The author himself is well aware that sample extracts are but a taste, and urges readers to go to the full work from which an extract is taken, if 'a quote prompts great interest, particularly if the subject matter seems controversial. He could be controversial; I think that some thoughts in this book will provoke disagreement in some readers, so Sargent's advice here is very sound.

Again he suggests the value of looking at the full work in order to see how the doctrinal teaching is built up, ie by considering what precedes the quotation that provoked interest. For this reason all extracts are referenced, and at the end there is a list (which the author has striven to make exhaustive) of all Lloyd-Jones' published works, as well as some further reading by other writers on his life and ministry.

Another way to use the book would be to pursue particular themes as these become relevant in ministry. An obvious example would be to follow up the entry *Salvation*, with such entries as *atonement, death, election, evangelism, grace, heart, heaven, infants & unevangelised, love, reason, regeneration, repentance, responsibility, will*.

I had reservations at the outset about a book of this kind, but having read it I am delighted to have enjoyed afresh the stimulus of Lloyd-Jones' preached works, and recommend it as an inspirational volume, which should whet the appetite of those who believe in God's use of preaching in the Spirit as a chief means of proclaiming

the gospel of Christ, and of those who desire to understand Scriptural teaching more fully and clearly.

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Re:Mission: Biblical Mission for a Post-Biblical Church

Andrew Perriman

Milton Keynes: Authentic Media,
2007

ISBN: 978-1-84227-545-0
Pb., pp156, notes.

Reviewed by Patrick Mitchel, Irish Bible
Institute, Dublin, Ireland

If Andrew Perriman is right in the eschatological framework of the New Testament presented in this book, an very large number of Christians have been, and are, profoundly wrong in what they believe about the message of Jesus and his return. This is not, of course, reason enough to disagree with his arguments, but it is an indication of the radical scope of *Re: Mission*.

Building on his earlier work *The Coming of the Son of Man: New Testament Eschatology for an Emerging Church* (2005), Perriman, an independent scholar based in Holland with interests in the missional and emerging church, sets out a Preterist vision: namely that practically all of the eschatological promises of the Bible have been fulfilled. He means by this that Jesus and Paul are focused on the imminent arrival of two dramatic 'horizons': the destruction of Jerusalem in AD70 and the later collapse of Greek-Roman paganism. These are the literal promised judgements of God on his people, and on Roman imperialism, out of which God creates the suffering 'community of the Son of Man'. This community embodies the fulfilment of God's promise

to Abraham and in effect marks the 'end' of the New Testament's vision. A 'third horizon'—the final judgement and renewal of the created order—is, for Perriman, 'barely discerned' in the New Testament.

This approach will probably disturb and disorientate many readers; here are some reasons why. Most of the New Testament simply does not apply to the contemporary church—it records events long fulfilled. We are 'off the map' in a 'post-biblical' age, largely beyond the range of the realised eschatology of Jesus' and Paul's vision. Indeed Jesus probably never imagined Gentiles would be included in God's promises to Israel (p. 64). The modern church, therefore, is in pioneer territory and it is in this unfamiliar landscape that it now has to rethink its mission.

Other implications follow. The 'good news' is not a timeless message of repentance, faith and the hope of heaven, but a message 'to Israel and about Israel' that Jesus is the one 'who will save his people from the historical consequences of their rebelliousness' (p. 40). The idea that the church today exists within the tension of the 'now' and the 'not yet' of the Kingdom of God is to unnecessarily spiritualise the Kingdom of God; instead the Kingdom has come so it is 'no longer the ultimate hope of the church' (p. 139). The images of judgement in the gospels refer not to a metaphysical eternal hell, but are literal pictures depicting impending scenes of death and judgement. The *Parousia* is not a future 'second coming' of the Son of Man; it refers to the historical conflict with the political opponents of Israel out of which emerges a faithful vindicated community (p. 75). Jesus' promise to be with his disciple to the 'end of the age' extends only as far as AD70 (p. 88). Paul's gospel is addressing literal salvation for Jews and Gentiles from impending divine judgement (p. 106). Even a text

like Philippians 2:9-10 is to be understood solely in a 'this-worldly' first century term of reference.

Perriman writes with creativity and flair. He is committed to let the biblical text 'speak for itself'. He brings to life the imaginary world of the Bible's authors and the Jewishness of the narrative story of God's purposes for Israel. His analysis rightly points to the huge exegetical problems facing the sort of futurist eschatology exemplified by the 'Left Behind' series. It also should challenge any form of dualistic evangelical eschatology detached from the biblical narrative. But is it convincing?

Part of the problem here is the fluid nature of imagery itself that defies neat categorisation. Perriman's three horizons at times seem artificial and forced, never more so than in the proposal concerning the 'resurrection of the dead' that Paul refers to in Acts 23:6, and elsewhere, as 'the hope of national resurrection at a time of judgement' (p. 97)! Something curious is happening here when an unrelenting insistence on literal eschatology leads to some sort of metaphorical resurrection experience for the early suffering church. It is also not at all clear how the gradual collapse of Greek-Roman paganism can be tidily applied to a vindication of Israel, centuries after the emergence of the Christian church.

Other questions are raised by the degree to which practically all of NT eschatology is squashed into the first two horizons. First is the relevance of the New Testament for the 'post-biblical' and 'post-eschatological' church. Perriman's schema leaves us detached from the story of New Testament and relegates much of Jesus' life and teaching to the realm of historical interest. (It is ironic that there are echoes here of dispensationalism's division of Jesus' message between Israel

and the church). It is striking, and very depressing, how both the Lord's Prayer and the Lord's Supper become merely 'acts of remembrance' for modern Christians (p. 154).

Second is the nature of mission. If, as he argues, the traditional evangelical message about sin and salvation is actually 'more appropriate to the first century', what actually is the 'good news' in a 'post-biblical' setting? It appears that salvation is somehow tied up with joining the 're-creational' community of the Son of Man—but how this is done is not spelled out. Rather mission is redefined as a somewhat vague notion of being 'an alternative humanity in the midst of things' (p. 149).

Third, the overwhelming focus on the first two horizons means little attention is paid by comparison to the third—the final judgement and new creation. This is quite remarkable since, if you accept its reality, this is by far the most dramatic of all horizons. Perriman does say that this ultimate hope 'should extend a backward pressure on the self-understanding of the church', but this is what the book does not really do. It is worth contrasting the outcome of his theology here with that of another recent book on eschatology, edited by S. Holmes and R. Rook, *What on earth are we waiting for?* (2007) which explores more fruitfully how eschatological hope impacts all of life in the here and now.

So, overall a paradigm-shifting, serious, frustrating and flawed book; worth wrestling with, and a powerful reminder of the vital place of eschatology in any interpretation of the Bible story.

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Body and Character in Luke and Acts. The Subversion of Physiognomy in Early Christianity

Mikeal C. Parsons

Grand Rapids, MI (USA), Baker Academic 2006
ISBN 978-0-8010-2885-4
Pb., pp191 Indices

Reviewed by Leonardo De Chirico, IFED, Padova, Italy.

Biblical studies are enriched by a variety of insights coming from many different directions. Reading the text through a particular lens and with a specific focus can shed new light on the force of the text itself. This is the case with physiognomy. Physiognomy is an ancient art of associating the study of a person's physical features with the understanding of the person's character. The main presupposition is that the physical is inherently linked to the moral and vice versa. Physiognomy has a long history spanning from Greek and Roman literature to present-day attempts to highlight the relationship between what is apparent in the outlook of a human being and what belongs to his inner human qualities.

This volume is an important contribution towards the appreciation of physiognomic awareness in the Luke-Acts narrative. Parsons cogently shows that Luke was very aware of physiognomic paradigms that were then accepted as strong cultural prejudices against certain kinds of people. His narrative strategy is to subvert these canons in order to show the inclusion of any kind of people in God's covenant community.

In the first two chapters, Parsons provides useful background information on classical physiognomic patterns.

Surveying Greek and Roman literature, he points to its origins in the Hippocratic medical tradition as well as in Aristotelian, Platonic and Stoic philosophers. He then shows how physiognomy worked in practice for example in the classical portrayal of Tiberius by Suetonius. In the ancient world there was a sense that 'strength and beauty of the body are reflections of nobility of character' (p. 49). Early Jewish and Christian literature is also investigated. Here too, the connection between the outward and the inward is clearly assumed and worked out in different ways, e.g. in Israel's priestly system, so concerned with wholeness of the body, and in Paul's accounts of his physical weakness which was used by his opponents to question his apostolic authority. The evidence indicates that physiognomic consciousness is at work even though 'it is not a major theme' (p. 65) in both canonical and noncanonical writings.

The bulk of the book, however, is in the next five chapters where Parsons deals with the Luke-Acts narrative. Here he examines the stories of the bent woman (Luke 13:10-17), the short Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10), the man lame from birth (Acts 3-4) and the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-40). In each instance, 'physiognomic conventions are introduced only to be overturned' (p. 124). The bent woman (whose problem is perceived as moral and therefore physical) is recognised as a daughter of Abraham to indicate her being part of the covenant community. Zacchaeus' shortness may reflect his physiognomic smallness in spirit, but he is searched for by Jesus and converted. The lame man's physical disability does not disqualify him from membership in the eschatological community. The Ethiopian eunuch (with so many physiognomic features that mark

him as physically, ethnically and morally ambiguous) is accepted through his confession and baptism.

Summing up, Parsons argues that 'the lame man (along with the bent woman, Zacchaeus, and the Ethiopian eunuch) would have been viewed by Luke's auditors as morally weak, corrupt, or even evil, yet Luke claims that the eschatological community is comprised of such as these, for "God shows no partiality" (Acts 10:34)' (p. 122). For the Lukan Jesus 'one's moral character is not determined by the color, shape, size, or limitations of one's body' (p. 144). The Luke-Acts narrative, radically redraws the map of who is in and who is out. In this new pattern, physiognomic prejudices are questioned and overcome in light of the inclusive nature of the kingdom of God. Indeed, 'The Lord does not see as mortals see: they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart' (1 Samuel 16:7).

It would be desirable to extend this valuable research on physiognomic patterns and Gospel reversals on other biblical *corpore*.

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An Introduction to the Desert Fathers

Jason Byassee

Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2007

ISBN 13: 978-1-59752-530-5
Pb., pp117, bibliog.

Reviewed by Christopher A. Hall, Eastern University, St Davids, PA, USA

Jason Byassee, Assistant Editor at the Christian Century and a Ph.D. graduate from Duke University, possesses a unique gift, that of the bridge-builder. In *An*

Introduction to the Desert Fathers, Byassee's short, pithy introduction to the world, thought, and practices of the desert fathers enables modern readers to comprehend, if not fully embrace, a culture of belief that is both wacky and wise. What motivated so many third and fourth century Christians to move to the harsh, uninviting Egyptian and Syrian deserts? Why would anyone think that a lifetime spent largely alone plaiting reed baskets could lead one deeply into the life of Christ's kingdom? Who were these monks anyway, and why did they live in such a strange manner?

One of the strengths of Byassee's book is his refusal to gloss over or idealize the lives and thoughts of the desert monks. There is both an 'appealing' and a 'dark side' to desert spirituality. The darker side of desert life, for instance, manifests itself in many desert monks' suspicion of the goodness of the body, a tendency that threatens 'Christianity's nature as an incarnational faith'. There is a seriousness and severity to desert spirituality that led some monks into legalistic and indeed, psychiatric dead ends.

Though dangers and dead ends are present in the desert monks' perspectives and practices, there is also deep wisdom and profound insights that can aid modern Christians. What we need is a wide guide to lead us through the desert terrain, and that is just what Byassee is.

The desert monks perceive key aspects of the gospel to which 21st century Christians often remain strikingly blind. They recognize, for example, the 'extraordinarily beautiful' nature of obedience. For the desert monks, to obey was to love deeply and to desire God above all persons and things. It is precisely at the intersection of faith and obedience, though, that a daunting problem presents itself: our desires have gone wrong. Sin

has deeply skewed human nature and its desires; '...our desires are all backwards. We value the valueless and despise the priceless.' Thus, our inclinations and desires need to be ironed out. We are bent and need to be straightened into the image of Christ and in the straightening 'become Christ to the other'. Here is the heart of desert spirituality.

Byassee prepares a colourful 'palette' of the stories and sayings of the desert fathers, each colour to be applied by discerning readers to the portrait of their own lives. Some of us, for example, simply eat or drink too much. 'The sort of physical traffic through our mouths and stomach can serve as a distraction, or can even substitute for the traffic through our minds and souls of conversation with God.' We can even turn our closest relationships into meals in which we devour the other in a broken need for ever more affection, love that in the final analysis only God can provide.

The desert practice of self-control and fasting can help to reorient and remould our desires, with safe, sane love the joy-filled result. 'The refusal to eat, drink, sleep, speak, or look around sharpens the senses to attend to God as food, drink, interlocutor, source of vision, and beauty.' Byassee also discusses other common problems or virtues pursued by the desert dwellers in their grace-filled attempt to reorient their desires and attention: quiet, lust, fortitude, pride, discretion, and hospitality all receive consideration.

What sets this little book apart from others on desert spirituality is Byassee's ability to help modern readers understand and practise the wisdom the desert monks offer. He breaks down stereotypes of monastic life while allowing the monks' oddness to remain. Indeed, in the desert we encounter 'an oddly ancient, oddly relevant form of living'.

Two final principles of desert life deserve a word: the key role of grace in spiritual formation and the slow pace of reformation into the image of Christ. While some monks fell into legalism and scrupulosity, the majority understood that all things begin with the grace of God offered in Jesus Christ. Yet the monks never separated grace, discipline, and obedience. As Byassee puts it, the rigorous discipline of the monks 'is impossible and unintelligible without grace—grace which is impossible and unintelligible without severity'. Most monks effectively married severity and rigour to love and gentleness. They understood that spiritual change is the slowest of all human movements. Things take a long time in the desert. Yet if a monk was quiet enough and remained put long enough, change would occur. 'It is the profoundest of realities that the Word of God shapes hearts as water does a rock—slowly, almost indiscernibly, but certainly, so that after years one can look back and see its work.'

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Francis Schaeffer and the Shaping of Evangelical America

Barry Hankins

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008
ISBN 978-0-8028-6389-8
Pb., pp 288, index

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

Francis Schaeffer (1912-1984), who was, as the title of this book indicates, a highly influential figure for evangelicalism, especially in US in the 1960s and 1970s, was also, as the author states, 'a complex person, a bundle of contradictions'.

In this detailed and comprehensive work in the Library of Religious Biography

series, considerable attention is given to the theological background and context in which the subject lived and worked, as well as extensive summaries of most of his books and movies and extended discussion of the themes of his teaching. The primary interest of the author is to investigate and assess Schaeffer's relationship with fundamentalism and evangelicalism, starting with his initial wholehearted involvement in militant fundamentalism of the 1930s. This was tempered dramatically during his ministry in post-Second World War Europe, centred on the famous retreat centre of L'Abri in the Switzerland. Here Francis (supported by wife Edith, and family and extended circle of disciples) developed his unique blend of apologetic evangelism and loving hospitality—he called it the 'final apologetic' which consisted of 'a loving church in a dying culture'.

However, this appeared to change when he began to reconnect with his American roots again and the polemic aspects of his position came to the surface as he became enmeshed with battles over evangelical orthodoxy (focused on biblical inerrancy and creationism), cultural issues and the political campaigns of the Religious Right. Even though during his European period he had broken with the most influential and strident mentors of his younger days, it seems Schaeffer did not lose his militant fundamentalist heritage but instead was able to emphasise aspects of his faith and apologetic which were relevant to the particular context.

The biography draws from the insights of many former students (several of whom are now recognized scholars) and colleagues by way of their writings and personal interviews. Many of them concede that Schaeffer was often weak, if not misleading or wrong, when it came to the fine points of the intellectual history and

culture that were such distinctive features of his position (as presented in books like *Escape from Reason* and the movie and book, *How should we then live?*). But they acknowledge that the general picture he presented was often a highly effective way of engaging his listeners on issues relating to worldviews, faith and culture with an evangelistic motive.

However, more importantly, they are certain that he opened up to them important areas of thought and experience and ways of approaching the wider world that their previous background (typically conservative American evangelicalism) had denied them. Even more so, it was 'compassion for people' and his 'passion for God' that were so important, and constituted the 'perfect complement' for his intellectual arguments. It is this combination that made Schaeffer 'easily one of the most important evangelicals of the twentieth century', especially at a time when western culture was in turmoil and the young people who flocked to L'Abri were in search of answers that their parents and teachers could not hope to provide.

So whether it was the staunch defenders of the faith, evangelical scholars or crusaders of the Religious Right—all of whom were influenced so strongly in different ways by Schaeffer—or evangelicals as a whole, according to Hankins the legacy of this 'complex' man was that he 'lived deeply within his own time and immersed himself in his own culture while somehow keeping his eye on what was ultimate'. They are therefore 'to follow his example as a model of how to bear witness to Christ within a particular time and place'.

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Reinventing English Evangelicalism, 1966-2001: a theological and sociological study

Rob Warner

Studies in Evangelical History and
Thought

Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2007
ISBN 978-1-84227-570-2
Pb., pp 284, bibliog, index

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

This is a useful but problematic study of a critical period in evangelicalism using as a framework a development of Bebbington's well-known fourfold definition involving a tension between a conversionist-activist axis and a biblicist-crucicentric axis in the development of the movement. The book is useful because it provides many details about important organisations and people in the English and international pan-evangelical scene (such as the Evangelical Alliance, Spring Harvest, Alpha, London Bible College, Inter-Varsity, Packer, Stott, Calver etc), data from interviews and statistical sources, and insights on the complex developments and trends of the period. However, it is limited by its ponderous style and intimidating plethora of references to sources (based as it is, in this series, on the author's 2006 University of London PhD), frequent value judgements that do not seem to arise out of the data presented, and a procrustean interpretation of material that sometimes does not take full account of the historical and spiritual context (eg trying to draw strong conclusions about theological profiles of evangelicalism by comparing the 1846 Evangelical Alliance statement of faith with the 1974 Lausanne Covenant whose origins and purposes are very different

from each other).

Although the aim of the writer is to discuss the English scene, there is considerable dependence on data from the American context. The case studies in the latter stages of the book are sometimes very brief, and throughout it is assumed that the reader will know the features and significance of the various organisations and figures studied, ignorance of which is sometimes a problem for understanding the argument.

Although styled as both a sociological study and a theological one, these two disciplines do not necessarily sit well with each other in this book, and neither are they used fully to inform each other. These disciplines are used only descriptively and so the author offers no creative

or dynamic ways to resolve or exploit the tension between the two axes he describes ('inherent bipolarity'), a tension which is, of course, all too apparent in other parts of the world as well. Instead, he ends up on a non-committal, even pessimistic, note, observing that the activist impulse of evangelicalism in the UK got to a point of severe 'vision inflation' before imploding in a 'late-onset decline', while he concludes more or less predictably that the theological side revealed phases of conservatism, progressiveness and moderation with the latter likely to triumph more by default than intrinsic worth.

Nevertheless, it is a book which raises important themes for anyone interested in the nature and destiny of pan-evangelicalism in UK and elsewhere.

Kenneth E. Bailey: *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels* (Downers Grove, Inter-Varsity, 2008. 978-0-8308-2568-4. Pb., pp443, Bibliog, index.

With a life-time of living, observing and teaching in the Middle East, Kenneth Bailey's insights as a commentator are invaluable, showing time after time, how an understanding of the cultural features of the background to the Gospels can bring alive the meaning of the text, and more importantly, the power and significance of Jesus and his message. This is aided by an intimate knowledge of contemporary and later religious literature of the region which he uses frequently to give deeper appreciation of the biblical text either by making a comparison with the broad cultural milieu or by making a contrast to show just how radical Jesus was in relation to other traditions. The 32 chapters of this book, divided into six parts, cover narratives (the infancy and the many of the 'dramatic actions' of Jesus), teaching (the Sermon on the Mount, and parables) and a special section on 'Jesus and Women'; the commentary covers specific passages of three Gospels (excluding Mark). The material dealing with narratives (including parables) is by far the most helpful, and even to read only the first part on the birth of Jesus is likely to dispel forever the myths that are usually associated with the Christmas story. Another helpful part of the work is the author's exposition of the rhetorical structure of the text, where he often finds vital aspects of the meaning of the text which would otherwise be completely overlooked.

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

Transcribed by Marylynn Rouse: *Ministry on my mind: John Newton on entering pastoral ministry*, (Stratford-upon-Avon, The John Newton Project: 2008) ISBN 978-0-9559635-0-6, Pb, pp30.

The John Newton Project is to be congratulated on producing this short booklet which is the private reflections of the notorious slave-trader, John Newton, as he considered a call to the ministry. Converted about ten years earlier, he was approaching his 33rd birthday in 1758, and devoted himself in the weeks leading up to this event to give concentrated prayer, study and self-examination to the challenge. To help with the process he wrote out his thoughts, particularly the results of his study of key biblical passages (including Mark 9:24; 2 Cor. 2:26; Luke 14:28; Heb. 5:4 and 1 Tim. 4:16), and the thoughts he had about his faith and commitment, and the nature of the ministry, its requirements and qualifications, and above all the grace he needed to respond to the call he felt so strongly. Finally, on his birthday, 4 August, he came to a positive conclusion and made a series of resolutions to give himself by God's power to this work which would occupy him until his death almost 50 years later.

It is a little disconcerting to read such a document—one that was never intended for the public (it is attractively presented in this publication, and even includes some facsimile excerpts of his own handwriting). But its intense spirituality, profound biblical reflection and honesty make it an document that is certain to be extraordinarily beneficial to all who read it 250 years later.

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

George M Marsden: *A Short Life of Jonathan Edwards* (Library of Religious Biography), (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), ISBN 9780-8028-0220-0, Pb, pp152, illus, index

Drawing on his extensive knowledge of the subject and previous publications (including a definitive full length biography), George Marsden has written a new life of Jonathan Edwards. Published in the Library of Religious Biography series, it is for the general reader but would be suitable also as an introduction for students, including as it does clear summaries of all Edwards' major works and an appendix giving suggestions for further reading. Apart from the first few pages and the rather awkward introduction of the contemporary, Benjamin Franklin (the significance of whom is clarified later on), the surprisingly compact narrative of his life, family and ministry as preacher, pastor, theologian, intellectual and supporter of missions to Indians, is gripping and informative—even to the extent of including detailed information about pastoral problems created by rebellious youth.

Edwards is placed firmly within the social, political, intellectual and religious context of the day, clearly showing why he is such an important figure in American (and evangelical) history; of particular importance is his connection with and influence on the 18th century revivals and awakenings, which constituted a 'revolution' of their own and which contributed so significantly to the later, more well known political revolution.

This book dispels many myths about the author of famous sermon, 'Sinners in the hands of an angry God', and is a model of popular yet scholarly biography.

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

Michael Nazir-Ali: *The Unique and Universal Christ: Jesus in a Pluralistic World* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008) ISBN 978-1-84227-551-1, Pb., pp 158 bibliog., index

In this short book the author offers a comprehensive yet compact exposition of his deep conviction that 'the fundamental values and virtues that are needed today for human flourishing arise from a Christian vision that has to do with the person and work of Jesus Christ'. The presentation is richly nuanced from the author's own multi-faith background and scholarly sources ranging from classic orthodoxy all the way through to contemporary evangelicalism and Pentecostalism.

In the process, Nazir-Ali, who is Anglican Bishop of Rochester (UK) and former General Secretary of the Church Missionary Society, reaffirms the essential biblical teaching about Jesus Christ and the gospel in its power to deal with sin and its effects at the individual, social and cultural levels. This dynamic vision is presented as a rich tapestry and with many suggestive insights relating to the understanding of biblical material, the place of the church in the community (especially in relation to other faiths) and its mission to today's world. As Lord Carey, former Archbishop of Canterbury says in the Foreword, 'Discovery of this truth... has the potential to reactivate Christian mission as well as confident dialogue with those who disagree.'

The material (originally delivered as a lecture series) begins with basic Christology and soteriology and then discusses Christ's lordship over culture, followed by wide-ranging reflections on relationships with other religions before reasserting in bold yet well-reasoned and amply justified terms the 'unique and universal mission' of Christ.

This is an important and valuable book—all the more so for its succinct exposition—for anyone who wants help in understanding and sharing the central message of the gospel while at the same time taking full account of the complexities of our modern world.

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

ABSTRACTS/INDEXING

This journal is abstracted in Religious and Theological Abstracts, 121 South College Street (P.O. Box 215), Myerstown, PA 17067, USA, and in the Christian Periodical Index, P.O. Box 4, Cedarville, OH 45314, USA.

It is also indexed in the ATLA Religion Database, published by the American Theological Library Association, 300 S. Wacker Dr., Suite 2100, Chicago, IL 60606 USA, E-mail: atla@atla.com, Web: www.atla.com/

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The New Conspirators Creating the Future One Mustard Seed at a Time

Tom Sine

God is doing something fresh through a new generation of 'conspirators'. This new work can be seen in at least four different streams: the emerging, the missional, the mosaic (multicultural church plants) and the monastic. In this book Tom Sine presents some of the innovative new models that are being created by those ministering within these diverse streams. He also explores the important questions they are raising for all of us regarding what it means to be a disciple, be the church and do the mission of the church. The book then investigates new challenges facing both our larger global society and the church as we journey together into an increasingly uncertain future. It is a call for all of us to join these new conspirators in discovering creative ways in which God might use our mustard seeds to be a part of what he is doing to manifest his kingdom in the world.

'Through the years, Tom Sine's writing has repeatedly knocked me out of my comfort zone. He continually inspires me with hope and encouragement. His new book is rich with challenge and inspiration, and it's full of signs that good things are afoot in the church and for the good of the world.'

Brian D. McLaren, author/activist (brianmclaren.net)

'In this innovative and compelling contribution, Tom Sine looks at how the Church can make the divine dream – the Wild Hope of the gospel – a reality.'

Russell Rook, Director of ALOVE, the Salvation Army for a New Generation

Tom Sine is an author and a Christian speaker with an international ministry. He is founder of Mustard Seed Associates, Seattle, USA.

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The Day is Yours Slow Spirituality for People on the Go

Ian Stackhouse

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'If you have lost the wonder of the next moment, can't cope with your stress, feel guilty when you rest, or can't do sustained concentration, then this refreshing book is for you. Ian Stackhouse teaches us how to live one day at a time.'

Viv Thomas, Director of Formation, www.formation.org.uk

Ian Stackhouse is the Pastoral Leader of the Millmead Centre, home of Guildford Baptist Church, UK. He is author of *The Gospel-Driven Church*.

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