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



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Editorial: Christ, Culture and Mission

WE COMMENCE OUR publication for 2011 with a good summary of the issues related to 'Christ and Culture' presented by Thomas Johnson, but with a particular angle which should prove to be helpful to our readers—the mission of the church; as he puts it: 'We must be converted from the world, so that our identity, values, beliefs and priorities are not those of this world. We must be converted back to the world, knowing that God has called and sent us to serve the Word in the world.'

This sets the theme for other articles. Jim Harries, for example, explains how differing cultural assumptions affect the way an African may interpret western scientific talk and the bearing this has on communicating the gospel and theological understanding. In West Africa, the concept of regeneration (being 'born again') has been a prominent feature of recent Christian experience, but, as Abraham Akrong shows, the familiar biblical model has been seen in a variety of different ways, not all of which are helpful or fruitful.

Moving across to South America, Eloy Nolivos presents a situation where two cultures—the original evangelical missionaries and the newly emerging local church—have differed in their understanding of Scripture and theology generally; now the task before local people as the church begins to develop its own identity is 'to gladly move away from their inheritance and espouse their own contextual hermeneutic', which is a task that calls for considerable sensitivity and grace.

The following articles move in other, though related directions. The

General Editor, Thomas Schirrmacher, presents an overview of Christianity and democracy, showing how biblical perspectives bear on Christians in the wider culture of organized society.

Then we have a perceptive paper on the 'relational mandate' of theological education by Hwa Yung, with a call 'to move away from the autonomous individualism of modernity and to recover the proper Christian understanding of the human person as an individual-in-community'.

Many cultures have no issue with this concept, at least within local and even regional terms, but in a world fraught with tension, it is likely to be under threat. So Christians with a clear understanding and experience of the diverse Kingdom of God, have a contribution to make to human welfare and this is as much a part of their mission as anything else.

We are pleased to have a response to an earlier paper (pages 78-80) and regret to advise of an error in another (see below)

Thomas Schirrmacher, General Editor
David Parker, Executive Editor

Erratum: ERT (2010) 34:3, page 249. The first paragraph should read: Christians should not 'bracket' their Christianity, as their moral and religious convictions are constitutive of their identity and the principal grounds on which they enter political deliberations and make political choices.

Christ and Culture

Thomas K. Johnson

KEYWORDS: *Accommodation, gospel, Word, values, image of God, alienation, counter-culture, human rights, education*

JESUS' PRAYER FOR the Body of Christ:

They are not *of* the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them *into* the world (Jn. 17:14-18; emphasis added).

I World, Culture and Faith

The tragic murder in the Amish school in Pennsylvania¹ brought our attention to a Christian group that has been very

serious in trying authentically to relate their faith to modern secular culture: the Old Order Amish. This growing group of about 200,000 people is mostly made up of descendants of the Swiss and Alsatian Anabaptists of the 16th century. From the beginning of their movement, they have said that true believers must be very serious about holiness, and that holiness means being separate from the world; believers must withdraw from the world. This withdrawal especially relates to the use of modern technology and labour-saving devices.

They think that selfish, individual pride is the fundamental motivation for all modern technology; therefore, a serious believer must avoid modern technology. Instead, they say, we should practise true humility, which means a lot of hard physical work, using old fashioned hand tools. The biblical verses, which they often quote in this regard, are 2 Corinthians 6:17: 'Come out from among them and be separate' and Romans 12:2: 'Be not conformed to this world'. According to the Old Order Amish, Christian holiness requires withdrawal from the

¹ The reference is to the murder of four girls in the West Nickel Mines Amish School in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, USA, on October 2, 2006.

world into separated, humble communities of true believers. This is the model of relating to the culture we can call, '*Holy Withdrawal*'.²

If we are serious about our Christian faith, we have probably had moments when we have wanted to think this way. I know I have had times when I have wondered why we Christians do not set up separate communities so we would not have to endure the terrible godlessness of this world. Why not withdraw from much of the world, even if I might choose to take my high speed computer and mobile phone along? The reason why not is simply what Jesus said in our text: 'My prayer is *not* that you take them out of the world' (verse 15). Jesus has called us to holiness and to not be conformed to this world, but he wants us to be *in* the world. Probably Jesus recognized that the real problem with worldliness is not something 'out there in the world', but rather something deep inside ourselves—our own unbelief, pride and ingratitude toward God. All of this could easily come along with us, if we tried to withdraw from the world into holy communities. If this is true, then the Amish have probably misinterpreted the biblical text about 'coming out and being separate'.

Another mistaken move in relation to culture was that of the so-called 'German Christians' during the Nazi

period. These people were Christians who were very enthusiastic supporters of Adolph Hitler. In fact, many thought they should support Hitler because they were Christians. Their reasoning went something like this: God's law comes to us partly through the creation orders. Those creation orders include our people and our state; therefore, the laws of our people and our state are the laws of God. With this in mind, serious German Christians thought they should enthusiastically support the leader of the German people (Adolph Hitler) and the National Socialist state.

I remember vividly the first time I read a book by one of these German Christian writers. It was printed in the old Germanic alphabet, which was always difficult for me to understand. I read a few paragraphs and asked myself, 'Did he really say what I think he said'? I went back and read it again. When I realized that I understood the author correctly, I felt appalled and dismayed. I wondered, 'How could believers support something so obviously evil?'

Before we become too proud of ourselves for not doing something so evil, we need to think for a moment. What we see in the German Christians of the 1930s is what we can call *accommodation* to secular culture—in this case, Nazi culture. Or if you prefer, you might call it *compromise* with secular culture. The Christian faith was misinterpreted in such a manner that it supported an agenda only from a non-believing source. In Jesus' terms, these believers were 'of the world'. But we can easily do something similar, even if our cultural agenda is much more respectable.

My own cultural/political sympathies might be described as 'compas-

² Some of the terminology used here comes from H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper & Row, 1951). Building on Niebuhr's descriptions of major types of Christian social ethics, this essay attempts to move to prescriptions for major methods for evangelical missiology and ethics.

sionate conservatism'. But I have to be extremely careful that I do not say that God is, like me, a compassionate conservative; nor should I say that compassionate conservatism is God's will. Rather, compassionate conservatism is the part of the world which I prefer, but I still am to be *in* the world but not *of* the world. I have to bring the criticizing and reforming Word of God into that part of secular culture we call compassionate conservatism.

So what is it that Jesus wants in relation to 'the world'? In the prayer in John 17, Jesus prays that God would help us to be 'in the world' but not 'of the world'. Thereby he calls us to try to be 'in the world' but not 'of the world'. This means that we should live in real contact with the world, without having our identity, thoughts, priorities, feelings and values controlled by the world. Instead, our identity, thoughts, priorities, feelings and values should be continually sanctified by the truth—the living Word of God. And as such sanctified people, Jesus sends us into the world in a way that is similar to how the Father sent Jesus into the world. We can probably summarize the central thrust of this biblical text by saying: *Jesus wants us to be in the world but not of the world for a very specific purpose: He has sent us into the world as hearers and bearers of the Word.*

It may be helpful to try to define the important word *culture*. Many of my university students spend time studying abroad, and they all come back talking about culture shock. When I then ask them what culture means, they usually say culture is 'how we do things here', wherever 'here' is. So I then ask, 'Is that all culture is?' In the following discussion, it usually

becomes clear that culture is much more. Culture is also how we think about things, how we feel about things and how we talk about things. Culture is what we have made out of nature, or in theological terms, culture is the entire human sub-creation developed from the creation as it came from the Father's hand. Culture includes customs, theories, ideas, practices, habits, role models, slogans, proverbs and much more. It is all that we pass on from one generation to the next. Education is partly about passing a culture from one generation to another, and all of us who received any education were largely educated into a particular culture.

So how does culture relate to faith? Is there any connection? Many observers of culture, especially the cultural anthropologists and sociologists of religion, have pointed out that particular cultures tend to be shaped by a particular religion. Philosopher Paul Tillich has nicely formulated these observations into a slogan, 'Culture is the form of religion, and religion is the substance of culture'.³ What must be added to Tillich's observation is that most religion is idolatry. Whatever culture it is that we inhabit, it is partly formed and directed by idolatry and unbelief. The Old Order Amish are not all wrong when they say that modern

³ Paul Tillich, *Theology of Culture* (Oxford University Press, 1959), 42. There is probably a bit of conscious exaggeration in this slogan, since some commonalities among all cultures flow from our common humanity, created in the image of God. These commonalities allow communication across cultures and world-views, though religious and cultural differences make communication more difficult.

technological culture is the organized expression of individualistic pride.

The apostle Peter reminded the first century believers of something very important in this regard (1 Pet. 1:18, 19). He said, 'You know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ'. His term 'way of life' (*anastrophe* in Greek), is very close to our modern word 'culture'.

We were all redeemed out of a godless way of life into a new way of life. This means that becoming a Christian is itself the ultimate cross-cultural experience. We were redeemed out of a godless culture into a believing culture by the precious blood of Christ, and that all happened when we first began to hear the redeeming Word of the Gospel. But as Jesus emphasized, we were not only redeemed out of a godless culture; we are called to be 'in the world', that is, sent back into the world as people who are both hearers and bearers of God's Word. This makes the relation of the Word of God to culture very urgent.

The relation of the Word of God to culture is complex.⁴ I hope someone reading this paper will ask, 'What about....?', thereby helping me learn something more about the relation of the Word to culture. But I am sure the Word has at least four distinct rela-

tions to culture, each of which can be summarized with a 'c'. Those four are critic, correlation, construction (or creation) and contribution; in each of these four relations of the Word to culture, we are simultaneously both hearers and bearers of that Word. We are always members of a particular culture who need to hear the divine Word, while we are also, in word and action, bearers of that Word into the various cultures in which we live and work.

II The Word Critiques Culture

We probably all know what a social critic is, the person who tries to stand over against his society and say what is wrong with that society. The words of a good social critic often land on the editorial pages of newspapers. A good social critic has a valuable role in society; however, the ultimate social and cultural critic is the Word of God, which has always been fearless and profound in its confrontation with sin. So we must hear the Word's confrontation of our sin, while also communicating that confrontation with sin into our world and culture.⁵ And sin does not end at the level of actions; like culture, sin extends to actions, thoughts, feelings and speech.

1 The Word and Sinful Actions

The Word of God stands against sinful actions. The prophet Amos is a good

⁴ This complexity arises from the way in which we are addressed by God's revelations in creation and in scripture, the way in which the biblical message contains both law and gospel, as well as the multiple proper uses of God's moral law.

⁵ It should go without saying that believers should affirm and give thanks for all that is good, just, true, and beautiful in each of our cultures. We must be grateful for creation and God's sustaining grace.

example. He wrote, "This is what the Lord says: "For three sins of Gaza and for four, I will not turn back my wrath. Because she took captive whole communities and sold them to Edom" (Amos 1:6). The sin mentioned is slave trading; the people of Gaza kidnapped whole communities to sell the people to the slave traders in Edom. Disgusting, but similar things still happen today. Some of the prostitutes in Prague (where I live) are slaves, kidnapped from their homelands.

We must hear the Word of God as it confronts sins that may even be acceptable within our cultures. God's Word has always condemned those matters mentioned in the Ten Commandments: idolatry, murder, stealing, lying, dishonouring parents, adultery and Sabbath breaking, and so on. We must hear and communicate God's displeasure at such acts and practices.

2 The Word and Values

Sin does not end with action but extends to the level of values. Some of our core values or basic values are all wrong. A generation ago Francis Schaeffer observed that in the West, "the majority of people adopted two impoverished values: *personal peace* and *affluence*".⁶ I think he was right, though we

might want to add that personal peace probably includes what we might want to call safety or security. These values quickly become our idols, our God-substitutes, which tend to shape our personal and cultural life. Listen sometime to the priorities one hears in the political campaigns. Prosperity, comfort and personal peace are what the various parties tend to promise, the differences being often only how we might pursue those values.

But the Word of God would challenge these basic values. The prophet Micah said, 'He has shown 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' (Micah 6:8). Justice, mercy and humility before God should be our basic values. Surely the Old Order Amish are right, that God-fearing basic values will make us very different from today's secular, hedonistic culture. But we are not only to hear the Word of God about basic values; we are also to bear that Word into the secular world. Our entire lives, lived out in the world, should be a statement that there is a real alternative to the world's impoverished values.

Different social critics today have claimed that a central characteristic of the West today is outward prosperity joined with inward emptiness. We can

⁶ *The Complete Works of Francis Schaeffer*, Vol. 5, *The Christian View of the West* (Crossway Books, 1982), 211. Schaeffer's definition is worth noting: 'Personal peace means just to be let alone, not to be troubled by the troubles of other people, whether across the world or across the city—to live one's life with minimal possibilities of being personally disturbed. Personal peace means wanting to have my personal life pattern undisturbed in my life-

time, regardless of what the result will be in the lifetimes of my children and grandchildren. Affluence means an overwhelming and ever-increasing level of prosperity—a life made up of things, things, and more things—a success judged by an ever-higher level of material abundance' (Schaeffer, *The Complete Works of Francis Schaeffer*, 5:211).

call it 'The Western Paradox'.⁷ The pursuit of personal peace and affluence has left the lives and hearts of millions of people largely empty. In stark contrast, as believers, our whole way of living and talking should be a statement that prosperity or affluence is not the highest good, though we may not like poverty. The internal emptiness of the West must be criticized, but it can be filled with faith, hope, love and gratitude, which can be joined with justice, mercy, and walking humbly before God.

3 The Word and Sinful Ideas

Culture is the realm, partly, of ideas. And many of the most important ideas we hear in education and the media are totally abhorrent to the Word of God. Some of the ideas that are most important are those that say what a human being is. Though communism is mostly gone, old Marxist ideas are still very influential, and one of the most influential Marxist ideas is that human beings are fundamentally economic creatures. Marx thought that economic relations determine a person's and a

community's entire way of thinking and living.

Today this idea is often given a capitalist spin, but it is still mostly the same view of a person. And this view of a person may be the majority point of view among political scientists and sociologists in the US and in the EU; however, Jesus totally and directly rejected this idea when he said, 'Man does not live by bread alone'. If we have partly accepted this view of a person, Jesus would call us to repent of a sinful idea; and we, as bearers of the Word into the world, have to use every opportunity we have to say, 'Man does not live by bread alone.'

In theoretical ethics today, one of the questions that most concerns me is that of why human life is valuable. Among European and American philosophers, the majority point of view seems to be that human life is valuable because of the unique abilities and functions that human beings have. Functions like reason, speech and creativity are seen as the basis for human value; but, of course, a being without those functions does not have any value. There is an organic tie between the theories of the philosophers and the practices of abortion, active euthanasia and tolerance of infanticide. Ideas have consequences.

Against that sinful idea the Word of God would say that humans are valuable because each person is created in the image of God. This God-given value cannot be lost, even if a person might lose some or most of the normal human abilities or functions. As bearers of the Word into the world, we have to take every opportunity we have to say human life is valuable with a God-given value, even if a person has lost some or

⁷ An early social critic to talk in these terms was Abraham Kuyper. Describing modern secular culture under the code name 'Babylon' he wrote, 'The most glittering life on the outside joined with the death of the heart, that is Babylon'. (*De Gemeene Gratie* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1902), Vol. 1, 456, my translation from the Dutch) A similar assessment of western life is found in the excellent book by David G. Myers, *The American Paradox: Spiritual Hunger in an Age of Plenty* (Yale University Press, 2000). Most of what Myers writes, as summarized in his subtitle, can also be said of European life.

most of those normal human abilities. This will mean criticizing other ideas about why human life is valuable, and some people will listen to what we have to say.

The Word of God stands over against culture as the ultimate critic, calling us and the world to repent of sinful actions, values and ideas. And as bearers of that Word into the world, we have to take every suitable opportunity to communicate, by word and deed, that ultimate criticism of sinful actions, values and ideas.

II The Word Correlates with Culture

The Word of God does relate negatively to culture as the ultimate critic; fortunately, however, our message, which we hear and communicate, also has a very positive relation to culture—the *Word correlates with the questions, needs and problems of culture*. This means that the Word provides solutions to the entire range of human needs. Let me explain that a bit further.

1 Honest Answers

First let's say, *The Word provides honest answers to honest questions*. This was something of a slogan of Francis Schaeffer, and it is important⁸ because many people today do have honest,

important questions. What is the meaning of life? Can we know that God really exists? Can we know if absolute truth exists? Can we really know right and wrong? Can we know if Jesus really was raised from the dead? Can we know if the Bible is reliable? Can I know for sure that my sins are forgiven? Can I know if I am justified and adopted by God? Can I know how God wants me to live? We could probably list more important and honest questions that people often raise, and these questions are, in principle, answered by the Word of God.⁹

This does not mean that there is one simple verse of scripture that we can use to simply answer complex questions, such as, 'How can we know for sure that God exists?' What I mean is that in the Word there are principles of understanding human life and the world which enable thoughtful and reflective believers to give substantial answers. This means that because we have the Word of God in our midst, there are, in the body of Christ, people who can give honest answers to the whole range of honest questions which arise in the world today. In this sense, the Word correlates with culture by means of giving answers to the questions which arise in the minds of men and women.

However, we should probably also notice why people ask serious questions: because God is a question-ask-

⁸ In Schaeffer's terms, 'Every honest question must be given an honest answer. It is unbiblical for anyone to say, "Just believe".' (*Complete Works*, Vol. 1, 189) He also said, 'Rightly understood, Christianity as a system has the answers to all the basic needs of modern man' (*Complete Works*, Vol. 1, 93).

⁹ For a good comparative study of how some of these universal questions occur to all people, see J. H. Bavinck, *The Church Between Temple and Mosque: A Study of the Relationship between the Christian Faith and other Religions* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981).

ing God. From the time of the Garden of Eden, when God came to Adam and Eve with the question, 'Where are you?', God has been asking questions of men and women.¹⁰ People do not always realize that God is pursuing them with anxious questions, but those honest questions are part of how God drives people to himself, so that they find their answers in the Word. This is why there is a correlation between the questions in our minds and the answers in the Word.

2 Anxieties

The Word not only correlates with our questions, but also *correlates with our deepest needs by means of speaking to the deepest human anxieties*. Since the time of Adam and Eve, people have been an anxious bunch. We worry all the time, not only because we are paranoid, but also because things really do go wrong. *Anxiety is the human sense of the fallen condition of our world*. We are anxious about what will happen to us, how will life turn out, what will be our calling and destiny? We are anxious about suffering and death. We are anxious about guilt and shame. We are plagued by a sense of emptiness and meaninglessness. And these deep anxieties become not only the matters of sleepless nights, but also they are the themes of the important movies, novels and songs. Culture is filled with anxieties of the widest possible range. The human heart cries out in its deep spiritual need, and that cry of need echoes

across the various dimensions of culture today.¹¹

We can be very grateful that the Word correlates to human need by speaking to the deepest anxieties of our hearts. But this is not intended only for believers—this should be part of the cutting edge of our bringing the Word into the world. All around us there are people whose hearts are bleeding with spiritual need. And we have the solution to the cries of their hearts—cries that can be heard wherever we go. The promises of God's Word correspond with the deepest needs, hurts and anxieties of fallen men and women. Listen for guilt, shame, fear of fate and death or a sense of meaninglessness, and you will have opportunity to talk about the promises of God.

3 Alienation

Closely related to this, we should say that *the Word correlates with human need by addressing our comprehensive alienation*. From the time of Adam and Eve, people have been in a kind of living death, suffering under a state of comprehensive alienation, separation from God, separation from each other, separation from ourselves, even separation from creation. This is experienced by people and is articulated by many, so it is a widespread theme in culture. Many good novels and movies depict our alienation and the attempts to overcome it. As a young man Karl Marx offered a sensitive and moving analysis

¹⁰ For more on this topic see Thomas K. Johnson, 'Adam and Eve, Who are You?' (www.contra-mundum.org/essays.html).

¹¹ This paragraph is dependent on Paul Tillich's analysis of anxiety in *The Courage to Be* (Yale University Press, 1952).

of human alienation, even while his own alienation from God came to expression in his atheism. The tragic effects of Marxism and Communism flow partly from setting the wrong message in correlation with human alienation.

It is important to see that the biblical Word is the right message to stand in correlation with our comprehensive alienation, and it does so by means of bringing reconciliation. First of all, the Word offers reconciliation with God. But in addition, the Word leads to reconciliation with each other, with ourselves, and maybe in some ways even to reconciliation with nature. In this life, reconciliation is never total, final and complete.

Reconciliation is always something that has to be worked out day to day because new conflicts always arise, and those new conflicts always bring the stench of living death back into our lives. Reconciliation is a reality made possible by the Word of God. In this way, the Word correlates with a deep need of the human heart and mind. For this reason it is important that the church becomes a community in which reconciliation is constantly occurring, so that the restored relationships within the Body of Christ stand in contrast to and correlation with the alienated condition of our world.

It is important that we hear the Word of God both as it is the critic of our sin and also as its promises correlate with our spiritual needs. It is extremely important that as we bear the Word into the world, we bring that Word in a balanced relation to culture. The Word is the ultimate critic of culture, but it is also the ultimate healer of the painful cries of our culture as it

speaks healing to anxious hearts and brings answers to tortured minds. We must be careful to hear and to communicate both in a balanced manner.

III The Word of God Creates New Christian Counter-culture

John Stott's excellent study of the Sermon on the Mount is entitled *The Christian Counter-Culture*, and there is good reason for this way of talking.¹² Jesus came to recreate us to be new people with new relationships, new ways of thinking, new ways of talking and new ways of doing things. In fact, this was part of the work of redemption from the earliest times in the Old Testament.

The people of Israel were supposed to be a redeemed nation, not just redeemed individuals. As a redeemed nation they had a complete cultural expression of their redeemed status. They had a tabernacle with an elaborate system of sacrifice and worship. They had music and visual art. They had a political structure and a system of laws. All this was created by the Word of God in ancient Israel to be the cultural expression of God's work of redemption.

After the death and resurrection of Christ, the Body of Christ became the new people of God who stood in conflict with both the Jewish culture and the Roman culture. At first the early believers were only a poor, frightened, socially marginalized and persecuted minority. Very soon, however, the basic Christian confession became,

¹² John R. W. Stott, *Christian Counter-Culture: The Message of the Sermon on the Mount* (InterVarsity Press, 1978).

'Jesus is Lord'! This confession stood in contrast with the claim of the Roman emperors that, 'Caesar is Lord'. Of course, Caesar claimed to be lord of everything, so the claim that, 'Jesus is Lord' meant that Jesus is also Lord of everything—a truly revolutionary idea.

It was only about a century ago that Abraham Kuyper wrote the famous words, 'There is not a thumb-breath of the whole realm of human life of which Christ, the sovereign Lord of all does not cry out, "It is mine!"'.¹³ Although the slogan is new, the idea was already powerfully active in the early church. This meant that all of life had to be brought under the Lordship of Christ.

This is the starting point for the full cultural expression of our faith. In the time of the Old Testament, the people of God were set apart from the surrounding cultures by national and language barriers. But the new people of God, the Body of Christ, were dispersed across all of Greco-Roman culture. And like the people of Israel, their status as the redeemed people of God slowly started to come to complete cultural expression.

Firstly, I think there was something of an ordered progression of the cultural growth of the Christian counter-culture in the early centuries. It was something of an 'inside moving toward the outside' type of progression in the cultural expression of the faith. Firstly, we see that *the Word constructs or creates new people with new hearts and new relationships*. We see this in the New Testament. People were saved. Families were reconciled. Small communi-

ties of believers were gathered around the gospel. Love became the mark of the Christian and of the Christian community.

Secondly, in the following centuries there was an exciting period of growth, and this growth was not only in numbers, though the numbers of believers exploded for a period of a few centuries. *There was also real growth in new ways of thinking and talking*. The believers learned how to think and talk about matters like the Trinity, the Incarnation and the two natures of Christ. The believers learned new ways of thinking and talking about society, ethics and learning. This was, I think, an expression of the new hearts that had been given by the gospel.

Thirdly, in the history of the early church, *the Word, working through believers, began to create new cultural institutions*. What does this mean? Believers started all sorts of new things. Orphanages, programs to assist people in need, then later schools, cathedrals, all sorts of art, then universities, then great music like that of Bach or Handel, while there was also great literature. One can almost tell the history of the Body of Christ by looking at the continuing series of new cultural institutions produced by believers in response to the gospel of Christ.

This is an exciting story, but it would take many hours to tell, enough for a whole course of study in a university.¹⁴ All I can do now is to state that

¹³ Abraham Kuyper, *Souvereiniteit in eigen kring* (Amsterdam, 1930), 32.

¹⁴ A good resource for this history is Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity*, 2 volumes (Harper & Row, 1953 & 1975).

the story exists and the story is worth hearing. Across the centuries, the gospel has indeed moved believers to create and construct all sorts of new cultural institutions and ways of life. Believers today should be courageous in following our believing ancestors in being willing to try to create new organizations, activities and movements for the glory of God. History is not finished. Believers should again become courageous in starting new cultural activities for the glory of God.

IV The Word Contributes to Culture

This contribution is very important for us who live in post-Christian Europe. What does this mean? Even though much of secular Europe denies or neglects the Christian heritage that shaped it, there are many elements in European culture that were produced or developed under the influence of the biblical message. These are activities, institutions or ways of thinking that hardly seem to be consistent with an unbelieving worldview, and which seem, historically, to be the result of the impact of the biblical message on European civilization. As believers, we can see this as one of the ways in which God has been at work to make our world a much nicer place in which to live. This is a long story to tell, so I will give just a few illustrations.

1 Practices

Notice that in Europe today, when an ambulance comes down the street with lights flashing and the siren screaming, everyone knows to get out of the way. We all know that someone is

injured or seriously ill and needs help quickly. But at many times and places in human history this would not have been true. It was not always obvious to all people that someone who is injured or seriously ill should be helped. At many times in human history, people thought the injured or ill should be left in their fate. I would suggest that Europeans all know to get out of the way of the ambulance because of the contribution of the biblical message to European civilization.¹⁵

It was under the influence of the biblical worldview that Europeans all know we should help people in need; and this principle, learned from the Bible, is the background for the European interest in humanitarian aid for people in need, while Europeans also work hard for political reconciliation. There is a whole set of important practices that make European life very humane and compassionate which arose partly because of the contribution of the Word to the world.

2 Ideas

Even in post-Christian Europe there are many key *ideas* which arose partly due to the contribution of the biblical Word. The idea of human rights is a good example. In western history, some of the first people to talk much about human rights were the Christian philosophers in Christian cathedral schools and universities. These were people like Thomas Aquinas and Albertus Magnus in the thirteenth century.

¹⁵ For this illustration I am indebted to Wim Rietkerk, of L'Abri, having heard it from him in a lecture or personal conversation.

They thought humans have rights because they were created in the image of God.¹⁶

Today most Europeans will want to talk about and even protect human rights, though they may not have a good explanation of why people have rights or where those rights originate. In some cases, the protection of human rights seems inconsistent with modern secular worldviews, though this does not seem to prevent people from often becoming energetic protectors of at least some of those rights. I think we believers should rejoice that the Word has contributed a central idea to western culture—that of human rights.

Another key idea contributed by the Word to secular European society has to do with the possibility of natural science. History shows us that the early modern scientists, especially in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, were mostly rather serious Christians, and that they developed modern science because of their Christian beliefs. They thought that the world is God's good creation, which we can and should try to understand. Christian beliefs had a crucial role in the start of modern science.¹⁷

16 A small part of this story is told in Thomas K. Johnson, 'Human Rights and Christian Ethics' (MBS Text 54, available at www.bucer.eu, then click 'international') and also in Thomas K. Johnson, *Human Rights: A Christian Primer*, The WEA Global Issues Series, Vol. 1. (Culture and Science Publishing: Bonn, 2008), 112 pp.

17 This story is effectively told by Nancy R. Pearcey and Charles B. Thaxton in *The Soul of Science: Christian Faith and Natural Philosophy* (Crossway Books, 1994).

Today science, along with the technology and health care which depend on science, is one of the most important institutions of western culture. Of course, many scientists are not yet believers and many do not know the extent to which the biblical message contributed to the initial development of science. But we can rejoice and give thanks to God for the way the biblical Word has contributed ideas that helped start an institution and movement that is so important and valuable today.

3. Institutions

It has also contributed whole institutions. One of the true radicals in western history was Jan Amos Comenius, also known as Komensky. One of his most radical ideas was that girls should be allowed and encouraged to go to school to get an education. Comenius is known as the 'Father of modern education' because of his educational writings and practices. He was also an evangelical pastor and theologian. Allowing girls to go to school was directly a result of his evangelical faith.

Today every western nation encourages or even demands that girls get an education, often without even knowing that the education of girls started as a distinctly Christian institution. I would suggest that the education of girls is a whole institution contributed to western culture by the biblical Word, and for that we should be profoundly grateful.

There are other institutions in western culture that seem to be largely the result of culture-forming by believers. We could mention orphanages and humanitarian aid organizations as

good examples.

History is not finished. Maybe some of us will be used by God, used by the biblical Word to bring entirely new contributions into secular culture. Maybe someone reading this essay can be used to start something just as radical and new as education for girls, humanitarian aid or modern science. The Word continues to be active as a key force that contributes to culture.

VI Conclusion

The great European preacher of a century ago, J. Christian Blumhardt, had a fascinating saying, 'A man must be converted twice, from the natural life to the spiritual life, and after that from the spiritual life to the natural life'.¹⁸ We must be converted from the world, so that our identity, values, beliefs and priorities are not those of this world. We must be converted back to the world, knowing that God has called and sent us to serve the Word in the world. The Old Order Amish are, I think, once-converted people. They have been converted away from the world, and that is absolutely necessary

for each of us. But Jesus also wants to convert us back to the world, to live in the world, to be sent as his representatives into the world. That means bringing the Word to culture.

What I have presented is little more than a progress report on some things I have learned about how that Word relates to culture. I really hope some of you are thinking, 'Does not the Word relate to culture like this....'? I am sure that the Word is the ultimate critic of culture, laying bare before God the sinful acts, values and ideas of the unbelieving world; and that Word, especially the promises of the Word, correlates with the deepest needs expressed in culture, needs for honest answers, the need for comfort in our anxiety and the need for reconciliation in our alienation. The Word also creates or constructs entirely new cultural entities, ways of thinking, living and ordering our world, which bring glory to God. The Word has a long history of contributing key ideas, practices and institutions, even to those cultures that do not acknowledge the Word, and for that we should be profoundly grateful.

Our challenge today is to live as twice-converted people, called out of the world to a life of faith and then sent by God back into his world as hearers and bearers of the Word.

¹⁸ Quoted by Herman Bavinck, *Wijsbegeerte der Openbaring* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1908), 207. My translation.

Magic, Science and Theology in African Development

Jim Harries

KEYWORDS: *Theology, vulnerable mission, language, resources, witchcraft, economics*

The consensus that aid has failed is nearly universal among those who look at the data.¹

This exploration into the development teaching from the West to Africa² has resulted in a discovery little less than amazing. Western academia considers itself to be rooted in objectivity, science and fact. But, the very objective factually oriented scientific academics, when they apply their knowledge to Sub-Saharan Africa, end up teaching magic. This occurs for at least two reasons. First, if the recipient culture is

one in which 'magic' is a normal accepted part of life, introduced teaching is appropriated on the same basis. Then, in the course of translation of explanations from one worldview to another, gaps in communication inevitably arise because equivalent words in different languages do not have identical meanings. These gaps will not be filled if the original and target cultures are too different for the basis of the relevant non-magical processes to be mutually understood.

Magic is here considered as being the means of achieving ends through the intervention of mystical or vital forces. Note that the character of these forces runs in parallel with scientific laws; the outcome of the application of or activity of the forces is often that which should also be expected by a scientist. But the deeply comprehended nature of what is happening is of a different order altogether from that of science. One of the problems with western 'development teaching' in Africa is that, through ignoring the characteris-

¹ Andrei Schleifer, 'Paul Bauer and the Failure of Foreign Aid', 379-390 in *Cato Journal*, Vol. 29, No. 3. (Fall 2009), 380.

² References to 'Africa' or 'Africans' are to Sub-Saharan Africa and its indigenous peoples.

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tics of the magical belief systems it meets, it undercuts the logic of its own operations.

The 'middle ground' considered in this essay is theology. It is suggested that the 'insurmountable' gulf between magical and scientific worldviews can be bridged by faith in the one creator God; who is the subject of biblical discourse. God's intervention, if indeed he is the one wise and orderly God witnessed to in the Scriptures, undercuts the chaos of traditional 'magical' views, and supplants the narrowness of positivistic scientific reductionism. A further explication of God's bridging role is the subject of other articles by this author.³ This essay, by pointing to the paucity or absence of alternatives, directs us to the need for theological discourse in local languages as a prerequisite for African development.

I The Insurmountability of the Magical Worldview

Even for a scientist, the impossible can happen. For example, scientists cannot understand how moving object A can pass stationary object B, given that as A approaches B the distance between

A and B is halved an infinite number of times. If it is halved an infinite number of times while A can go on drawing closer and closer to B, it should never pass B, or infinity wouldn't be infinity.⁴ In the scientific worldview it is assumed that an inexplicable process is governed by scientific laws that are *yet to be discovered*. The force of gravity is another good example of this; not knowing why gravity happens does not prevent scientists from believing science.⁵ Similarly, for adherents to the magical world-view, discovering effects that do not seem to be subject to mystical powers does not undermine belief in mystical powers.

Scientific and magical worldviews survive attacks on their comprehensiveness. Someone with a magical worldview will always interpret all that happens to them or all that they perceive to be magical in origin. This does not preclude the possibility of prediction. Whether a chicken's producing an egg every day is scientific or magical does not change the fact either that the egg is produced or that its production is predictable. The same presumably applies to the falling of rain, the burning of paper, the transmission of sound waves from one person to another and so on. But if all these things that western people assume to occur by science can also happen by magic, what really is the difference between the two?

3 For example see Jim Harries, 'International Development Without Money? Some Theological Reflections', 175-187 in *The Goal of International Development: God's Will on Earth as it is in Heaven* (Pasadena: WCIU Press. In Press.) <http://www.jim-mission.org.uk/articles/international-development-without-money.pdf> (accessed 7 July 2010) and Jim Harries, 'The Name of God in Africa' and related contemporary theological, development and linguistic concerns', *Exchange, Journal of Missiological and Ecumenical Research* 38 (2009), 271-291. See also www.vulnerablemission.com.

4 See Mazur (Joseph Mazur, 'The Motion Paradox: The 2,500-Year-Old Puzzle Behind the Mysteries of Time and Space', <http://members.authorsguild.net/mazur/work1.htm> accessed January 5th 2008) for details.

5 Howstuffworks, nd. 'How does gravity work?' <http://www.howstuffworks.com/question232.htm> accessed 5 January 2008.

A key difference in these worldviews is in the causative agent. In the scientific worldview, the causative agent is 'nature' (in the sense of being a 'physical power causing phenomena [in the] material world')⁶—which does not exist in the magical worldview.⁷ The causative agent in the latter is a mystical power of some sort—something that does not exist in the scientific worldview. Nature is considered to be impacted by natural forces but magical powers by mysterious forces. The two worldviews can run in parallel without ever meeting.

This author being born and bred in the West but subsequently having lived in rural Africa for many years, has realised just how pervasive western man's scientific view is. Whatever western man sees happening in rural Africa, he can explain using his own worldview. Someone being spirit possessed he calls emotion. A rain maker's activity resulting in dark clouds he assumes to be coincidence. People's love of 'palaver'⁸ he sees as

arising from their ignorance of science and rationality. Someone's being healed through prayer he considers to be placebo. Attempts at manoeuvring mystical forces through animal sacrifice he finds to be motivated by a desire to eat meat. Hence Westerners can make a close study of Africa life, as many anthropologists have done, without in the least compromising their western scientific worldview.

Western people are slower to realise that the reverse also applies. As they can pass over all magical beliefs because of their superior knowledge of science, so people rooted in the magical worldview can pass over scientific beliefs through their superior knowledge of mystical causation.

Given the above, teaching someone in a way that appears contrary to their own deeply ingrained worldview may well not change their worldview, but simply extend its boundaries. Then no matter how scientific someone considers their explanations to be, someone else rooted in the magical worldview will appropriate them into their pre-existing framework. No matter how scientifically trained or oriented the western development worker, in other words, the people he teaches who have not appropriated the scientific worldview will take him to be a magician. That is, they will take him to be teaching magic, and will understand what he teaches to be magic.⁹

Asking people the question, 'Do you take me as speaking of magic or of science?' is generally a useless question,

6 J.B. Sykes, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 674-675.

7 Jim Harries, 'Pragmatic Theory Applied to Christian Mission in Africa: with special reference to Luo responses to "bad" in Gem, Kenya' (PhD thesis submitted to the University of Birmingham, UK, 2007), 132. <http://etheses.bham.ac.uk/15/1/Harries07PhD.pdf> accessed 20 September 2007.

8 'The palaver is a traditional African institution of debate and consensus whose democratic potential has been overshadowed by modern political systems'. (Jasmina Sopova, 'In the Shade of the Palaver Tree' http://www.unesco.org/courier/1999_05/uk/signes/txt2.htm accessed 7 January 2008.)

9 Of course the reverse also applies: a western man will seek for a scientific basis for that which he sees a magician perform.

because for the respondents the terms science and magic will be defined by their own worldview. Science, for example, can be considered to be the term used by western man for 'magic'. Here we see a serious but often unperceived drawback of language use—words neither carry cultures, or cross cultural barriers. They are, after all, just sounds. Different people saying they believe in magic, or in science, can mean very different things.

II What it is to be Teaching Magic

When someone speaks on the basis of a scientific worldview to a listener of a magical worldview, the result will be both in gaps in what is communicated and in communicating content that is not intended. Examples that *illustrate* the likely kind of outcome of such intercultural communication are given below:

1. You give someone a bicycle, ride ahead with your bicycle and expect them to follow you, but the bicycle you handed over did not have a drive chain!
2. You give someone a guard dog, but they take it as a pet.
3. A slightly more subtle example—let's imagine a man has a child called Doreen. When he hears the name Doreen he automatically associates it in his mind with her birthday, say December 1st. Yet it would be wrong of this person to assume that because he associates that birthday with the name Doreen, someone else will necessarily know the date on having heard the name.

These examples illustrate the *kinds of difficulties* faced by those who would attempt to lead African people who are following the 'magical worldview' with instructions in English that are rooted in a scientific worldview.¹⁰ The process of translation between worldviews will leave gaps in knowledge that will interfere with understanding and the operation of whatever process is under consideration. These gaps in understanding can be sufficiently consequential (as the examples above show) such that magic would be required to enable the achievement of the desired outcome. Hence the West in teaching its science in Africa is promoting dependence upon magic.

While such 'promotion of magic' may not last long in a western setting (if the process requires a magical step in order to succeed, this will be realised and the process disqualified), the same cannot necessarily be said of many African contexts. The literature on Africa, particularly that exploring its anthropology, is replete with illustrations, examples and demonstrations of African people's belief in what we are here calling magic (witchcraft, curses and blessings, mystical or vital forces, spirits, ancestors etc.).¹¹

¹⁰ For further discussion on the nature of the 'magical worldview', see Jim Harries, 'The Magical Worldview in the African Church: what is going on?' in *Missiology: An International Review*, Vol. XXIV, No. 4, (October 2000), 487-502.

¹¹ Numerous examples of authors who describe the dependency of African society on magic could be given from the anthropological literature. Here are just four examples: E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande* (Oxford: Clarendon Press,

African people are therefore not necessarily taken aback when given processes to follow that will work only in combination with magic.

They are resigned to the fact, in other words, that certain things succeed only when carried out or implemented by Europeans (who have this special magical knowledge¹²), and that no end of careful instruction will successfully transfer it to their community. They are almost as determined as they are 'resigned', not to concede this dependence on magic.¹³ Partly this is because 'it works'. The reason that 'it works', from a western scientific perspective, is not because 'magic works', but because Westerners come to stand in the gap. Also, because in today's English speaking world, someone who believes in magic is looked down upon.

1937); Placide Tempels, *Bantu Philosophy* (Paris: Presence Africaine, 1959); Christopher O. Davis, *Death in Abeyance: illness and therapy among the Tabwa of Central Africa* (London: Edinburgh University Press, 2000); Gerrie Ter Haar, (ed.) *Imagining Evil: witchcraft beliefs and accusations in contemporary Africa* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc. 2007).

¹² See the 'Hidden Power of the Whites', (N.W. Turner, *Religious Innovation in Africa: collected essays on new religious movements* [Boston, Massachusetts: G.K. Hall & Company, 1979], 271-278.)

¹³ African people will not generally use the term 'magic' to describe their own worldview, as they know that it is held in disdain by the wealthy West. Assuming the English language to be universal has thus deprived it of vocabulary. (See Jim Harries, 'Intercultural Dialogue—an overrated means of acquiring understanding examined in the context of Christian Mission to Africa', *Exchange: Journal of Missiological and Ecumenical Research*. 37 (2008), 174-189, for related discussion.)

What is meant by Westerners 'standing in the gap' is that the aid and dependency situation that the West 'imposes' onto Africa is self-perpetuating, regardless of the success or failure of the wisdom associated with it. In other words, development assistance to Africa is driven by other than evidence for the procedural success of its projects. It continues due to Westerners' consciences and not because it 'works', and it is implemented on the basis of an assumption that is considered unassailable—that magic does not exist and can be safely ignored. If magical forces do not exist, then to recognise people's perception of them is to consider those people to be primitive or superstitious.

Because these latter terms are taken as offensive, and to use them in reference to a particular colour or ethnicity of people is considered racist, the international community has no choice but to ignore magical beliefs. This unfortunately results in the perpetuation of an understanding of the African scene that is misguided. It perpetuates magic, because the finance invested in the launching and re-launching of projects itself justifies to the African the operation of a project that is dependent on 'magic'.¹⁴

¹⁴ This can be illustrated with an example of the promotion of a chicken project. Let's imagine that \$5000 dollars are needed to launch a chicken project, of which \$500 will be salary to the project manager. Even if all the chickens die and their house is consumed by termites, the manager can still consider the project a 'success', as it has given him a reward of \$500. (See also David Maranz, *African Friends and Money Matters: observations from Africa*. [Dallas: SIL International, 2001], 150-151.)

The above ensures that magically based processes continue to be promoted under the title of 'development aid'. Such aid is far from innocent or inconsequential in its impact. This is so for a number of reasons:

1. Aid and development projects result in the perpetuation of gross unhealthy dependency of Africa on the West.¹⁵
2. They prevent, by monopolising (for example) the educational scene, African peoples from advancing socially and economically.
3. Magic being closely linked in the African scene with evil, means that promotion of magic is a perpetuation of evil.
4. The Bible and therefore the Christian faith condemn magical practices.¹⁶

III Economics as Case Study

Economists these days have a high profile when it comes to intervention in international relations—especially aid and development assistance. The following is a brief look at the discipline of economics and ways in which its teachings promote magic in Africa.

The roots of the word 'economics' and at least to some extent its history, lie in the Greek terms *oikos* (house) and *nomos* (law). In order to discover 'African economics' we can begin by considering African 'household laws'.

Examples here taken to illustrate these are from a booklet written by and for the Luo people of Western Kenya, called *Chike Jaduong e Dalane* ('Rules for a Man in his Home').

This small red book written by Raringo¹⁷ provides guidelines for family life to prevent death. Being 100 by 150 millimetres in size and only a few millimetres thick, the book is clearly intended to be a handbook to be carried in someone's pocket for reference. Each of the 331 rules contained in it answers a question about life in a Luo homestead. Personal experience of having lived amongst the Luo people since 1993 confirms the basic accuracy of the book in relation to Luo people's lives. Here are some examples (translated by myself in abbreviated form) to illustrate the kind of laws that are found:

Law number 111: If two daughters of one home have both been married, it is not permitted for the bride wealth to be received for the younger one before it has been received for the older.¹⁸

Law number 262: Once having matured a Luo man should leave his father's homestead to begin his own. Luo law states that to do this, a man must have a wife. But then the question arises, if his wife should die suddenly before he has entered the new home, can he begin the new home with the corpse before it is buried? The

¹⁵ For example, running a 'failed' project as in footnote 14 may be more profitable for an African than running his own project that 'works' but has no donor to pay a salary.

¹⁶ As of course do the teachings of some other 'faiths'.

¹⁷ Jacktone Keya Raringo, *Chike Jaduong e Dalane* (Ugunja, Kenya: Geranya Agencies, nd.).

¹⁸ Raringo, *Chike Jaduong e Dalane*, 24.

answer given is no, because there are certain rituals that the wife must perform in the new homestead that only a living wife can perform, such as cooking the first meal.¹⁹

Law number 70. This law outlines the procedure to be followed in finding a man to inherit a widow. After waiting for at least three months after her late husband's burial a widow must prepare beer for the occasion. Her inheritor must be a brother or cousin to her husband, and must already have completed bride wealth payments for his other wives.²⁰

These 'house rules' (selected randomly from the 331) are listed to help my western reader to appreciate how unlike western economics household rules can be. The rules, designed to avoid death through an understanding of the nature of vital forces (that are controlled by tribal ancestors), form the starting point for this African people's comprehension of 'economics'.

Differences are of course much wider than the conventional boundaries of 'economics'. The very words used in the course of describing economic (household) practices such as those above may have very different impacts in the original African community than they apparently do when translated to (western) English. Here are some specific examples of differences in language understanding that apply in parts of Africa:

When a butcher *cuts up a joint of*

meat a Westerner expects him to carefully slice through all but the toughest joints by dividing the bones with a knife. In Africa an axe is used much more freely to chop bones.

We assume someone in Britain who is *cooking lunch* is using electricity or gas, whereas in much of Africa they are much more likely to use wood and/or charcoal.

In the West, the word *wife* usually refers to only one woman living with a man, but in many parts of Africa, the 'wife' could be any one of up to three women living with a man.

Whereas *laughter* indicates joy in the West, it often shows embarrassment or fear amongst African people.

Truth in the West is to do with objectivity, but in Africa that which is respectful and not offensive.

Whereas a *woman being pregnant* is a common topic of normal conversation in the West, pregnancies are not talked about in much of Africa, to avoid attracting magical attack on the unborn child.²¹

(Any readers who find the above to be slanted against African people and culture please bear in mind that such a reaction is exactly one of the reasons so much of African culture goes 'under-

19 Raringo, *Chike Jaduong e Dalane*, 50.

20 Raringo, *Chike Jaduong e Dalane*, 16.

21 Note that the truth or otherwise of these examples is not our main point. While some may argue that the examples given are less than 'true', they do clearly illustrate ways in which language uses can differ according to culture.

ground' and out of sight. 'Different' may not be 'inferior', and I am trying to bring some of these things into the light.)

Such differences between words have been articulated in an article published in the *Journal of Intercultural Communication*, that suggests that words can helpfully be considered to have 'shapes'.²² It seems clear that many people, scholars and laymen alike, tend to ignore such differences in word content and impact, assuming them to be inconsequential. This tendency is particularly widespread because of the domination of Britains and Americans in global scholarship—many of whom are monolingual and therefore have little experience of the vagaries of translation.²³ Ignoring differences between cultures however, even if using one language, may be introducing folly.

IV Wrong Assumptions on Language Use

Many western scholars and practitioners seem to think that the need to take account of the complexities of African culture is negated if the language they

use throughout their interventions is an international one like English; however they do not realise the gross changes and approximations that have occurred in the course of translation from African languages to English. The model of economic progress and development advocated for Africa is these days frequently an *en-masse* transfer of education and resources as well as language from the West to the African continent.²⁴

This is a very convenient stance for those in western nations. They thereby conclude that their product (education, technology etc.) is exactly what is needed around the globe. This is how western scholars market themselves. But it results in legitimising grossly top-down approaches to 'development'. It obviates the need for Westerners to listen to non-western scholars, at least until the latter have become conversant and almost totally accepting of the status quo in western scholarship. Surely it is time native English speaking countries realised that their high valuation of English arises because it happens to be their own native tongue, and not because it can possibly stretch to articulate the vast multitude of cultural contexts amongst the peoples of our world.

The dysfunctionality associated with the predominance of scientifically-rooted European languages in Africa (and European languages are used in education through most of the

22 Jim Harries, 'A linguistic case for the necessity of enculturation in theological and economic teaching based on the 'Shape of Words': including a case study comparing Sub-Saharan Africa with the West,' *Journal of Intercultural Communication*, Issue 18, October 2008. <http://www.immi.se/intercultural> (accessed 7 July 2010).

23 See the examples given at the start of section II in this essay that illustrate how consequential differences in understanding can be, such that they can negate originally intended processes.

24 The Millennium Development Project is a good example of this. (United Nations. 'UN Development Goals.' <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/> accessed 5 January 2008.)

continent) is preventing positive internally sourced development and change from occurring. Maintaining incompetence amongst people through use of a European language may limit their capabilities at challenging the global status quo. But is this moral?

While such results in some security (poor disoriented communities do not constitute a military threat), its gross perpetuation of poverty and all the suffering this implies is abhorrent.²⁵ The globe becomes more and more of a polarised place as whole people are 'written off' in so far as their languages and contexts are ignored in the designing of policies that govern them. This could be avoided if more flexibility in language policy were to be encouraged or allowed, and if even Westerners were to take the time to assist people in addressing their issues by learning their languages and living in a way that is 'vulnerable' to them.

V Answering the Critics

Translation is at least as much impossible as it is possible. It conceals as much as it hides.²⁶ What it conceals, it can conceal very well, so that many Westerners, especially those sitting in monolingual communities such as the USA and UK, can remain blissfully

unaware of what they do not know.

Having considered the question of translatability in more depth elsewhere,²⁷ the argument I present below counters the suggestion that inter-cultural dialogue is enabled through having a 'common humanity', despite the fact that people from distant geographical and cultural backgrounds have a lot in common. This can be illustrated pictorially in Figure 1.

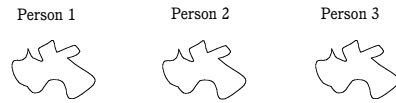


Figure 1. Shapes of people.

Fig. 1 suggests that people have the same *shape*, wherever they are.²⁸ But now Figure 2 below illustrates that despite being of the same shape, two people can be found at very different points on any cultural graph:

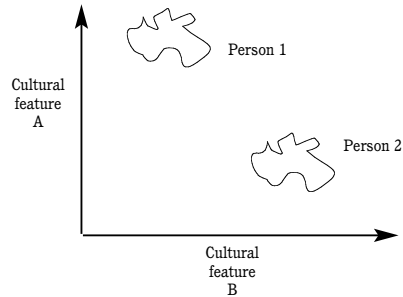


Figure 2. Two people on a cultural graph.

25 In short, what is here suggested is that giving more freedom can result in problems, perhaps conflicts, but in the long run giving people freedom to make their own choices will result in a more positive outcome than restraining their freedom to prevent them from making bad choices.

26 In making choices in their selection of words and phrases to use, translators obviously reject many alternative options.

27 Harries, 'A linguistic case for the necessity of enculturation'. Harries, 'Intercultural Dialogue'.

28 The parts of this arbitrarily chosen human 'shape' attempt to represent all that is essentially human.

Cultural features A and B could be extremely diverse. They could be dress style versus eating preferences, inclination to being loving as against respectful, tendency to walk or use a bicycle, belief in God as against magic, etc. Our common humanity does not prevent us from being vastly diverse in our cultural traits—i.e. in how we express that common humanity.

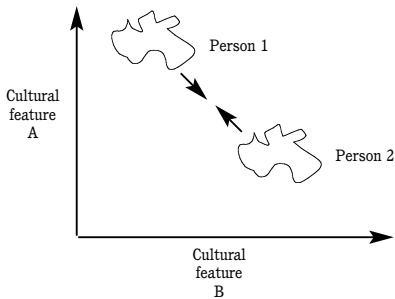


Figure 3. Closing the Gap Between Diverse Peoples

Figure 3 illustrates how the gap between cultures could be reduced by moving people closer to one another. Moving closer may be desirable for many reasons, such as to enable clear communication and a mutually more acceptable and better way of life. What Figure 3 clearly illustrates, however, is that if people want to come closer together, each one must move in *opposite directions*. This strongly implies that an educational system needs to be culturally specific, i.e. that education and guidance for life needs to differ according to people's culture and life circumstances—something that is not possible when much of the world is being required to copy from the Anglo-Saxon model. From this it can be concluded that the commonness of our

humanity does not do away with either cultural differences, or the need for culturally specific education.

The current international linguistic and economic climate simply does not allow a regionalisation of education in Africa, at least much of Anglophone Africa. Being grossly dependent on foreign funds, and officially using the same foreign language for all formal activities, means in effect that foreign wisdom invariably gets pride of place in Anglophone Africa, regardless of any lack in its local fit. 'Appropriate' thinking or technology is very hard to find. Whenever it emerges, it is squashed out by the owners of European languages, especially English, who act as referees for content as well as grammar in writing. (Publishers will often accept only texts that they know will satisfy native English speakers, as they are the ones who have the money to buy books.)

In other words, for writing in English to be respected it may need to meet some of the very standards that will prevent honesty on the part of Africans. One thing that could at least help this situation and give people a chance to think for themselves would be for Africa to end its subservience to European languages. Financial incentives of all sorts to those who operate in European languages are however so great (jobs, international travel, scholarships, social prestige etc.) that such thinking for oneself on the part of Africans can these days amount to economic suicide.

One of the outcomes of the various arguments presented above is that development advice coming from the West to Africa is put in such a way as to render success logically impossi-

ble—unless, that is, mysterious magical powers or Westerners come to its rescue. Hence many efforts made by Westerners from their ivory towers to stimulate ‘development’ in poor countries of Africa are futile. Worse than that—they are distracting people from the progress that they might have been making, and promoting dependence, lies and corruption in the process. But then—what is the alternative?

Note that underlying this article is a basic (theological) belief in the ‘goodness’ of the world, and the goodness (or potential goodness) of mankind. What we mean is that, given the freedom to do so, people can make good decisions that will lead to mutual advantage. If this were not the case and African people’s ways of life were irretrievably evil, as has been assumed for the Lele of Congo and others,²⁹ then the western world’s overseas development policy perhaps ought to continue as it is.

Scientific texts being transformed into magical prose as described above should give Christians great cause for concern. So called ‘modern education’ spreading around the ‘poor world’ may be closer to the magical papyri of Acts 19:19 than the ‘true gospel’ that Paul was preaching.

VI The Way Forward

This article represents a more optimistic position than that held by those who think that the way forward in the West’s relationship to Africa is ‘more aid or nothing’.³⁰ It is time for that depressingly limited set of options to be swept out of the back door and forgotten. Its social reductionism is close to criminal.

The ‘way forward’ is explored below under three headings. All three are closely inter-related, and together they constitute a valid basis for future western involvement in Africa that will avoid the promotion of magic.

First is the necessity to recognise the importance of language. It is time to end the crude levels of relationship that are enabled when using European languages to connect to people in Africa who are of a very un-European culture. Development advice for Africa needs to be formulated and presented by people familiar with the languages and cultures of a people and region. The present situation is an embarrassing mockery, in which overseas experts direct projects in Africa from distant offices through foreign-funded local managers. On the ground, everyone can be fully aware just how inappropriate project policies can be, but the problem is how to tell the boss in a distant office when that person has no clue to the language and culture with

²⁹ Mary Douglas, ‘Sorcery Accusations Unleashed: the Lele revisited 1987’, 177-193, *African Journal of the International African Institute*, 69 (2) (1999), 178.

³⁰ This seems to be extremely widely assumed, as (almost?) every ‘project’ engaged in by the West in Africa and other ‘poor’ parts of the world involves the transfer of material resources from the West.

which he is dealing.³¹

Second is the need to have foreign personnel working in African countries in financially vulnerable ways. The current association between white, wealthy and imprudent use of funds (in comparison with nationals) in parts of Africa is generative of serious racism.³² One straightforward way of rectifying this is to have Westerners work on projects in Africa that they do *not* themselves pay for. When white Europeans' professional colleagues in Africa are not financially dependent on them, they will be more likely to speak truthfully. It is common for Europeans working in Africa to raise more funds abroad when finance gets short for some reason—for example misappropriation through corruption. But instead of using foreign money to bail out their position or project, the Europeans should seek a solution that depends on and draws on a local community. (This is a position the national

who he hopes one day will take over from him will certainly be in.) If the local community simply allow the project to collapse rather than bailing it out, then one wonders whether they were serious in wanting it in the first place. If outsiders were not constantly busy handling finance, it would give them more time to learn the local language, and then in turn to learn to operate in a way that is locally appropriate.

Africa receives a *vast* amount of foreign aid of all sorts from 'the West'. Yet there is also a 'stand-off' by Westerners and a strong feeling that Africa should be running its own affairs; this is especially to avoid accusations of neo-colonialism, imperialism, being domineering and so on. The resulting duplicity on the part of donors—on the one hand, needing to be in control, and on the other, wanting to avoid being seen as being in control—is ironic in a number of ways:

First, that western nations should be handing out aid, but not taking responsibility for its impact;³³ and this despite the fact that the degree of aid provision of different sorts can dwarf other economic activity and orient a whole country to the pleasing of foreigners.³⁴

Second, that it prevents Africa ben-

31 This, and the risk that funding could be cut as a result, results in the 'failures' of a project being kept secret, as explained by Rich a number of times with reference to the Millennium Development Project (Sam Rich, 'Africa's Village of Dreams.' *The Wilson Quarterly*, 2007. See also http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=wq.essay&essay_id=231264 accessed 5 January 2008.) Jim Harries, 'Language in Education, Mission and Development in Africa: Appeals for Local Tongues and Local Contexts', *Encounters Mission Ezine*, Issue 19, (August 2007). http://www.redcliffe.org/uploads/documents/Language_in_Education_19.pdf accessed 10 October 2007, and Harries, 'A linguistic case for the necessity of enculturation.'

32 One could almost say in Sub-Saharan Africa, the veneration of Whites.

33 Jim Harries, 'Providence and Power Structures in Mission and Development Initiatives from the West to the Rest: a critique of current practice', *Evangelical Review of Theology* (2008, 32:2), 156-165.

34 'Foreign aid... [is] the predominant source of financial resources for much of [Africa]...' (Dambisa Moyo, 2009. *Dead Aid: why aid is not working and how there is another way for Africa* [London: Allen Lane, Penguin Books, 2009]), 25.)

efiting from contextual expertise. While swamped with books, technology and know-how from the West, local alternatives can hardly get off the ground. The exclusion of Westerners from visible authority positions that is these days required to avoid the appearance of paternalism is a blight on the prospects for real progress in Africa. From the African point of view such exclusion is considered legitimate because Europeans who back their words with foreign money, finding their language in use, easily take and are given too much power. This would be rectified if 'foreigners' were to confine themselves to operating only in African languages, and in some cases at least refuse to back their activities with foreign money.³⁵

The final topic is getting away from a 'top down' approach; it can hardly be dealt with sufficiently in this paragraph but it must be mentioned. The above strategies go a long way in taking us in the bottom-up direction. Development workers who use local languages and rely on locally available resources (that they themselves do not solicit) for their activities are to a large extent *forced* to be bottom-up in their strategy.

The other important way to ensure 'bottom-up-ness', to demonstrate genuine humility and to reach to the very heart of a people is to concentrate on theological aspects of the task in hand.

Giving God the credit removes praise from self, and is a way of enabling African people to perceive the basic beliefs that underlie the 'developed' way of life they desire, and not only the outward expression of such beliefs.³⁶ Teaching the Bible and teaching theology in peoples' own languages are the ideal means of bottom-up promotion of development.

This is after all the means of addressing key issues already discussed above regarding African people's mystical forces, often translated into English using the term 'god'.³⁷ What is the true nature of God then is an important question that needs urgent attention in Sub-Saharan Africa.³⁸

VII Conclusion

The prevalence of the 'magical worldview' means that scientific discourse from the West is received in Africa as being magical. Implicit translation from one worldview to another, even if the language (such as English) is the same, leaves gaps in comprehension on the part of the receiver of communication in different areas of life, including economics. The fact that people of all cultures share a common humanity

35 Jim Harries, 'Issues of Race in Relating to Africa: linguistic and cultural insights that could avoid traps', <http://www.jim-mission.org.uk/articles/issues-of-race-in-relating-to-africa.html>, accessed 5 January 2008.

36 The Christian church has clearly had an enormous role to play in the development of the West to where it is today but this is a role that is often concealed by secular re-interpretations of history.

37 African names for 'vital force' are often simply translated by the English term 'god'.

38 Harries, "The Name of God in Africa" and related contemporary theological, development and linguistic concerns', 271-291.

is shown to be insufficient basis for clear intercultural communication, and does not prevent science being transformed into magic or vice versa. Three recommendations made to Westerners working in Africa are: that they use

African languages, do not invest financially in their key activities, and give priority to theological teaching. Thus Westerners may get to the position of being an aid to 'bottom-up' African development.

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The 'Born again' Concept in the Charismatic Movement in Ghana

Abraham Akrong

KEYWORDS: *African Indigenous Churches (AIC), Pentecostalism, salvation, deliverance, missionaries, colonialism, social unrest, democratization.*

THE PURPOSE OF THIS paper is to analyse the 'born again' concept in the Charismatic movement in Ghana both as a category of salvation and also as a social status. The paper will further examine the soteriological assumptions behind this concept and the social context that brought it to prominence as an important form of Christian social identity in Ghana. The sources include recorded radio and television sermons, interviews and the manuals of instruction for new members of charismatic churches.

The impetus to write this paper came from an interaction I had with a Muslim lady who had been recently converted to Christianity through the instrumentality of one of the charismatic churches in Ghana. In a conversation, the lady retorted ebulliently to a question, 'If I were not born again, that lady would have had a few lessons

from me!' This testimony convinced me that for her and many others like her who have been attracted to the charismatic movement the status of 'born again' is seen as a spiritual status as well as a form of social identity and a badge of identity that come with one's membership of a charismatic church. That is, the status of 'born again' is invariably regarded as a new form of identity that must distinguish those claiming it from ordinary Christians because this status is believed to be a new spiritual reality that demands radically new patterns of behaviour

A proviso is instructive here because the category of the 'born again' does not have the same status and prestige as it used to enjoy at the beginning of the charismatic movement. This is because the prosperity promised to the born again is becoming more important than their moral identity. As one of my informants puts it, 'These days we do not care about being born again because it can restrict the enjoyment of prosperity.'¹

¹ Interview with a charismatic member, Accra.

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I Historical Perspective

The charismatic movement in Ghana represents what I have described elsewhere as a relatively recent expression of African spirituality in the historical development of African Christianity.² The charismatic movement is part of a continuum that can be traced directly to African spirituality through the instrumentality of what has been described as African independent or indigenous churches (AIC). This AIC movement has been shaped principally by the questions regarding salvation which are posed by African Christians.³ Its point of departure is the application of the spiritual resources of Christianity to daily mundane issues and problems which are very much part of African traditional religion. Ironically, the charismatic movement distances itself from African traditional religion because it perceives the latter as demonic and therefore something from which its adherents must be saved (very much like the message of missionary theology).⁴ This created the conditions for the profound and radical Africanization of Christianity at deep levels of thought, making possible the use of traditional categories and language for articulating the message of Christianity.

The emergence of AIC as a spiritual movement within African Christianity goes back to the end of the 19th century

and early 20th century. The movement was spearheaded by African prophets who believed that they had been called by God to bring the message of Christianity to their people as a religion of salvation that could address their concerns and problems. In a process of what could be described as the spiritual appropriation of Christianity on the basis of African spirituality, a movement was set in motion whose aim was to interpret Christianity in such a way that it could deal with concerns which hitherto had been on the periphery of missionary theology of salvation

The process of the Africanization of Christianity in the African indigenous churches and the later Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal churches in Africa is continuous with African spirituality and the regulative principles that define the structures of salvation in African traditional religion. The controlling paradigm of this Africanization process initiated by the African indigenous churches is based on the idea that there are spiritual resources that can provide solutions to human problems, both physical and spiritual.

The Christian message was generally introduced into Africa as a message of salvation that was meant to save the African people from the debilitating effects of the paganism of African culture.⁵ Therefore, on becoming Christians, African converts were expected to reject African culture in favour of western civilization. These converts reacted to this situation in two related ways. First, they silently endured the devaluation of their culture in the mis-

2 Abraham Akrong, 'Salvation in African Christianity', *Legon Journal of Humanities* Volume xii (1999—2000), 9-13.

3 Akrong, 'Salvation in African Christianity', *Legon Journal of Humanities*, (1999-2000), 25.

4 Abraham Akrong, 'The historic mission of African Independent Churches', *Research Review, New Series* vol 14, No2, (1998), 12.

5 Eboussi Boulaga, *Christianity Without Fetishes* (Mary Knoll, NY: Orbis, 1984), 19.

sionary churches while they were secretly combining Christianity and African traditional religion as two complementary or parallel systems that addressed different needs and concerns. Secondly, this silent protest in the missionary churches found expression in movements in African Christianity which began with the phenomenon of African indigenous churches.⁶

This protest was institutionalized in the AIC which made it possible for Africans to apply the principles of African spirituality to their understanding and interpretation of Christianity. The contribution of this movement to the growth of Christianity in Africa resulted from the fact that it was able to make essential elements of African spirituality the presuppositions for the appropriation of Christianity as a religion that can address the salvation concerns of Africans. This allowed Africans to use categories derived from African culture as the medium through which the Christian message could be translated. More importantly, the movement initiated a process of Africanization of Christianity which today is expressed in many unique forms of Christianity in Africa

II African Christianity

The African indigenous churches prepared the grounds for the reception of the Pentecostal traditions in many parts of Africa. It is important to note that the modern Pentecostal movements and the African Indigenous

churches emerged around the end of the 19th century and early 20th century as movements in search of the tangible experience of the divine in the lives of believers. For this reason, when the Pentecostal tradition came to Ghana, it found a fertile soil in AICs which had already developed concepts and language based on the African world-view that could be used to appropriate and interpret Christianity to bring out its spiritual dimensions

African Christians found in Pentecostalism a form of Christianity that resonated with their own Africanization of Christianity project initiated by the African indigenous churches. The emphasis of African Christian on life mediated through the spirit found correspondence in the Pentecostal emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. Pentecostal spirituality, whose constitutive element is the active presence of the Spirit by means of which God can deal directly with the believer, was seen by African Christians as similar in many ways to the Christianity developed by the AICs and hence its attraction.⁷ The spiritual perspectives of Pentecostal theology gave to African Christians a theological frame of reference that could justify their own theology of salvation that brings spiritual solutions closer to their immediate needs and concerns. Thus, once Pentecostalism had been contextualized and interpreted on the basis of the African world-view, it was seen as a form of

⁶ David Barret, *Schism and Renewal in Africa* (Nairobi, Kenya: Oxford University Press, 1968), 127.

⁷ Juan Sepulveda, 'Reflection on the Pentecostal Contribution to the mission of the Church in Latin America', *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, 1992:1, 100.

Christianity appropriate to African salvation concerns.⁸

The charismatic movement emerged in the late seventies in Ghana and was presented as a new and popular version of Christianity that promised easy access to spiritual power that could provide solutions to all kinds of problems. The Charismatic movement could be described as a form of African Pentecostalism with influences from evangelical Christianity and the faith movement of America and Europe.⁹ Due to its Pentecostal roots, it has also been categorized as Neo-Pentecostal.¹⁰

The message of the charismatic movement is very simple and attractive: The power of the Holy Spirit is available to deal with all types of problems, including protection from witchcraft, deliverance from ancestral curses, deliverance from demons and witches that prevent women from getting husbands and spirits that make married women barren, demons that may hamper the prosperity of traders and prevent workers from getting promotion or students from passing examinations or couples from stable marriages, and demons that may block opportunities to travel abroad to improve one's lot. The message is dominated by these key words associated with salvation: total wellbeing of the

believer, especially the born again—progress, blessings, opportunities, victory over evil and prosperity.

III Sociology of the Charismatic Movement

The charismatic movement appeared on the Ghanaian scene in a period of very stressful social circumstances which resulted from the turbulent socio-political and economic situation in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The youth of the nation were particularly affected by this situation; many of them saw radical social change as the only way of dealing with their plight and therefore they embraced the revolutionary rhetoric. For this reason, some social commentators have argued that the series of coups and revolutions of this period was a kind of protest of the youth against the status quo, and their desire for a new order.

Some charismatic leaders believed that the message of the charismatic movement emerged at this critical period in the life of the country as a message of hope and empowerment that promised the availability of spiritual recourses for dealing with problems and contradictions in one's life. Thus Bishop Bob Hawkins, one of the pioneers of the charismatic movement in Ghana, argued in a television program that the charismatic movement emerged at crucial time in Ghana to provide an alternative to despair among the youth that could easily have led to violent social revolution.¹¹ There

8 Akrong, 'Salvation in African Christianity', *Legon Journal Humanities*, 14.

9 Akrong, 'Salvation in African Christianity', *Legon Journal Humanities*, 20.

10 Elom Dovlo, 'A comparative Over-view of Independent and Charismatic ministries in Ghana', *Trinity Journal Church and Theology* (1992), 15.

11 GTV Programme, 'In the light', Contribution of Bishop Bob Hawkins, 25 June 1999.

are also charismatic preachers like pastor Eastwood Anaba who emphasize the social and political significance of the charismatic movement in providing an alternative to the revolutions and coups of that time.¹²

The Charismatic movement presented a Christian message that espoused spiritual principles that could be used for organizing one's life based on one's relationship with God. The category of 'born again' was presented as a definitive status that would make it possible for one to lead a victorious life in the midst of the prevailing debilitating socio-economic and political circumstances. Being 'born again' became a function of the new possibilities of self-definition which linked the spiritual benefits of being born again to the creation of a new social identity with possibilities of a victorious and prosperous life.

The 'born again' status was presented by Charismatic theology as a guarantee of the success and prosperity promised in the Bible because when one becomes born again, one acquires a legal status as a child of God that qualifies one to an inheritance of prosperity and success in life. The covenantal language that is used to describe the status of the born again is instructive here. The notion of birth suggests that one has been born into a spiritual family that confers a status, and with this status come privileges and rights

due the fact that one belongs to God in a special way.

In practice, many people whose lives had been dislocated and shattered because they could not cope with the challenges of the time found in the charismatic message an opportunity to rebuild and transform their lives for the better. Those who turned to drugs and alcohol as a way of dealing with the social dislocation found in the 'born again' concept an opportunity for a fresh start. The category of 'born again' thus became the preeminent symbol of belonging to the family of God that confers on one the right to the material benefits of the spiritual birth. It was thus seen as a status that brings about the type of spiritual and social transformation which empowers one to deal with the debilitating forces of social change.

The charismatic movement initially saw itself as a new Christian community of Christians who were different from others. In fact, Mensa Otabil, the General Overseer of the International Gospel Church, in his initial messages called on all born again Christians who been disappointed in their various churches to come out to form a new fellowship of believers.¹³ The aim of these born again fellowships was to create the nucleus of a new Christian community that could lead believers to become born again Christians and also sustain that status. The structured life of the charismatic fellowships which later evolved into churches became the

¹² Eastwood Anaba, *God's End time Militia: winning the war within and without* (Accra: Accra Design Solutions, 1997; see also Asamoah Gyendu, *African Charismatic Studies of Religion in African* (Accra: Christian Press, 2005), 121.

¹³ Kingsley Larbi, *Pentecostalism: The Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity* (Accra: Centre for Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies, Accra, 2001), 359.

outward expression of new Christian community of the born again.

The charismatic churches are usually leader centred, but they manage nevertheless to create opportunities in the movement that make it possible for many people who are otherwise invisible in the society to perform leadership roles which bring them dignity, self-worth and respect. The 'born again' community thus provided the social space for everyone to acquire dignity through the various roles they performed and the leadership functions which they exercised. This allowed for what might be described as the democratization of charisma in the service of God through the leadership roles and functions made possible in the church. The visibility that came with the 'born again' status helped people to concretize their new identity in real leadership performance roles.

The democratization of leadership roles in the movement also provided different types of pastoral services to the members of the community which enhanced their sense of worth and importance. The 'born again' identity provided a blue-print for the articulation of the cherished interest of individuals in the group in the form of a new identity that comes with more social visibility. In this process, the charismatic movement was able to mobilize symbols and language associated with success in life or the victorious life as a resource for facing existential challenges of life for those privileged to be part of this movement.

IV Biblical Perspective

The *locus classicus* of the biblical concept of 'born again' is John 3:3: 'Unless

a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.' The concept is linked with the eschatological destiny of the believer. In 1 Peter 1: 23 it is seen as a new status: 'You have been born anew, not of mortal parentage but of the immortal through the living and enduring word of God.' In 2 Corinthians 5: 17, Paul describes the 'born again' status as the occasion for the transformation that takes place when one becomes a new creation in Christ because of the filial relationship with God through Christ: 'I will be a father to you and you shall be my sons and daughters.'

The biblical concept of being born again implies a new status that distinguishes one from the old nature through new attributes that the new creation brings.¹⁴ Thus Ephesians 4:23-24 states: '...you must be made new in mind and spirit and put on a new nature of God, which shows itself in the just and devout life called for by the truth'. So we can see that the biblical idea of being born again means an inner spiritual experience that is expressed in a qualitatively superior moral life.

The mainstream Protestant doctrine of salvation focuses on justification by grace through faith. The focus of this view of salvation is the legal status one acquires before God as result of justification. However, this juridical interpretation of salvation contrasts sharply with the Pentecostal theory of salvation which is based on experiencing the benefits of justification in the

¹⁴ Gordon Fee, *Paul, The Spirit and The People of God* (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 1977), 21.

form of holiness and sanctification. The Pentecostal emphasis on the experience of the benefits of justification in terms of personal holiness is similar to the pietistic order of salvation which lays similar emphasis on the changes that justification brings in the life of the justified—call, repentance conversion, justification sanctification and eschatological perfection and glorification.¹⁵

The antecedents of the Pentecostal view of salvation as spiritual transformation that brings about holiness or sanctification can be traced historically to the Wesleyan holiness movement where the idea of second baptism and perfection were regarded as a crucial part of individual salvation. In its theology of salvation, the Pentecostal movement appropriated this idea of salvation which includes the notion of second birth.

V Classical Pentecostalism and the Charismatic Movement

To be born again in mainstream Pentecostal theology means to be born from above.¹⁶ It is not understood as reformation of character nor becoming religious or a change of heart, but the communication of something which was not previously there. Being born again gives the individual the benefits of sal-

vation through the regenerative work of the Holy Spirit which makes one a new creature. People who are born again are engrafted into Christ through baptism which makes it possible for them to acquire the qualities of Christ. It is this transformation that qualifies the born again to be designated as children of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.

As children of God by adoption, they can call God Father because now they belong to the family of God with all the privileges of children of God.¹⁷ As a result, the born again person can live victoriously over the world and also be set apart for Christ to be sanctified as a saint. This Pentecostal view of 'born again' is interpreted in Charismatic theology as a new spiritual status. This status empowers believers to face personal, spiritual, social and economic problems based on the assurance that they have access to spiritual power on account of the status they have acquired as children of God.

The various charismatic preachers have articulated views on the 'born again' concept that bring out the theological underpinning and ontological structure of the concept. Rev Dr. Koranchi Ankrah, the General Overseer of the Royal House Chapel, taught that we are all creatures of God but not all of us are children of God—only the born again are the children of God. Because they are born again they have these rights: prosperity, deliverance and protection from the devil, well-being and success, and the privilege to call on God and God being obliged to

15 Abraham Akrong, 'Akan Christian view of Salvation from the Perspective of John Calvin's Soteriology' (Th. D. Diss., Chicago 1991), 173.

16 Guy Duffield and M. N. Van Cleave (eds), *Foundations of Pentecostal Theology* (Los Angeles: Life Bible College, 1983), 228.

17 Duffield and Van Cleave, *Foundations of Pentecostal Theology*, 224.

help them. The 'born again' have a special legal status before God which entitles them to an inheritance that guarantees the benefits of success and victory over evil. The 'born again' have by birth become new creations that allow them to receive the Holy Spirit which links them up to God so that they can have direct access to God. As new creatures, their lives are set on God and not on the flesh because they have been delivered from sin of the flesh; God has given them spiritual insight that allows them to imagine a 'break-through' and because they are children of God whatever they will imagine happens.¹⁸

Pastor Ashimolowo proclaimed in a television sermon that God has allotted a portion of property to all the 'born again' as part of their inheritance which pre-ordains them to success and the victorious life. Therefore any failure or problems in their lives means that someone—demon or witch—is tampering with their pre-ordained allotted success.¹⁹ Archbishop Duncan Williams proclaimed in one of his television sermons that '... the born again are moved to the very presence of God where they can speak to God directly'.²⁰ Chris Gakyilome also affirmed in a radio sermon that the 'born again' have an inheritance based on their status as children of God and failures in their lives mean that they

have allowed Satan to rob them of their rights.²¹

On the personal level, the born again must possess the gift of speaking in tongues; many born again persons spend hours practising how to master the art of speaking in tongues. Speaking in tongues is believed to be the visible sign that one is born again and it gives one special access to God. As one charismatic preacher puts it, 'speaking in tongues moves the born again to the very presence of God where they can have unlimited access to the blessings of God'.²² The gift of speaking in tongues also acts as a medium of protection that shields the prayers of the 'born again' from the disruption of the devil. Indeed, the gift of speaking in tongues allows the born again to communicate with God in a language that the Devil cannot comprehend, thus enabling one to reach God safely. Speaking in tongues is an important gift that comes with the status of being born again because it is one of the outward signs that one is a child of God

VI Analysis

The charismatic view of being born again has continuities with Pentecostal doctrine, but it is appropriated and interpreted as a category of salvation within a wider view of salvation that includes material prosperity and well-being. The classical Pentecostal view of salvation, which is continuous with the pietistic idea of salvation, on the

18 Television Sermon by Rev Dr Koranchi Ankrah, Channel 2, Pentecost Hour, Accra, 20 Feb. 2002.

19 Television Sermon by Ashimolowo, Channel 2, Pentecost Hour, Accra, 29 Aug. 2004.

20 Television Sermon by Archbishop Duncan Williams, Channel 2, Pentecost Hour Accra, 27 Oct. 2002.

21 Television Sermon by Chris Gyakilome, Channel 2, Accra, 6 Oct. 2005.

22 Television Sermon by Chris Gyakilome, Channel 2, Accra, 5 May 2005.

other hand lays great emphasis on the personal salvation benefits that accrue to the saved in terms of the experience of radical moral and spiritual transformation. The general Pentecostal view of salvation is expressed in personal categories because of the emphasis on the expected changes that should occur in the moral and spiritual life of the believer. In continuity with the Pentecostal tradition, the charismatic understanding of salvation is also expressed in personal terms but is not limited to moral and spiritual transformation; it includes prosperity and the victorious life.²³

So the theory of salvation that underpins the charismatic 'born again' concept is a view of salvation which emphasizes moral and spiritual transformation as well as existential and material wellbeing. Also, the critical difference between the charismatic theory of salvation and classical Pentecostalism is that while in the latter the emphasis is on moral and spiritual transformation, in the former the moral and spiritual transformation is viewed as the status that qualifies one to enjoy wealth and prosperity. This view of salvation with primary emphasis on prosperity is based on the idea that believers have had their debts paid by Christ through his sacrifice on the cross. What is left for the 'born again' is the inheritance that belongs to them by right as children of God, or, to put it in other terms, a reward which is material and physical prosperity.

The idea that the forgiveness of sin accomplished by Christ amounts to debt paid creates a tendency in the charismatic theology to treat sin lightly—as something that belongs to the life prior to becoming born again. The result is that the moral and spiritual aspect of holiness that should accompany the experience of being born again is often ignored. The focus then becomes prosperity that comes with the 'born again' status. This tendency has given rise to the perception that the charismatic prosperity message has attracted to itself doubtful characters who exploit the people. The weakness in the emphasis on prosperity alone as the most important element in salvation allows the moral and spiritual aspects of 'born again' to be ignored, thus presenting a truncated theology of salvation.

The emphasis on material prosperity as the main focus of salvation leads to a demonology that sees evil in terms of the obstruction of one's prosperity. According to this view, evil enters the life of the 'born again' in the form of demonic interventions that obstruct and deprive the 'born again' of the right and access to prosperity. The use of this demonology as an explanation for problems and difficulties in life can easily lead to what has been described as a 'witchcraft mentality' that attributes all problems to the devil and his agents. This type of mentality can create an unhealthy dependence on men and women of God.²⁴

One further problem of the 'born

23 J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Chrismatics: current developments within Independent Indigenous Pentecostalism in Ghana* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2005), 206.

24 Abraham Akropong, 'Neo-Witchcraft Mentality in Popular Christianity', *Research Review (New Series)*, (2000), volume 16, 11.

again' concept in the message of the charismatic movement is that it is imprecise. One is not sure whether being born again is a status that one acquires in the process of salvation or if it is a status that is conferred on one by just becoming a member of the charismatic movement. Usually the claim to being 'born again' in evangelical Christianity is accompanied by personal narratives which show experiences that mark the beginning of the born again life. In my research on 'born again' in the charismatic movement, these personal narratives are absent. What we have instead are the external features like speaking in tongues that mark one out as 'born again' and the promises that come with being born again.

One therefore gets the impression that in the charismatic movement today, the 'born again' status starts when a person is initiated into the charismatic movement through various ceremonies which include the acceptance of particular teachings. It appears therefore that the 'born again' status is conferred by the movement on those who become full members. Here the sociological dimension of the 'born again' status becomes more important than the spiritual and moral aspects. This peculiar interpretation and use of the concept of being born again constitutes a transformation of a salvation

category into a social category that confers the privileges and benefits of salvation.

VII Conclusion

The charismatic movement appeared on the Ghanaian scene at the period in the history of the country when it was facing a lot of socio-economic and political problems. These crises manifested themselves in the lives of many people in the form of social dislocation which, especially for the youth, meant a crisis of identity because the normal socialization process that defined identity through education and the job market had been disrupted. This produced a general mood of despair and disillusionment. The charismatic message came on the scene as a wonderful message of hope that would help them reorganize their lives. The charismatic movement provided a message that claimed that there is spiritual power which is available and can solve all problems in life. What one needed was to be 'born again' and the problems of life would be solved. Many people rushed to join the movement because of the harsh realities of the situation and the enticing promises of the movement. The category of the 'born again' became a badge of identity that assured and guaranteed access to the power that could make the successful life possible.

Hermeneutics and Missions in the Land of the Equinox

Eloy H. Nolivos

KEYWORDS: *Revivalism, sects, fundamentalism, Protestantism, Pentecostalism, contextualization.*

It took less than a century for Spain and Portugal to 'Christianize' the population of Latin America. For the next four hundred years the Roman Catholic Christendom model of society reigned supreme. Now, in the 1990s, the scholarly spotlight focuses mainly upon the 'explosive' growth of Protestantism. The new face of the church in Latin America is largely a Protestant story.... The most significant change, of course, is that it is now the *Latin American* churches, warts and all, that have taken their destiny into their own hands. Traditional holdouts in Roman Catholicism and in North American and European mission structures, one is tempted to say, will go the way of the dinosaurs.¹

¹ Guillermo Cook, *New Face of the Church in Latin America: Between Tradition and Change* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1994), ix, 268.

I Introduction

The time has passed when observers, critics and opponents considered Latin American Protestantism² 'the invasion of the sects'.³ This marginalization has given way to a popular acceptance, which Stoll likens to a 'New Reformation' or a 'Reinterpreting the Invasion of the Sects as an Evangelical Awak-

² The term *Evangélico* (Evangelical) in Latin American is a catch-all word for all Protestant groups including independent churches, Pentecostals and Neocharismatics. In other words in Latin America 'evangelical' and 'protestant' are synonymous.

³ The following texts on Ecuadorian Protestantism especially express this sentiment: Tomás Bamat, *¿Salvación O Dominación?: Las Sectas Religiosas En El Ecuador*, 1a ed. (Quito, Ecuador: Editorial El Conejo, 1986); David Stoll, 'The Invasion of the Sects in Latin America', in *Is Latin America Turning Protestant? The Politics of Evangelical Growth* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); María Albán Estrada and Juan Pablo Muñoz, *Con Dios Todo Se Puede: La Invasión De Las Sectas Al Ecuador*, 1a ed., (Ecuador: Planeta, 1987); Alvin M. Goffin, *The Rise of Protestant Evangelism in Ecuador, 1895-1990* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994).

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ening.⁴ Today the renewal in Latin America has many manifestations or faces: Catholic, Liberationist, Ecumenical, Evangelical and Pentecostal.

Latin America's Protestant hermeneutic is one distinctive that has challenged and enriched the global Christian community. The views and methodologies of a Latin American hermeneutic, ie., its exegesis, contextualization, conscientization, social praxis, pneumatic emphasis and *una mission integral* (a holistic mission that addresses both the spiritual and social facets of life) demonstrate new non-western hermeneutical principles. Although Cook's analysis correctly depicts Latin American believers directing their own future, there are still vestiges of their spiritual parents' influence even in their hermeneutics.

Protestantism in Ecuador exemplifies an evangelical conservatism inherited from North American fundamentalist missions.⁵ This paper considers historically how Ecuadorian Christians are heirs to a literal hermeneutic as a result of their Protestant evangelical heritage. The strengths and the weaknesses will be observed as well as how some Ecuadorian evangelicals are moving away from this inheritance to a contextual interpretation of Scripture. The newer emphasis points to the aspiration for an indigenous hermeneutic where Scripture is sought to address the Ecuadorian reality rather than adopt an outdated exclusively individ-

ualistic approach to the Bible. The Ecuadorian Church is at a historic moment for renewal which if successful will establish their hermeneutical process.

II The Development of a Literal Hermeneutic

The Bible Societies, missionaries, electric (media) church, para-church organizations and the Pentecostal movement are all waves that have deposited conservative beachheads on the Americas of the South. From the mid-nineteenth century and following, many of these North American and European Protestant tides helped shape in Latin America a literal hermeneutic grounded on an absolute inerrancy of Scripture. José Míguez Bonino calls the first wave '*los iniciadores del protestantismo 'criollo'*' / (the initiators of the 'Creole' Protestantism') who began to posit the beginnings of a literal hermeneutic. In spite of their various denominational backgrounds, (Methodist, Presbyterian and Baptist), these founders shared the common evangelical perspective of their particular era.⁶ In Ecuador, what type of hermeneutic and perspective of Scripture developed from these initiators? The following defines present Ecuadorian hermeneutics as the fruit of their Protestant founders.

Ecuador's literal hermeneutic is a product of evangelical fundamental-

4 The latter is actually Stoll's title for chapter ten.

5 Fundamentalism, which entered at the end of the 19th century, is today well established in the country.

6 My translation. José Míguez Bonino, *Rostros Del Protestantismo Latinoamericano*, (Buenos Aires and Grand Rapids: Nueva Creacion/Eerdmans, 1995), 35.

ism.⁷ Their evangelical hermeneutic is fundamentalist because of their literal reading and interpretation of Scripture. It is also positivistic in that they understand the Bible as offering verifiable information by mere observation and reasoning. Bonilla concurs that Ecuadorian evangelicals believe in the plenary and verbal inspiration of Scripture as the inerrant proclamation of God.⁸ Bonino's typology of Latin American Protestantism is clearly perceived among Ecuadorian Protestants: they are 'individualistic, subjectively Christological—Soteriological, with an emphasis on sanctification', maintaining 'a dualism and spiritualism (that leads to) a legalistic and separatist ethic'.⁹

A study in the history of Ecuadorian Protestantism reveals the predecessors that contributed to this inheritance.¹⁰ From 1820 to 1895 the Protes-

tant forerunners, also known as the first 'initiators', introduced the Spanish Bible. Foreign Protestant missions followed, residing in Ecuador from 1895 to 1912 while at the same time slowly laying down roots in certain regions of the country until 1945. During the period from 1945 to 1962 many Protestant missions and organizations entered Ecuador reinforcing Protestantism. The present phase of expansion and growth began in 1962 through the Pentecostal and Charismatic explosion. The following discussion explicates the development of the conservative, literal and spiritual hermeneutic that exists in Ecuador today.

1 Initiators of Ecuadorian Protestantism

The Protestant story in Ecuador, like other Latin American countries, did not occur in a vacuum isolated from internal and external historical events. The region's emancipation from Spain during the 1820s played a major role in the Bible's entry into Ecuador. The emancipation granted a freedom that allowed for the entrance and spread of new ideas in the vernacular.

The Bible's entrance into Ecuador consists of the first phase of this new initiation into Protestantism. Padilla explains that as early as 1820 and 1822 New Testaments were given to Ecuadorians in the coast, but the first person recorded distributing Scriptures was Scotsman Diego Thomson in 1825. Soon others from his organization, the British and Foreign Bible Society, as well as the American Bible Society, dispensed God's word to a spiritually hungry people on the equa-

7 Yattenciy Bonilla is a former Jesuit priest, a Biblicist, a New Testament professor and the Vice President of *United Biblical Society* in Ecuador. During the last 14 years of working in Ecuador, he has found that the greatest challenge in working with Ecuadorian Evangelicals has been their inherited fundamentalism that has not always been open to education and scholarship outside of the Scriptures. (Yattenciy Bonilla, interview by author, digital recording, Quito, Ecuador, 9 January 2004).

8 Bonilla, interview, 9 January 2004.

9 Bonino, *Rostros Del Protestantismo Latinoamericano*, 46, 47.

10 The divisions of the Ecuadorian Protestant movement are from Washington Padilla, *La Iglesia Y Los Dioses Modernos: Historia Del Protestantismo En El Ecuador* (The Church and the Modern Gods: History of Protestantism in Ecuador), 1a ed. (Quito, Ecuador: Corporacion Editora Nacional, 1989), 64.

tor. The Bible's literal and historical meaning convinced authorities of its literary value for their educational system. Although Thomson refused to start schools, others after him carried out the task.

In Ecuador's second phase, Protestant missionary activity from 1895 to 1945, the model of American evangelicalism fashioned future Protestantism in the country. The first two missionary groups that entered into Ecuador, the Gospel Missionary Union (1896)¹¹ and the Christian Missionary Alliance (1897) hermeneutically embodied and transmitted a strong fundamentalist impulse for evangelism.¹² This inclination resulted in an individualistic interpretation of the church and the Christian life from the literal approach to Scripture. Padilla stresses,

The labor of these entities are likened to a miner who proportions precious gold mixed with clay. The precious gold (represents) the gospel that until then was unknown by the Ecuadorian people, while the clay (symbolizes) the

(North American) cultural elements which alienate and impede the full application of the values of the Gospel for our country.¹³

A particular value endorsed by these groups was a premillennialist vision of the Kingdom of God. They believed that in their generation the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the battle with the antichrist and the spreading of the gospel to the entire world would bring about the return of Christ and the end of human history. All of this would occur before the millennial reign spoken of in Revelation chapter 20.

2 HCJB The Voice of the Andes

The twentieth-century witnessed the rise of media religion attempting to reach the modern world. Ben Armstrong, a former director of National Religious Broadcasters and a champion of the 'electric church', a term he himself coined, affirmed that God's intention 'is to use the electric church to revitalize the older forms of the churches, empowering them to keep up with the twentieth-century challenges of a rapidly expanding population and a rapidly diminishing span of time before the return of Jesus Christ'.¹⁴ Although there is much debate over whether the electric church is or is not truly an effective expression of the gospel, high up in the Andes Mountains of Ecuador, visionaries of the

11 A month earlier on June 5, 1896 a victory for the liberal party produced a law that allowed for *libertad de cultos* (freedom of worship) and for the establishment of permanent Protestant congregations in the country. 'La Confraternidad Evangélica Ecuatoriana a la Nación' (The Ecuadorian Evangelical Fellowship to the Nation), (Quito, Ecuador: Confraternidad Evangélica Ecuatoriana, 1990), 2.

12 This impulse was not detached from a western worldview as Padilla suggests: 'the individualism implicit in their message and their supposedly apolitical stance would lead them to promote many of the values of North American society.' (My translation. Padilla, *La Iglesia Y Los Dioses Modernos*, 184.)

13 Padilla, *La Iglesia Y Los Dioses Modernos*, 187.

14 Bill J. Leonard, 'The Electric Church: An Interpretive Essay', *RevExp* 81, no. Winter (1984): 43.

electric church began the first Christian 'missionary' broadcast in the world.

Early in the 1930s the missionary activity of a new organization in Ecuador, HCJB, would be destined to become the largest Protestant mission work in the country. HCJB (*Hoy Cristo Jesus Bendice/Today Jesus Christ Blesses*) 'The Voice of the Andes', the world's first missionary radio station, went to air with just 200 watts of power on Christmas day 1931 in a crude sheep shed. Clarence Jones and Ruben Larson sat inside the shelter with the vision of reaching the world with the gospel. Today HCJB World Radio ministries has faithfully fulfilled its original vision for over seventy years. HCJB spans the globe, 'proclaiming the good news, using international short-wave, local radio stations and satellite program delivery, as well as training, healthcare, technical services and television program production'.¹⁵

Leonard suggests that since the beginning of the radio and television age, American Evangelicals have controlled the way Christianity is presented on the airwaves.¹⁶ HCJB as the first representative of the electric

church on the mission field followed an American Christian broadcasting format. In Ecuador, the primary efforts of the radio station were to evangelize the country.¹⁷ Over their seventy-two years of broadcasting, they have been a reinforcing presence both positive and negative of a conservative evangelical Protestantism. Padilla expresses this dual presence:

The Voice of the Andes was a new channel of foreign penetration with all the positives and negatives it meant to Ecuador. Positive, in that it was a new channel for the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and an advance in the order of technique, material and culture; negative, in that unintentionally (it) came to reinforce international liberal capitalism—and this, not by any foreign government design or of a North American Imperialistic strategy; but (rather), by the sincere desire of some Christians obeying Christ's mandate to 'preach the Gospel to every creature,' utilizing the most effective means that modern civilization placed at their disposal.¹⁸

This new media channel broadcasts North American and Latin American fundamentalist preachers like Billy Graham, Pat Robertson, Luis Palau,

15 HCJB now ministers to more than 100 countries in 120 languages and dialects.

16 He clarifies the prominence of evangelicals in the media church, 'Whatever their subgroupings, evangelicals have come of age, and one significant factor has been their utilization of the media to communicate their message to American society. Evangelical use of the media is an inevitable result of American revivalistic philosophy and technique.' (Leonard, 'The Electric Church: An Interpretive Essay', 44).

17 Today all of Ecuador is covered by HCJB's radio and television transmissions. There are 22 provinces (states) in the country and HCJB has 22 transmitters in 22 cities.

18 My translation of Padilla, *La Iglesia Y Los Dioses Modernos*, 356. Bamat in his small book suggests that such American missions demonstrate an imperialistic infiltration. Bamat, *¿Salvación O Dominación?*, 72.

Omar Cabrera and Alberto Motessi. For Pablo A. Deiros, these evangelists of the masses upheld a 'kerygmatic' hermeneutic of the gospel: 'they belong to a transconfessional family that emphasizes the proclamation of the gospel as the solution to all human and societal problems.'¹⁹ Their evangelistic ethos originated from a literalist interpretation of scripture now present on the radio and television in Ecuador.

Many other North American parachurch organizations also entered, emphasizing evangelism through specialized interests and ministries such as Bible translation and community development. Two specific groups came to Ecuador: the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIM) in 1952 and the renowned World Vision International in 1975. In Ecuador they followed the same fundamentalist worldview and hermeneutic already demonstrated.

3 Pentecostalism the New Conservative Force

Pentecostal missionaries from the International Foursquare Church, Arthur Gadberry and his family, first arrived in Ecuador in 1957. Five years later, the Pentecostal explosion of 1962 marked the first significant Protestant growth in Ecuador since the initial evangelical penetration in 1825 by Thomson. In 1962 the Aguirre family working in Panama was sent to help the Gadberrys in Ecuador. Roberto Aguirre, a US citizen of Mexican

descent (bi-cultural), organized a city-wide crusade without the help of other churches except the Assemblies of God. The crusade appeared doomed for disaster according to Wayne C. Weld:

Failure seemed inevitable since the small Foursquare congregation could not even provide many counselors for the campaign. There was no choir, no musicians, no seats in the rented football (soccer) stadium, and relatively little publicity before the campaign. But finally just before the campaign was to begin an event occurred that was to turn defeat into victory. The manager of a local radio station offered to broadcast all the services for operational costs of some fifteen dollars per night.²⁰

Aguirre invited Roberto Espinoza, an AOG healing evangelist from California, to be the speaker for the event. On the first night only 1,000 people came out, but, when the news spread of the healings, the fire of God's Spirit ignited and left a blazed trail over the next six weeks.²¹ On the second night

²⁰ Wayne C. Weld, *An Ecuadorian Impasse* (Chicago: Evangelical Covenant Church of America, 1968), 62. The media coverage would be a major factor in the success of the crusade.

²¹ William R. Read, Victor M. Monterroso, and Harmon A. Johnson, *Latin American Church Growth* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1969), 122. It was an 'extraordinary visitation of the Holy Spirit with signs, wonders, and miracles that (throughout) 42 days shook the conscience of many lives and multiplied at least five times the evangelical population of Ecuador' (my translation). '25 Años De Labor Misionera En El Ecuador De Las Asambleas De Dios', ed. *Familias Misioneras* (Ecuador: Asambleas de Dios, 1987), 3).

¹⁹ My translation of Pablo Alberto Deiros, *Historia Del Cristianismo En America Latina* (History of Christianity in Latin America), 1. ed. (Buenos Aires: Fraternidad Teologica Latinoamericana, 1992), 803.

5,000 appeared, on the third night 10,000; by the end of the week, over 20,000 people filled the stadium. At the end of the six-week revival, 30,000 people witnessed 1,500 baptized in water. The thirty plus member Foursquare congregation in the city of Guayaquil received into their fold 600 new converts. This propelled them to open seven more churches in the city.

Once the fires of revivalism settled, Pentecostalism in Ecuador through North American denominations (Foursquare, AOG and the Church of God Cleveland, Tennessee) surged as the new conservative force of Protestantism. These groups have also posited a literalist view of scripture but with an individualistic (escapist) eschatology. Pentecostals as Protestants theologically and in praxis fall on the left wing of the Reformation in the tradition of the Radical Reformation (Anabaptists) rather than the Magisterial (Lutherans and Calvinists). Predominantly in the last four decades, as Deiros suggests, the main characteristic of the Ecuadorian Pentecostal worldview that explicitly influenced their hermeneutic was 'a dualistic view of the world cosmologically, heaven vs. earth, and sociologically, church vs. world'.²² North Ameri-

can Pentecostals in Ecuador have continued in the Evangelical fundamentalist model of those before them.

III Fundamentalism

Established on the Equator

What Bonino identifies as 'the Evangelical face of Latin American Protestantism' correctly defines the fundamentalist Protestant identity past and present. He boldly states,

It is unthinkable of a Latin American Protestant identity that excludes these (fundamentalist) characteristics. Even more, I dare say that the future of Latin American Protestantism will be Evangelical or it will not be.²³

Today Ecuador likewise shares an Evangelical identity with many fundamentalist aspects (sectarian, premillennialist, pietistic, holding to the centrality of Scripture, etc.) which will remain part of its future legacy.

Presently there are over 150 members (churches, denominations and para-church organizations) of *la Confraternidad Evangélica Ecuatoriana* (the Ecuadorian Protestant Fellowship). In a document addressed to the nation they identify themselves as an evangelical entity and they state their basic beliefs, as:

1. The inspiration of the Holy Bible;
2. The Holy Trinity, manifested in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit;
3. The virgin birth of Jesus Christ;
4. The deity, incarnation, expiatory

²² My translation of Pablo A. Deiros and Carlos Mraida, *Latinoamerica En Llamas* (Latin America in Flames), (Miami: Editorial Caribe, 1994), 179. He offers several observations on how Pentecostals interpret Scripture: 1) a Fundamentalist reading of the Bible; 2) the Pentecostal hermeneutic is dogmatic; 3) a literal reading of the Biblical text; 4) the refusal to use elementary techniques to study Scripture; and 5) an allegorical and experiential reading (experience is normative in a Pentecostal hermeneutic), 181-185.

²³ My translation of Bonino, *Rostros Del Protestantismo Latinoamericano*, 51.

- death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ;
5. The salvation of human beings (and escape from the kingdom of darkness and eternal condemnation) only by grace through faith in Jesus Christ and the acceptance of his lordship;
 6. The church of our Lord Jesus Christ made up of all the redeemed through his precious blood, who constitute his visible body on this earth, entrusted to proclaim his holy and blessed gospel;
 7. The second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ to the earth in order to establish once and for all his reign of love, peace, justice and joy in the Holy Spirit.²⁴

They ultimately seek to maintain an evangelical attitude that exhibits 'a belief in Christ and a revealing of Christ'.²⁵ A conservative Protestantism is well established in the equatorial country where its sierra, coast and jungle regions manifest its belief system.

1 Strengths and Weaknesses of a Literal Hermeneutic

The Ecuadorian evangelical hermeneutic acquired from various missionary efforts (Bible societies, missionaries of various denominational backgrounds

and para-church organizations) has left positive and negative results.²⁶ First the positive elements will be observed.

As demonstrated beforehand, the literal interpretation of Scripture provided a strong support for an evangelistic impulse. The motivation behind Bible distribution, the GMU and CMA missionaries, the HCJB radio and television ministry and the Pentecostal groups was wholehearted obedience to the biblical mandate of evangelism. Through the examples and the Scriptures that they have observed, the Ecuadorians have been guided to propagate the gospel in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria and even to the outer most parts of the world. Jerold F. Reed's analysis found that a believer's testimony and the distribution of the Scriptures were the two most important factors for conversion.

The literal interpretation of Scripture has also contributed to the Ecuadorians' esteeming orthodoxy. Such a fundamentalist defence against enemies attacking from without (the destructive atheist critics) and from within (the liberal theologians attempting to negate the evangelical faith) has given meaning to the people during these crisis moments. Another strength stems from the Pentecostal hermeneutic that emphasizes the spiritual power of the scriptures to overcome personal and social evil. Sherron

²⁴ The fellowship further declares that 'the previous beliefs or postulations of faith emerge from a wide biblical base which permit us to maintain our doors open for all those who confess and commit to such postulates'. (My translation, 'La Confraternidad Evangelica Ecuatoriana a La Nacion', 5.)

²⁵ 'La Confraternidad Evangelica Ecuatoriana a La Nacion', 5.

²⁶ For the following I am dependent on Reed's survey of *Los Evangelicos del Ecuador* (The Evangelicals in Ecuador), 19. It is a partial survey of his doctoral thesis: Jerold F. Reed, 'A Componential Analysis of the Ecuadorian Protestant Church' (1974).

Kay George explains this emphasis:

A constant companion and identifying sign of Pentecostals, the Bible, provides models, examples, and solutions for the contemporary Christian. It is used extensively in church services, healing, exorcism, testimony, daily witness, street-preaching, problems-solving, and vehement apologetics.²⁷

There are other strengths to the Ecuadorian hermeneutic but the above three exemplify the Bible's evangelistic ethos, orthodoxy and spiritual power.

In Ecuador, the negative effects of the literal interpretation come from its extreme fundamentalist form. Bonino observes three aspects of Latin America's fundamentalism: an ideological influence acquired, a staunch ethical stance and an exclusive ecclesiastical position; these are found also in Ecuador.

This fundamentalism first negatively transmitted the ideology and politics of the United States—in particular the new religious right and their support of the established order.²⁸ Dif-

ficulty arose for Ecuadorian Evangelicals in judging scripturally their spiritual parents' homeland because their literal interpretation directed them to honour their parents above all. Another difficulty appeared as a result of the dualistic morality inherited from the evangelical and pietistic tradition of the missionaries. Their literalism manifested through a staunch legalism, an opposition to the material and a separation from the world, an individualistic and subjective ethic was passed on. Lastly, because of the individualistic and subjective ethic incarnated, Ecuadorians experienced much isolation and division.

2 Espousing a Contextual Hermeneutic

After 1970 there arose a '*neo-evangelico*' (Neo-Evangelical) movement in Latin America, which Bonino prefers to call '*la renovacion evangelica*' (the Evangelical Restoration). This restoration movement is firmly represented in the '*Fraternidad Teologica Latinoamericana*' (Latin American Theological Fraternity). It upholds and rescues an evangelical tradition, it affirms the centrality of scripture, it critiques the acculturation of the Latin American Evangelical Protestantism and it proposes a contextual hermeneutic.

Contextualization for Latin Americans is basically a Protestant theology of evangelism and social awareness. George says, that 'the creative contextual contributions of theologians such as Elsa Tamez, Orlando Costas, Rene Padilla, Mortimer Arias, and Samuel Escobar have enabled the church in Latin America to move beyond a false dichotomy between evangelism and

²⁷ Sherron Kay George, 'From Liberation to Evangelization: New Latin American Hermeneutical Keys', *Int* 55 (2001): 373, 74.

²⁸ Bonino gives sufficient examples of Chile, Guatemala and the physical and ideological support of the 'contras' in Nicaragua, Bonino, *Rostros Del Protestantismo Latinoamericano*, 52. It was in Ecuador where Padilla's eyes were finally opened in 1970 and he became 'conscious of the relationship that there exists between religious conservatism and political conservatism...the church had married the power', (my translation of Padilla, *La Iglesia Y Los Dioses Modernos*, 12).

social justice.²⁹ In Ecuador Washington Padilla (1927-90) woke up to such a contextual hermeneutic. His awakening 'began to gain conscience that history and the life of the church are intimately related with the history and the life of the world in general, and in our particular case Ecuador'.³⁰ His leadership as an Ecuadorian Evangelical left a lasting impression for future generations who now follow his example and the FTL's hermeneutic.

IV Conclusion

Ecuadorian Evangelicals like Freddy Guerrero, Estuardo Lopez and Nelson Castro, to name a few, are leaders today directing the new face of Protestantism in the country. This generation is leaving a legacy for other Ecuadorian believers and future generations of Protestants. The Ecuadorian Evangelical Fellowship rightly depicts their vision and mission for Christians in the country:

We see through the pages of the Word of God that faith (preaching) and life (social action) go hand in hand in the holistic purpose of redeeming humanity from sin and their consequences. We seek to identify ourselves with the ethnic, cultural and social realities of Ecuadorian men and women in search for their self-realization....

We are a young Church with our limitations but we also have our

aspirations. We desire to glorify God and do his will.³¹

It is obvious a new generation of Protestants (Pentecostals, non-Pentecostals and Independents) in Ecuador is taking their destiny into their own hands. But at the same time they respect and acknowledge the Latin American Protestant inheritance handed down to them. They realize that most Ecuadorian believers are today still using the literal interpretation of Scripture. The hermeneutical task remains before all Evangelical Ecuadorians, regardless of theological background, worldview and the inherited missionary tradition.

The Ecuadorian evangelical hermeneutic as demonstrated in this study is a Protestant missionary inheritance. Conservative forms of North American fundamentalism were transposed, or, as critics claim, they were imposed by missionaries. This paper has presented historically the development of a literal hermeneutic arising from an inherited evangelical Protestantism. Fundamentalism, which entered at the beginning of the late nineteenth century, is today well established in the country. The strengths (evangelism, orthodoxy and spiritual empowerment) and the weaknesses (ideology of the right-wing, a dualistic morality and an ecclesiastical individualism) were observed. And finally the restoration of Protestantism in Latin American has also beckoned Ecuadorian Evangelicals to gladly move away from their inheritance and espouse their own contextual hermeneutic.

²⁹ George, 'From Liberation to Evangelization: New Latin American Hermeneutical Keys', 371.

³⁰ My translation of Padilla, *La Iglesia Y Los Dioses Modernos*, 12.

³¹ My translation of 'La Confraternidad Evangelica Ecuatoriana a La Nacion', 7, 9.

Christianity and Democracy

Thomas Schirrmacher

KEYWORDS: *Religious freedom, Enlightenment, minority religions, Orthodox Church, Catholic Church, Islam, fundamentalism.*

THE FIRST DEMANDS for religious freedom, freedom of conscience, freedom of the press, and universal male suffrage arose in England in the middle of the 17th century in the radical wing of Protestantism. Michael Farris produced a comprehensive study regarding the early sources of religious freedom in the USA, which included countless sermons and tracts.¹

Sebastian Castellio, a former student of John Calvin, spoke out in 1554 against Calvin advocating a still rudimentary form of religious freedom (which would continue the punishment of the 'godless', i.e., the atheists). The English Baptist Thomas Helwys²

(1550-1616) subsequently wrote the first known tract that called for complete religious freedom in 1611. Another English Baptist, Leonard Busher,³ followed with further tract in 1614. The idea spread among Baptists and other 'dissenters' in England, the Netherlands, and later in the US.

It was the Baptist and spiritualist Roger Williams (1604-1685), co-founder in 1639 of the first American Baptist church with a Congregational structure, who in 1644 called for complete religious freedom.⁴ He established on what later became Rhode Island the first constitution in which church and state were separated, assuring religious freedom—also for Jews and atheists, despite the fact that he was a friend of Christian mission. In 1652 slavery had been already abolished on Rhode Island. Rainer Prätorius hit the nail on the head when he

1 Michael Farris, *From Tyndale to Madison* (Nashville: B & H, 2007).

2 Thomas Helwys, *A Short Declaration of the Mystery of Iniquity* (London: n. p., 1611, reprint: London: Kingsgate Press, 1935).

3 Leonard Busher, *Religious Peace* (Amsterdam: n. p., 1614, London: Sweeting, 1644).

4 Roger Williams, *The bloody tenent, for cause of conscience* (London: n. p., 1644), see also *Christenings make not Christians* (London: n. p., 1645).

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said: 'Not in spite of the fact, but rather because he was deeply religious, Williams called for a separation of politics and religion.'⁵ The same applies to William Penn's (1644-1718) subsequent 'holy experiment' in Pennsylvania.

I Step-children of the Reformation

The Protestant theologian and philosopher of religion, Ernst Troeltsch,⁶ supported the view that the codification of human rights was not due to the established Protestant churches, but rather to Free Churches, sects, and spiritualists—from the Puritans to the Quakers—which were driven to the New World. 'At this point the stepchildren of the Reformation finally had their moment in history.'⁷ In the United States of America a number of factors combined and merged: the hard-earned freedom of religion and conscience that had been pioneered by the deeply religious Williams and Penn, the separation of church and state, the constitutional drafts (initially without freedom of religion) developed further by the Puritans and other Reformers, and the implementation of democracy for the territorial states by enlightened and deistic politicians, who translated the

religious guidelines into secular law.

The birth-hour of religious freedom—to exaggerate somewhat—represents therefore the struggle for freedom by Christian minorities against the Christian majority churches. In some non-Christian countries it represents the struggle for freedom of the religious minority movements versus the majority religion, as was the case with Buddhists versus Hindus in India. This also explains the ambivalence of historical Christianity with regard to democratic developments, 'the ambivalence of Christian tolerance'⁸ which makes it impossible to draw a straight line historically from Christianity to democracy.

Still too few studies exist regarding the question whether the close relationship between democracy and minority churches is purely historical or whether it still applies today. Jeff Haynes has presented an extensive analysis in which he discusses which religious groups and trends in present-day Africa promote or impede democracy.⁹ He comes to the conclusion that the large, established churches frequently have bigger problems with democracy than the smaller, new churches. Although the latter are seemingly more 'fundamentalist', they are more democratic within, provide more prospects for internal promotion and are not as determined by a striving for hegemony. Haynes comes to similar conclusions regarding Islam in Africa.

5 Rainer Prätorius, *In God we trust, Religion und Politik in den USA* (Munich: Beck, 2003), 35.

6 Cf. Friedrich Wilhelm Graf, 'Puritanische Sektenfreiheit versus lutherische Volkskirche', *Zeitschrift für Neuere Theologiegeschichte*. Vol. 9 (2002) 1, 42-69.

7 Ernst Troeltsch, *Die Bedeutung des Protestantismus für die Entstehung der modernen Welt* (Munich/Berlin: Oldenbourg, 1911), 62.

8 Rainer Forst, in Manfred Brocker and Tine Stein (eds.), *Christentum und Demokratie* (Darmstadt: WBG, 2006).

9 Jeff Haynes, *Religion and politics in Africa* (London: Zed Books, 1996).

II Judaism as a Minority Religion

The statement that it was religious, especially persecuted minority groups, which demanded democracy and freedom of religion, does not apply only to Christianity, but also, and particularly to Judaism, or—to choose a much more recent example of a religion which emerged only in the 19th century—to the Bahá'í. Whether one should go so far as to state with Hannes Stein, 'the modern constitutional state did not originate in Athens, but in Jerusalem'¹⁰ is debatable. However, the idea of a federal constitution and a separation of priest and king did indeed originate from the Old Testament. It is not a coincidence that it was the eminent Jewish philosopher and reformer Moses Mendelssohn (1728-1786) who was the first in Europe to advocate the separation of church and state and freedom of religion—even if that did not yet include tolerance of the irreligious. The Jewish enlightenment emanating from Mendelssohn affected both secular enlightenment as well as Christianity and has a permanent place in the history of democracy.¹¹

III Christianity and the Enlightenment

The anticlerical enlightenment of the French Revolution and the American Revolution, shaped by very devout and deistic individuals, are linked by a pro-

found commonality which one would not suspect at first glance. Both were directed against the ruling, mainline churches. Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859) in his famous work on democracy in America posited that here deeply religious, mostly reformed movements had entered into an inseparable symbiosis with enlightened views.¹²

The interplay between Christianity and the Enlightenment operated, as far as the emergence of democracy in America was concerned, with significantly less friction than in Europe, where it occurred only following numerous violent and bloody conflicts. This continues to have an effect even to the present, and perhaps explains the often-experienced lack of understanding between Europe and America.

IV Christianity and Democratisation

Neither would the Enlightenment have led to democracy had it not been able to draw on Christian concepts in western civilisation, nor would Christianity have changed its political ethics or relinquished its comfortable position in the alliance between throne and altar without the enlightenment, since according to Manfred G. Schmidt, 'democracy has its roots primarily, yet not exclusively, in countries which were culturally influenced by Christianity and, in spite of a prolonged

¹⁰ Hannes Stein, *Moses und die Offenbarung der Demokratie* (Berlin: Rowohlt, 1998), 10.

¹¹ S. Christoph Schulte, *Die jüdische Aufklärung* (Munich: Beck, 2002).

¹² Alexis de Tocqueville, *De la Démocratie en Amérique*, 2 vols. (Paris: Gosselin, 1835, 1840), additionally Manfred G. Schmidt, *Demokratiethorien* (Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwiss., 2008), 113-131.

strained relationship between democracy and the Christian religions, received and further developed their guidelines for ordering social life from Christianity.¹³ Schmidt is referring here to one of the most distinguished Australian political scientists, Graham Maddox.¹⁴

Whilst he, as well as the American historian Page Smith¹⁵ do not speak on their own account, the best known German representatives of this thesis are theologians such as William J. Hoye or politicians such as Hans Maier.¹⁶ This thesis has naturally not been left unchallenged.¹⁷ The 19th century state churches on the European continent were all too obviously allied with the monarchies against revolutionist aspirations or against the 1848 movement, to draw a mono-causal line from Christianity to democracy.

In 1993 Samuel P. Huntington drew up the widely accepted thesis of the four waves of democratisation.¹⁸ In

addition to sociological and economic factors, he observed an accumulation of the role of religious majority religion or denomination. Subsequently in a first wave (1828-1926) particularly Protestant countries became democracies. During the second wave (1943-1962) particularly Protestant, Catholic and Far Eastern countries, during the third wave (1974-1988) predominantly Catholic and Orthodox countries became democracies and during the fourth wave (after 1989/1990) all religions mentioned were affected again.

Today, of the 88 free democracies worldwide, 79 or more than 90 per cent are predominantly Christian. Besides this there exists one Jewish democracy and seven made up of predominantly Far Eastern religions, whereas in Mauritius and South Korea Christians constitute the second largest population segment. Mali is the only free, democratic country with a majority Muslim population.¹⁹ One could also refer to Turkey and Indonesia, even though they are not ranked as 'free' countries on the lists mentioned.

Is it coincidence that the correlation between religious orientation and the ability to democratise repeated itself after the fall of the Soviet empire? Is it coincidence that the secular, Protestant and Catholic countries formerly under the influence of the Soviet Union

13 Schmidt, *Demokratiethorien*, 422-423.

14 Graham Maddox, *Religion and the rise of democracy* (London/New York: Routledge, 1996).

15 Page Smith, *Rediscovering Christianity. A history of modern democracy and the Christian ethic* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994).

16 William J. Hoye, *Demokratie und Christentum* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1999); Hans Maier, *Demokratischer Verfassungsstaat ohne Christentum—was wäre anders?* (St. Augustin: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, 2006); see also in: Brouck/Stein, *Christentum und Demokratie*; cf. as early as Hans Maier, *Kirche und Demokratie* (Freiburg: Herder, 1979).

17 Cf. the collection of essays with pro and contra, Brouck and Stein, *Christentum und Demokratie*.

18 Samuel P. Huntington, *The third wave* (Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1993); cf.

Samuel P. Huntington, 'Religion und die dritte Welle', in: *Europäische Rundschau* 20 (Winter 1992) 1, 47-65; Samuel P. Huntington, 'After twenty years', in *Journal of Democracy*, 8 (1997) 4, 3-12.

19 Classification according to www.freedomhouse.org.; for quality cf. Schmidt, *Demokratiethorien*, 381-386; 392-398 and further studies, 417, 422.

fairly quickly became functioning democratic states, the Orthodox countries did so only partly (democracy remained incomplete in Russia, Georgia, Montenegro and Macedonia) and the Islamic countries did not at all?

V Islamic Countries

This is not to say that Islamic countries cannot in principle be democratised (Mali has refuted this since 1991). The point here is not that we want to find reasons for a sense of superiority because of some historical advantages of Christianity. The failure of large parts of Christianity during the period of National Socialism²⁰ is a reminder to Christians of the words of the apostle Paul: 'Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall' (1 Cor 10:12). Democrats, including Christian democrats, can only be filled with the wish for Muslim states to also become democratic states.²¹

Research to date has neglected to examine more precisely what obstructs the establishment of democracy in the Islamic cultures, and what type of impact different theological and cultural versions of Islam have on the political structure. Naturally, it can be

assumed that the configuration of the Turkish, Persian, Arabic and Asian expressions of Islam influenced the degree of democratisation and freedom in the countries which they dominated.

However, the question of whether parallels to intra-Christian development exist in Islam has barely been pursued, that is, whether Islamic minorities and sects do display greater openness towards democracy when compared to the respective majority representation of Islam

VI Political Ethics and Denominational Structures

John Witte referred to the fact that as a general rule support for democracy in political ethics preceded the major waves of the democratisation of states with a certain denominational majority.²² Is it coincidence that the turning point of the Catholic Church towards freedom of religion and democracy during the Second Vatican Council, between 1974 and 1990, was preceded by a third world-wide wave of democratisation, which included many Catholic countries in Europe and Latin America? I do not want to establish a direct inter-dependence here, but surely nobody would seriously dispute that the theology of the largest religious community in the world influences the political realities of its supporters.

Since Orthodox theology found it most difficult to adopt a post-enlightenment ethic, it would hardly be sur-

²⁰ See Thomas Schirrmacher, *Hitlers Kriegsreligion*, 2 vols. (Bonn: VKW, 2007).

²¹ Moataz Fattah, *Democratic values in the Muslim world* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2006); Frédéric Volpi, *Democratization in the Muslim world* (London: Routledge, 2007); Larry Diamond (ed), *The Spirit of Democracy* (New York: Times Books, 2008); as a plea, Benazir Bhutto, *Reconciliation* (London: Pocket Books, 2008); cf. critical analysis Franco Burgio, *Export of democracy to the Arab world* (Munich: Grin, 2007).

²² John Witte (ed.), *Christianity and Democracy in Global Context* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993).

prising to find that amongst the Christian countries, it was the Orthodox ones that struggled most with the concept of a free democracy, although in the meantime parliaments (and governments) are freely elected there too. Some of these countries still show significant defects in democracy, for instance autocracy (in Russia), or restricted freedom of religion (in Greece). At the same time, the recognisably progressing reform of theology and the political ethics of Orthodox churches towards human rights and democratic forms of government²³ would give reason for hope that democracy in the Orthodox countries will become stronger and more free.

A perusal of the outlines of ethics by German-speaking Christian theologians of all denominations for the last twenty years reveals that no one advocates an undemocratic form of government or a form of Christian theocracy. I consider democracy as characterised by an election of parliament and government through free elections, a constitutional state, i.e. the separation of powers and the verifiable adherence of

governmental action to law and justice, independent courts and an effective opposition. It is also a situation in which the constitutional state affords and protects human rights and the rights of all citizens, including minorities, and the separation of church and state, including freedom of religion.²⁴

The survey of equivalent English-language documents reveals the same. Concepts of political ethics by Christian theologians, who do not depict democracy as the best form of government, originate either from countries that are not free or from an Orthodox context, and fortunately, according to my understanding, no new examples have been added to the list in the 21st century. The fact that in its ethics the largest religion in the world became almost completely involved in the most complicated and youngest form of government in history, is an as yet unwritten success story.

Added to the question of political ethics, must be that of the internal structure of Christian confessions. The French political philosopher Montesquieu (1689-1755), in his magnum opus, already held the view that the monarchy tended to suit Catholicism, whereas the republic suited Protestantism better.²⁵ For a long period of time he seemed to be correct, but an increasing democratisation of Catholic countries gradually made a differentiation necessary.

23 Cf. for the Greek Orthodox Church Konstantin Delikostantis, 'Die Menschenrechte im Kontext der orthodoxen Theologie,' *Ökumenische Rundschau* 56 (2007), 19-35; Konstantin Delikostantis, 'Hē orthodoxia hōs protasē zōēs syllogikos tomos,' *Akritas* 1993; for the Russian Orthodox Church Rudolf Uertz, 'Menschenrechte, Demokratie und Rechtsstaat in der Sozialdoktrin,' in Rudolf Uertz and Lars Peter Schmidt (ed.), *Beginn einer neuen Ära?* (Moskow/Bonn: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, 2004); Rudolf Uertz and Lars Peter Schmidt, *Die Grundlagen der Lehre der Russischen Orthodoxen Kirche über die Würde, die Freiheit und die Menschenrechte* (Moskow: KAS, 2008).

24 Cf. the numerous versions of democracy and the question of what constitutes it in Schmidt, *Demokratiethorien* and Arend Lijphart, *Patterns of Democracy* (London: Yale Univ. Press, 1999).

25 Schmidt, *Demokratiethorien*, 77, on Montesquieu in general 66-79.

However, at this point we have to return to the role of the minority and free churches. The first constitution in history on which a state was founded was that of what later became Connecticut (1639) in the United States of America (USA). This happened only a few years before Rhode Island was founded. It is an obvious example of the influence of Congregationalism, to which the majority of the inhabitants belonged.²⁶ The pace of the development of democracy was more rapid in Reformed countries with Congregational or Presbyterian Church structures, such as the USA, Switzerland and the Netherlands.

The evangelicals were, according to Marcia Pally, the 'backbone of the civic-democratic development'²⁷ in the 18th and 19th centuries in the USA, because they themselves were congregationally structured, and promoted communal development. They were anti-authoritarian and characterised by a strong individualism. And finally by virtue of their anti-racist past²⁸ they emerged as supporters of black churches and female preachers.

It is evident that as part of the over-

all impetus of the waves of democratisation, the more alike the internal structures of Christian denominations were, the more expeditiously they came to terms with enlightened democratic states. The more lay people participated in the decision-making and the more the churches were organised through elections from bottom to top, the sooner denominations did an about-face on a global scale. In only one instance does this equation fail: theoretically the Catholic countries should have been seized by the democratisation wave *after* the Orthodox countries.

Lest this be understood as one-sided, confessional partisanship, it should be pointed out that, in the case of the German constitution, the above mechanism did not apply. One must differentiate between the official teaching of a denomination on the one hand and the acts of the laity on the other: Catholic laypersons frequently acted much earlier than their church in favour of the separation of church and state. Especially through the Centre party political Catholics supported the Weimar Republic. Many committed Catholic laypeople contributed formatively to the development of the constitution of the German Federal Republic.

This was not the case in the same way with Protestants. Although it can be said about the Anglo-Saxon countries at the time of World War II and before: 'In the churches of the USA, but also of Great Britain, democracy and Christianity were practically viewed as being synonyms.'²⁹ This view naturally

26 See also Prätorius, *In God we trust*, 32-34 and Hoye, *Demokratie und Christentum*, 143-145; Willam J. Hoye, 'Neuenglischer Puritanismus als Quelle moderner Demokratie', in: Brocker/Stein, *Christentum und Demokratie*, 99-102.

27 Marcia Pally, *Die hintergründige Religion* (Berlin: Berlin Univ. Press, 2008), 46, 88 et al.

28 Chuck Stetson (ed.), *Creating the better hour* (Macon: Stroud & Hall, 2007); Ian Bradley, *The Evangelical impact on the Victorians* (Oxford 2006; cf. Thomas Schirrmacher, *Rassismus* (Holzgerlingen: Hänssler, 2009) and see also *Multikulturelle Gesellschaft* (Holzgerlingen, Hänssler 2006).

29 Martin Greschat (ed.), *Christentum und Demokratie im 20. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1992), p. VIII.

reached Germany via the Allied Powers, with the exertion of more or less gentle pressure. Yet, at the time of the development of the Constitution, the Protestant Church still struggled to accept democracy. It was not until 1985 that the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), in a famous memorandum³⁰ accepted liberal democracy without 'ifs and buts'.

VII Evangelicals and Christian Fundamentalists

Martin Riesebrodt maintains that all fundamentalists are hostile towards democracy: 'True fundamentalists are never democrats on principle, but from expediency.'³¹ However, this hypothesis cannot be proven by either an historical or an empirical investigation. Neither does the history of democracy prove him correct—numerous fundamentalists formed part of its inception—nor does the present. One must look at each group individually to assess its capacity for democracy. Conceding that the concept of fundamentalism is hardly suitable for scholarly purposes—fundamentalists are always 'the others'—I would nevertheless agree to presuppose the fundamentalist character of certain movements.

Let us for instance take Brazilian evangelicals, who are largely influenced by Pentecostalism. According to

research undertaken in Brazil in 2003 by the sociologist Alexandre Fonseca,³² 25 of the 57 evangelical members of congress belonged to opposition parties, while 32 belonged to the ruling labour party. They represented 11 per cent of the members of congress, which corresponds approximately with the percentage of evangelicals that make up the country's population. In Brazil it is possible to accumulate votes for designated candidates. Fonseca established a high degree of backing for democracy, something that is not always found with the Catholic Church. The fact that *all* democratic parties are regarded as places for Christian involvement shows that the secular character of the state and the parties has been accepted.

In South Korea evangelicals constitute 15 per cent of the entire population, accounting for the largest section among Protestants. When benchmarked against German standards, it was found that they are predominantly fundamentalist-orientated, both among the Presbyterian and the Pentecostal wings. They live peacefully in a society in which the majority of the population is Buddhist, stabilising the secular democracy.³³

Recently sociological studies inves-

³⁰ *Evangelische Kirche und freiheitliche Demokratie* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1986), 1985; cf. in addition Eberhard Jüngel, *Evangelische Christen in unserer Demokratie* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1986).

³¹ Martin Riesebrodt, *Die Rückkehr der Religion* (Munich: Beck 2001), 89.

³² Alexandre Brasil Fonseca, *Evangélicos e mídia no Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro 2003); see also Religion and 'Democracy in Brazil,' in Paul Freston (ed.), *Evangelical Christianity and Democracy in Latin America* (Oxford, New York: OUP, 2008).

³³ Donald N. Clark, 'Protestant Christianity and the State,' in: Charles K. Armstrong (ed.), *Korean Society* (New York 2006); David Halloran Lumsdaine (ed.), *Evangelical Christianity and Democracy in Asia* (Oxford, New York, 2008).

tigated the relationship between evangelicals in the global south and politics, particularly with reference to democracy.³⁴ The outcome was altogether very positive; the support of dictators or tyrannical regimes remained the exception. This also shows that the 300-400 million evangelicals living outside the USA cannot be equated with the 50 million living in the USA. In addition, it should be considered that among the evangelicals in the USA, a significant number are Afro-Americans and Latinos and that even under George W. Bush 40 per cent of the evangelicals voted for the Democrats.³⁵

Evangelicals throughout the world, are politically divided into radical evangelicals and conservative evangelicals, with the radical evangelicals inclined towards liberation theology in Latin America and India,³⁶ and in the USA (e.g. Ronald Sider and Jim Wallis) belonging to the strongest critics of the politics of George W. Bush.³⁷

If, to choose a different tool of assessment, one investigates the Christian ethics of evangelical theologians—according to Riesebrodt's definition also 'fundamentalists'—all of them, for multiple reasons, advocate democracy, and that not only as a pretence. Richard Hempelmann has documented his hypothesis, that German evangelicals are predominantly not fundamentalists and that Christian fundamentalism has no basis in Germany. He proved this by, among other things, stating that Christian minority parties such as the Pentecostal Party of Bible-believing Christians (Partei Bibeltreuer Christen [PBC]), or the Catholic Christian Centre (katholische Christliche Mitte) receive hardly any votes.³⁸ Added to this is the fact that their respective churches do not support these parties.

A similar principle applies in the USA. The *Christian Reconstruction* movement is considered to be the only movement which theoretically wanted to create a Christian republic with binding biblical laws, as had been the case during the times of the founding fathers of the USA. The movement remained insignificant and barely survived the death of its founder.³⁹

The problem of the evangelical movement in its history and partly up to the present day, lies rather in the

34 See e.g. David Halloran Lumsdaine (ed.), *Evangelical Christianity and democracy in Asia* (Oxford, New York, 2008); Terence O. Ranger (ed.), *Evangelical Christianity and Democracy in Africa* (Oxford, New York, 2006); cf. also Paul Gifford, *African Christianity* (Kampala: Fountain Publ., 1999; London: Hurst, 1998).

35 Pally, *Die hintergründige Religion*, 54, 57.

36 Cf. e.g. the evangelical forerunner of the Indian ecology movement Ken Gnanakan, *Responsible Stewardship of God's Creation* (Bangalore: Theological Book Trust, 2004).

37 Ronald J. Sider, *Scandal of Evangelical politics* (Grand Rapids, 2008); Jim Wallis, 'Dangerous Religion. George W. Bush's Theology of Empire', in Bruce Ellis Benson, Peter Goodwin Heltzel (eds.), *Evangelicals and Empire* (Grand Rapids, 2008); Randall Balmer, *Thy Kingdom Come. How the religious right distorts the faith and threatens America* (New York, 2006).

38 Reinhard Hempelmann, 'Fundamentalismus', *Materialdienst der EZW 71* (2008) 7, 243-244; cf. Thomas Schirrmacher, *Feindbild Islam. Am Beispiel der Partei „Christliche Mitte“* (Nürnberg: VTR, 2003).

39 E.g. Pally, *Die hintergründige Religion*, 55; for details see Thomas Schirrmacher, *Anfang und Ende von Christian reconstruction* (1959-1995) (Bonn: VKW, 2001).

fact that evangelicals shy away from politics and leave the shaping of society to others. For this very reason they are no threat to democracy (as long as one does not view the high number of non-voters as a threat to democracy). The Russian-German evangelicals living in Germany, for example, often do not even work together with other evangelicals. As they descended predominantly from the completely or partly pacifist Mennonite and Baptist traditions, they are, as far as violence and the malpractice of politics are concerned, 'harmless' churches. In a religious sense they may be fundamentalists, but in the political sense they are certainly not.

If fundamentalism is defined by its attempt to re-establish the original condition of religion in the face of modernity, what emerges in the Christian realm with the ideal of the altogether a-political first church in Jerusalem, is a rather pacifistic movement.

VIII Conclusion

Despite much ambivalence in the relationship between Christianity and democracy, there are reasons why determined Christians and minority churches have called for secular democracy, have advanced it, and have helped to stabilize it.

Spirituality Without God

A Christian Response to Buddhism

Harold A. Netland & Keith E. Yandell

In recent years Buddhism has attracted a fast-growing following in North America and Europe. In part, this is because Buddhism seems to offer peace and inner tranquillity, a profound spirituality and insight into ultimate reality, yet without the need for belief in a God. To many spiritual seekers in the post-Christian West this 'spirituality without God' has strong appeal. Whilst Buddhism has been a formative influence in the cultures of South and East Asia it is a relatively new arrival in the West and is little understood by Christians. This book has the twofold aim of introducing the diverse Buddhist traditions to Western readers and of offering a Christian engagement with the central truth-claims of Buddhism. Throughout the book the claims of this ancient religion are treated with respect and careful attention but the authors maintain that there are good reasons for ultimately rejecting Buddhist conclusions. This book is one of very few attempts by Christians to offer a respectful and informed, but honest and robust critique of this important religion.

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Energising Community: Theological Education's Relational Mandate

Hwa Yung

KEYWORDS: *Individualism, Enlightenment, rationalism, society, divine image, Trinity, ecclesiology, ethics, pastor*

I Introduction

In his delightful and deceptively simple book, *Christianity Rediscovered*,¹ Vincent Donovan told of his work among the Masai people of East Africa, who appeared to have no interest at all in Christianity despite the best effort of the church through education and medical outreach. So he told his bishop that he would dissociate himself from these and would 'just go and talk to them about God and the Christian message'.² For one whole year, once a week, he spent an hour in the early morning talking to all the members of one particular tribe. At the end of the year, he asked them whether they would decide

for Christ, and if so, baptism would follow. But he told them however that baptism would not be automatic for everyone, but only those who have really listened to and understood the gospel message. Those who have missed many sessions, or are deemed to have little understanding or scarcely believe would not be baptised. At that point, the tribal leader, Ndangoya, stopped him gently but firmly and said:

Padri, why are you trying to break us up and separate us? During this whole year that you have been teaching us, we have talked about these things when you were not here, at night around the fire. Yes, there have been lazy ones in this community. But they have been helped by those with much energy. There are stupid ones in the community, but they have been helped by those who are intelligent. Yes, there are ones with little faith in this village, but they have been helped by those with much faith. Would you turn out and drive off the lazy ones with the ones with lit-

1 Vincent Donovan, *Christianity Rediscovered* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1978).

2 Donovan, *Christianity Rediscovered*, 15.

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tle faith and the stupid ones? From the first day I have spoken for these people. And I speak for them now. Now, on this day one year later, I can declare for them and for all this community, that we have reached the step in our lives where we can say, 'We believe.'³

The statement by Ndandoya, 'We believe,' says it all!

The organisers of this consultation have referenced our topic to the book, *The R Factor*, by Michael Schluter and David Lee,⁴ which highlights the importance of relationship and community in society, especially in government and the marketplace. The book served as a powerful critique of the modern industrialised world of today, and argues that only through the restoration of 'relationism' in society can there be true personal fulfilment and a stable global order. The conceptual framework of 'relationism' clearly derives from the Christian values of the co-authors. But it is significant that the historical genesis of the book also came out of Africa where both authors worked in their younger days!⁵

II Defining the Problem— Western Individualism Versus Community

The problem which this paper seeks to address has been set out by the organisers as follows: '*In what sense might community be considered a mandated priority for theological education? Why man-*

dated, for whom, to what end, with what limits?' The issues are raised in the context of 'the majority world's whole-somely endemic responsiveness to the values of community, over against western preoccupations with individualism', and are to be further developed 'by reflection on how this valuation of community could further reshape theological education in the majority world to its benefit, and then how a transforming back-flow into western theological education might be encouraged'.⁶ We begin with the tension between individualism and community.

The Christian understanding of the person-in-community is often split into two opposing poles, individualism and collectivism. In individualism, the person is completely free, autonomous and ultimate in all his beliefs and actions. The individualist treats social solidarity and communal authority with disregard. Collectivism, in more recent discussions, refers to the collective ownership of property, especially land and means of production and, by implication, a high degree of government or social control over individual life. This is the basis for various forms of socialism. In the majority world and more traditional societies, other forms of collectivism or community are found, built on tribal, ethnic, religious or group solidarity. Within such societies, every member comes under the subjection of communal control or of those in authority in the community.

Underlying the concern of this consultation is the idea that, in moving

3 Donovan, *Christianity Rediscovered*, 92.

4 Michael Schluter and David Lee, *The R Factor* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1993).

5 Schluter Lee, *The R Factor*, 4.

6 Para.1 of the brief for this conference, 'Elaborating the 2009 Consultation Theme'.

away from the various forms of communal control and shared commitments, western societies have gone too far in the direction of individualism. This has infected the church as well. How can we recover a proper place for community in Christian life and thought, especially in theological training?

Individualism is probably found in all cultures, but manifested supremely in modern western culture. Various roots for this in the west are traceable but there is general agreement that it goes back to the Greeks. In his sustained critique of the pervasive dualism in western thought, *Being and Relation*,⁷ Carver Yu argues that this way of thinking is rooted in Greek metaphysics, especially in the concepts of nature (*physis*) and substance (*ousia*).⁸ The pre-Socratic Greeks understood the universe as a rational order which is 'complete-in-itself, self-subsistent and self-motivating'. The concept of nature, which came out of this background, was used to express 'the notion that things or the totality of things all have the fundamental principles of determining what they are immanent in themselves, that things exist in and through themselves. That means, things are to be explained in virtue of themselves without recourse to anything other than themselves.'⁹

Plato later built his theory of 'Ideas' upon this concept of reality as 'reality-in-and-through-itself', which has no

place for any dynamic interaction or interpenetration. This laid the seed of individualism in western thought.¹⁰ Similarly, Aristotle developed his notion of substance on the concept of being as 'being-in-itself'. Each substance has a particularity of its own, having its identity in and through itself, and identified as a substance precisely because it is self-subsistent. The world is composed of discrete substances and any relation among individual entities composed of discrete substances is merely accidental.¹¹

Yu goes on to suggest that Descartes built his understanding of the self upon these Greek philosophical ideas, rooted in the concept of reality as 'being-in-itself'. For Descartes, the self-conscious 'I' in *cogito ergo sum* ('I think, therefore I am') is implicitly understood as a substance, which is self-subsistent and needs no others for its existence.¹² The self or 'ego-subject' subsists in its own self-consciousness, without intrinsic relations to the world or to other selves. Thus was born the autonomous self which lies at the heart of modern individualism.

Although influenced by Greek philosophy, Christianity took a somewhat different path rooted in the biblical teachings. It sought to combine a strong emphasis on commitment to community with an intense concern for the dignity and value of the individual. The latter was undergirded by various emphases in the Bible. These include the doctrine that every human is created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26),

7 Carver T. Yu, *Being and Relation: A Theological Critique of Western Dualism and Individualism* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1987).

8 Yu, *Being and Relation*, 49-63.

9 Yu, *Being and Relation*, 67.

10 Yu, *Being and Relation*, 78-86.

11 Yu, *Being and Relation*, 88-98.

12 Yu, *Being and Relation*, 98-105.

the love commandment (Mt. 22:37-39), and the affirmation of the equality of all in Christ (Gal. 3:28). These and similar ideas in Christian theology not only drew attention to the importance and value of the individual person but, as Harold Berman has argued, also helped lay the foundations of the laws on civil rights and liberties, and other principles of modern democracy in the west.¹³

It is important to emphasise that this unequivocal stress on the fundamental equality of all humanity, irrespective of race, religion, gender or creed is not found in any other religion or culture, or, at least, not stressed with the same clarity. Of course this is a terribly politically incorrect statement to make in today's world. But the facts are undeniable.¹⁴ Nevertheless, over the centuries, these ideas have become intertwined with similar ideas that emerged out of Greek philosophy

and the Enlightenment.

The net result today is that the modern world has seen the emergence of an individualism that has both Christian and pagan roots. With the decline of Christianity and the emergence of a modern worldview largely domesticated by the Enlightenment, the commitment to community weakened, leaving the autonomous individual increasingly to reign supreme. Thus in one sense, individualism represents the triumph of Greek metaphysics and Enlightenment thought; but from another perspective, it is a Christian heresy! It is this perversion which led to the irresponsible exercise of individual freedom in many parts of the west today, the object of Solzhenitsyn's searing critique in 1978. Speaking at Harvard's Commencement, he asserted: 'The defense of individual rights has reached such extremes as to make society as a whole defenseless against certain individuals. It is time, in the West, to defend not so much human rights as human obligations.'¹⁵

To sum up, as one writer puts it, from the Christian perspective 'Individualism is the development of one aspect of the Christian understanding of the person-in-community. It needs continuous correction from those who understand that the self lives only in relation with others.'¹⁶ It is to this that we now turn.

13 See Harold J Berman, *The Interaction of Law and Religion* (London: SCM, 1974), 49-76. With respect to the whole western legal tradition upon with modern democracy with its clear affirmation of human dignity, freedom and equality rests, Berman wrote: 'These principles... for Western man as a whole... are, above all, historical achievements created mainly out of the experience of the Christian church in the various stages of its life... These successive ages of the church have created the psychological basis, and many of the values, upon which the legal systems of democracy and socialism rest' (pp.72f). See also Ronald J. Sider, *The Scandal of Evangelical Politics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2008), 79-156, 171-190.

14 See for example the brief treatment of this theme in Howard Peskett and Vinoth Ramachandra, *The Message of Mission* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2003), 37-44.

15 Alexander Solzhenitsyn, 'A World Split Apart', Harvard Commencement Speech (June 8, 1978).

16 Roger L. Shinn, 'Individualism,' in *A New Dictionary of Christian Ethics*, eds., John Macquarrie and James Childress (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1986) 295-7; here 297.

III The Need to Recover Community

Following from the above, the most important reason for emphasising community in life and thought is the need to recover a proper Christian understanding of the person-in-community. But another good reason for our effort to reemphasise community is because communal modes of thought and life remain important in the world at large. We begin by looking at this first.

1. The predominance of communal thinking in many parts of the world today

In many parts of the world, life and thought are still centred around the community. Vince Donovan's story of evangelism among the Masai illustrates this clearly. He came to understand that if he was to baptise them, he had to baptise either the whole tribe or none at all. This way of thinking is obviously foreign to many of us. But it does give us food for thought, especially on an issue like paedobaptism: Will our differences over this ever be resolved theologically, or do we have to turn to anthropology for an answer? Other examples abound.

Cultural anthropologists like Paul Hiebert have repeatedly drawn attention to this as well. Contrary to the assumptions of many western missionaries, communal thinking predominates in many parts of the majority world. In these places, Hiebert writes,

The basic building blocks of the society is not the individual person but a group. People do not see themselves as autonomous, but as members of the groups to which

they belong...The most valued human qualities are those that help preserve group loyalties and maintain congenial social relationships. Qualities needed to achieve certain individual goals are secondary.¹⁷

This implies that missionaries who come with an individualistic mind-set will be perceived as relationally superficial, impersonal, antisocial or even lacking group loyalty!

It is important to note that we are not here speaking merely about traditional societies and a world that is soon passing away. Even within western societies there is an increasing quest for a recovery of community, of which Schluter and Lee's book, *The R Factor*, is only one indication. Perhaps the one book that speaks most clearly of this trend, even though in a rather different manner, is Samuel Huntington's book on *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*.¹⁸ His thesis is simple: increasingly people will seek refuge in their respective cultural or group identities, based on such as history, tradition, race, religion and language. This trend is being fuelled by globalisation on the one hand and resurgences of indigenous cultures in non-western societies on the other. Cultural identities will increasingly shape global politics in the coming days.

Huntington's thesis was written soon after the collapse of the Iron Cur-

¹⁷ Paul G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1985), 122.

¹⁸ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (London: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

tain; we have seen enough since to note its essential correctness. The point that needs noting is that, if cultural identities will shape the geo-politics of tomorrow, surely it will fundamentally shape the church and world mission too. And any discussion of cultural identities in most parts of the world today brings us right back to the importance of community.

2. Biblical and theological considerations

But there is an even more important reason for us to recover the community today in life and thought, and that is what the Bible and Christian theology teach. This is well summed up in the statement, 'Elaborating the 2009 Consultation Theme', drawn up by the organisers of this conference. It states:

This entire theme should then be taken deeply into biblical and theological warrant, grounded and opened up there, not least in terms of the community-formation intended by creation and by redemption, the Fall as relational rupture, the relational purpose of the Cross, salvation as reconciliation, the place of the church, the body of believers, within God's present redemptive programme, the relational dimension of all biblical ethics, the corporate nature of the Final Hope—and all this rooted in the nature of the Trinity, and in the relational love-intention that is foundational to God's character and His deeds.¹⁹

To try to elaborate on this in any

detail would take a whole textbook, if not a library! What I shall seek very briefly to do is to draw attention to some of these important biblical and theological themes that undergird the importance of community.

a) God's purposes in creation and redemption

God's relational purpose for humanity in creation is clearly seen in his creating humans, male and female. This is clear from God's words, 'It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him' (Gen. 2:18). This relational aspect of human existence was made doubly emphatic in the words, 'they shall become one flesh' (Gen. 2:24).

But it is not just in the creation of man and woman in Genesis chapters 1 and 2 that we see God's relational purpose for humanity. There is much more. We see this most clearly when we begin to look at the consequence of sin in human life in Genesis chapter 3. Sin came and our human relationship with God became broken (Gen. 3:24). But sin also led to the disintegration of the human personality through guilt, shame and fear (3:7-10). The human's relationship with oneself is now broken. Next, man's relationship with his wife became broken through fault-finding, blame-shifting and inordinate desire instead of self-giving love (3:12, 16). Finally, humanity's relationship with nature is now broken through the curse of sin and judgment (3:17-19). In other words, whereas humans were created to live within a total set of wholesome relationships, sin has wrecked it all. Francis Schaeffer sums all this up as follows:

¹⁹ 'Elaborating the 2009 Consultation Theme', Para. 1.2.

First of all, man is separated from God; second, he is separated from himself, thus the psychological problems of life; third, he is separated from other men, thus the sociological problems of life; fourth, he is separated from nature and thus the problem of living in the world, for example, the ecological problems. All these need healing.²⁰

It is against this background that we realise how shabby and weak sometimes our doctrine of salvation has become. It was David Bosch who pointed out that the tendency to individualise and spiritualise salvation has been endemic in western theology since Augustine, in part because of the Platonic influence which prioritised the eternal soul over the temporal body.²¹ The earlier evangelical embrace in much of the 20th century of a similar understanding of salvation certainly contributed to what is sometimes termed a 'Protestant individualism'. Thus it is important to remind ourselves that we are created to live within a total set of relationships—with God, with ourselves, with fellow humans, and with nature. Salvation is not concerned only with saving spiritually the individual person, but also with the redemption of the whole creation and the healing of all our broken relationships, including communal ones.

This finds its outworking in the message of the Bible. In the Old Testament, God was not just interested in

saving one individual, Abraham, but a whole nation, Israel. His words to Israel, 'I will be your God and you will be my people' (Ex. 6:7), which summed up his purposes for them, was a constant refrain throughout their history. The same emphasis is found right through the New Testament where the church is referred to as the 'flock' (Jn. 10:1-30), 'the people of God' (Eph. 2:11-22), 'the Body of Christ' (1 Cor. 12), 'the family of God' (Rom. 8:15ff), 'the community or fellowship of the Holy Spirit' (Phil. 2:1), and various other terms, almost all of which are rooted in community.

This is perhaps most clearly seen in the 1 Peter 2:9 where four communal metaphors for the church are thrown together, as if for emphasis: 'But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession...' And then there is, of course, the image of the church as the 'Body of Christ,' in which all members are mutually dependent (1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4:1-16), supplemented by the theology of spiritual gifts, wherein different ones are gifted differently to complement one another, so that together we make one whole.

If the above examples do not suffice, it needs to be pointed out that English readers of the Bible often fail to realise that many of the indicatives ('you are...') and imperatives ('you shall...') are couched in the plural 'you', rather than the singular! Finally, even with regards to church leadership, the terms deacons and elders/presbyters almost invariably appear in the plural or in a plural context. In other words, from the biblical perspective, a Christian in isolation is a contradiction in terms.

²⁰ Francis Schaeffer, *Death in the City* (London: Intervarsity Fellowship, 1969), 76.

²¹ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission—Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Missions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 215-217.

The above is an all too brief summary of the place of community in God's purposes for his people in both the Old and New Testaments. Yet, important as this may be to our thinking about relations and community in Christian thought and life, there is something even more fundamental—it is the nature of God himself!

b) The nature of God

In discussions with strict monotheists, Christians unconsciously find their belief in a Trinitarian God somewhat of an embarrassment. But that is because we have forgotten how intellectually robust is the doctrine of the Trinity!

The belief in a monotheistic creator presents us with a paradox that is not easily resolved. Can God be both self-sufficient and personal? On the one hand, if he is self-sufficient, he is perfect in himself and needs no created world to love. On the other hand, if he is personal and perfect in his personality, it means that there must be an external object for him to love. This would mean that God needs someone external to himself without which his personality cannot find fulfilment, thereby implying that he is not self-sufficient. It is doubtful that this can be resolved rationally. But in the doctrine of the Trinity, this is fully resolved because of the perfect love relationship that exists within God through perfect mutual indwelling of the three Persons in each other.

Conversely, without the doctrine of the Trinity, it is not possible to describe God as both perfectly self-sufficient and personal. If God is fully personal, then he cannot be self-sufficient because he needs the universe and his

creatures with whom to relate. But if God is perfectly self-sufficient, he cannot be conceived of as being fully personal. This leaves us with two alternatives, neither of which is particularly adequate or attractive from a Christian view-point. The first is a strict monotheism which tends towards *absolute transcendence*, e.g. the Islamic doctrine of God. The other alternative is some form of *impersonal monism or pantheism*, e.g. Vedantic Hinduism's concept of *Brahman*, the 'Ultimate Reality', which is beyond description by human language.

Against this background, we can fully appreciate the doctrine of the Trinity in Christian theology. Because God is Trinity, he is fully perfect both in his self-sufficiency and his personality. Therefore it makes perfect sense for the Bible to say 'God is love'. And through the eternal love relations within the Godhead between Father, Son and Holy Spirit, God models community for us. Further, through the Great Commandment (Mt. 22:37-39), wherein we are reminded that our most important duty as humans is to love God and to love each other, God calls us to live in community. Thus in direct contrast to Descartes' *cogito ergo sum*, the Christian asserts, 'I love and am loved, therefore I am'! The Christian finds perfect fulfilment for his/her individuality in community.

IV Theological Education and the Road to Community

In light of the above discussion on the need to recover the place of community in theological education, we shall now look at how building relationships and enhancing community thinking can be

incorporated into our training programmes.

1. Knowing and thinking relationally

Descartes' idea of the thinking individual contributed much to the presupposition in the modern world that reason in its analytical rationalistic form, with its stress on logical argumentation and conceptual analysis, is the primary means of knowing. Yet this gross distortion of reality can easily be disproven. Just ask any Christian group, even in the west, how did each person come to know Christ? Probably the largest number will tell you that they came to faith because someone with whom we have a meaningful relationship (parents, siblings, friends, colleagues, etc.) brought us to Christ.

Depending on where you are, a substantial number (especially in the majority world) will probably tell you that they came to faith through an experience of the presence or the power of God. The smallest number will have come through to faith through intellectual argument and analytical reason! The point is that most of us 'know' through relationship and experience. Reason, as logical argument and conceptual analysis, often merely serves to help analyse, understand and conceptualise our faith, and not to ground it.

Building on the work of Edmund Perry and others,²² I would like to sug-

gest that our knowledge of God comes through three distinctive media, namely *reason*, *experience* and *relationship*. The first is reason, where we know primarily through conceptual analysis (including empirical reasoning) and logical arguments. This is, as noted earlier, the main approach to knowing found in modern education. The second means of knowing is experience. It includes both inner 'psychical' or spiritual experience, such as found in meditation, worship, prayer, visions, ecstasy, and the like, as well as experiences of God's power through signs and wonders. The third means of knowing is via *relationship*. It can be knowledge of God that is mediated to us through our relationship with a human intermediary such as a friend, parent, pastor or spiritual mentor. But it can also be an immediate transaction between God and the individual Christian, through a direct relationship with him.

The point that is being made is that we do not come to know God only via reason. We come to know him also through experience and relationship as well. Further, it should be noted that these three approaches are not three distinctively separate and water-tight approaches to knowing. Rather, there is considerable overlap and merging at the boundaries of each approach. Thus with respect to any experience of God, coming to know God involves not only our *religious experience* but also our analysis of it through the use of *reason*. Again, knowing God through *relationship*, whether via another person or directly with him, invariably involves some sort of *experience*. For the purpose of this paper, further discussion will focus primarily on the knowledge

22 Edmund Perry, *The Gospel in Dispute: The Relation of Christian Faith to Other Missionary Religions* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1958) 99-101; David Hesselgrave and Edward Rommen, *Contextualization: Meanings, Methods and Models* (Leicester: Apollon, 1989), 205f.

of God through relationship.

It is not just in real life that we find that knowing comes through reason, experience and relationship. We find these different ways of knowing clearly enunciated in the Bible as well. Most of us have relatively little difficulty reading Paul. Much of what he wrote has a logical flow, which modern minds like ours usually follow with greater ease because we have been taught to give priority to reason. But the Gospel of John tends to give us far more problems, until we realize that his modes of argument are not merely analytical and logical, but often experiential and relational.²³ The following are some clear examples in John's Gospel of knowing via relationship.

4:39; 'Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony.' (*Comment: Their belief is linked to their relationship with the woman.*)

8:43f, 47; 'Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires...Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God.' (*Comment: Jesus' words were opaque to them because they did not belong to him.*)

10:14, 16; 'I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me... I have other sheep... and

they will listen to my voice.' (*Comment: How do the sheep know the shepherd's voice? Well, how does a baby recognize mummy's voice?*)

14:15; 'If you love me, you will obey what I command.' (*Comment: Obedience, which follows from knowing and accepting something to be true and good, flows out of a loving relationship.*)

Perhaps the clearest illustration comes from 5:39 and 42.

Jesus told the Jews: 'You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life...' (*Comment: Like good evangelicals, the Jews searched the Scriptures, yet did not find the truth! In other words, good sound biblical exegesis, using careful reasoning, did not lead them to the Saviour. Why? 'I know you do not have the love of God within you.' (Comment: Because there was no love relationship between them and God!)*)

The above is a small selection of verses from John's Gospel which illustrate the point being made, that is: we *know* God not merely through reason alone. Similar examples can be found in other parts of the Scriptures. If we try to use reason alone to understand these verses, we will always be stumped by their logic or the apparent lack of it. This should be enough to warn us against our modern over-reliance on reason as the primary means of knowing. But unfortunately, that is the way almost the whole of our theological curriculum is shaped.

In a recent conversation with a clin-

²³ I would add that John's logic is often not linear but circular or spiral, both of which are common in our multicultural world.

ical psychologist,²⁴ he made a comment that gives another side to the point being made here. He noted that behavioural changes in human beings come about as a result of changes, not primarily in the left side of the brain (which deals with logical reasoning), but rather in the right side (which deals with emotions, etc.). The difficult question is how do we do so? Some of what follows will hopefully have something useful to say on this issue in theological education.

2. Thinking relationally in theology and ethics

The need to think relationally must be built into the way we actually go about doing theology, both in its methodology and the content. We will look at three examples.

a) The authority of Scriptures

Evangelical theology is rightly concerned with the defence of the authority of Scriptures. The solution that

many conservative scholars have taken is to use the concept of inerrancy, which in its best form means that the text as originally given (not as we have today) is free from error with respect to all that God intended. Some find the arguments in support of this approach satisfactory. Others feel that the arguments are rationalistic and problematic, because, given the critical problems in the Bible, they end up 'dying the death of a thousand qualifications'. What can be said is that this approach is clearly shaped by Enlightenment rationalism, which assumes that you can prove the authenticity of God's truth by human reason alone. John Calvin was no less familiar with some of the critical problems in the Bible. But being a pre-Enlightenment person, he defended biblical authority by affirming that 'Scriptures must be confirmed by the witness of the Spirit'.²⁵

It would appear that we can build a much more robust doctrine of scriptural authority if we can combine the conservative defence in its best forms using reason, with a parallel appeal to

24 Dr Wei-jen Huang, Faculty Member, Northwestern University Medical School. He refers to three books, Allan N. Schore, *Affect Regulation and the Origin of the Self: The Neurobiology of Emotional Development* (Hillside, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1994), *Affect Dysregulation and Disorders of the Self* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Co., 2003), and Daniel J. Siegel, *The Developing Mind: How Relationships and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are* (New York, NY: Guildford Press, 1999). He says that these are 'based on state of the art research, which validated the biblical truth that it is love that heals (it's the felt grace, the emotional experience of being validated, understood and cared for that transforms people, not the left brain intellectual debates)' (in personal communications, 29 Sept 2009).

25 John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2 Vols., ed. John T. McNeill (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1960), Book 1, Chap. VII. As Geoffrey W. Bromiley, 'The Church Doctrine of Inspiration,' in *Revelation and the Bible*, ed. Carl F. H. Henry (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1959), 203-218, has noted, the development of the doctrine of biblical inerrancy took place in the post-Reformation period in response to certain rationalistic tendencies. For the Reformers, inerrancy was an implicate of their doctrine of inspiration. And 'since the Holy Spirit himself attests the word which he has given, there can be a relative unconcern in relation to its human qualifications' (212).

our personal relationship with God and to our experience of the Bible's divine authority in real life. Thus our belief in scriptural authority is also rooted in a God who can be trusted to speak truthfully about himself, and in Christ who bears truthful witness to his Father, and whose revelation comes with its own self-authentication through the inward work of the Spirit.

Moreover, this authority is confirmed to us in our daily experience of God's presence and the powerful name of Jesus, which includes the signs and wonders of the Holy Spirit. This shifts the defence of scriptural authority from one centred purely on reason to one which includes that, as well as our *relationship* with God and our *experience* of him.

b) Relational ethics

A second example can be found in the way we do ethics. Christian ethics as we have it has been largely written in the west, which tends to prioritise principles over relationships. The assumption is that ethical decisions are made primarily as individuals and based on moral-legal principles. But how does such an ethic work in situations where relations take priority? The complexity of this is well illustrated by a very well-known story in the Confucian classics.

The duke of Sheh informed Confucius, saying, 'Among us here there are those who may be styled upright in their conduct. If their father ha(s) stolen a sheep, they will bear witness to the fact.'

Confucius said, 'Among us, in our part of the country, those who are upright are different from this. The father conceals the misconduct of

the son, and the son conceals the misconduct of the father. Uprightness is to be found in this.'²⁶

The point is that in the traditional Chinese value system, *yi* (uprightness or righteousness) is not defined by moral-legal principles alone. It is also defined by the obligations of a person's family and social relationships.²⁷ This explains in part the importance of *guanxi* (relationship) in Chinese culture even today. This is true not only in China, but in many other societies as well. That is why Christian ethics developed within a western cultural context cannot easily be applied without modification in non-western cultures.

Examples of these abound. For example, Christian ethics formulated in the west treat bribery as unambiguously morally wrong. Yet anyone who has lived in the majority world knows that applying this in a black-and-white manner is well-nigh impossible, if not pastorally irresponsible in many situations!²⁸ In many parts of the world, it is assumed that relationships are sealed with gifts of some kind or other, or gratuities of sorts are given for 'favours' obtained. (In the west one does not pay bribes but only gives 'tips' or pays 'professional fees'!) This does not make

²⁶ *The Analects of Confucius*, XIII, 18, Legge's translation, various editions.

²⁷ See further Tan Che-Bin, 'Ethical Particularism as a Chinese Contextual Issue', in *The Word Among Us: Contextualizing Theology for Mission Today*, ed. Dean S. Gilliland (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1989), 262-281, here 266.

²⁸ See Bernard T. Adeney, *Strange Virtues: Ethics in a Multicultural World* (Leicester: Apollos, 1995), 142-162.

paying in any and every situation morally right. But it does mean that we need to rethink the way Christian ethics is worked out in different parts of a multicultural world, especially in a context where the line between a bribe and a gift is not easily drawn.

Another example concerns the tensions between the nuclear family, strongly taught in western Christian ethics, versus extended families found in most parts of the majority world. Could it not be that one of the key obstacles to discipleship and holiness in non-western churches is that we are too dependent on ethical teachings developed in the western cultures and have thus failed to really wrestle with Christian ethics in a contextually relevant manner?

It would appear that the way forward is to develop a pastorally-sensitive ethic that holds in proper tension moral-legal principles (based on *reason*) on the one hand and social obligations (based on *relationships*) on the other. But much work along these lines needs to be done by churches in the majority world.

c) A 'macro-ecclesiology'?

A third issue concerns ecclesiology. Whilst it is true that the independent local church has existed since the Protestant Reformation, it really has come into its own in the 20th century, with its worldwide proliferation. Whereas earlier ecclesiological discussions have dealt with issues related to and between denominations, evangelical writings in recent decades have centred almost entirely on the local church, often with the megachurch set up as the ideal! To what extent this is

driven by Protestant individualism, and also the Reformation emphasis of the true church as the *coetus fidelium* (assembly of the faithful), and therefore ultimately invisible, can be endlessly debated.

But the long and short of this is that modern day evangelicals, to borrow a distinction from economics, by and large have reasonably good micro-ecclesiologies, but many have hardly any macro-ecclesiology at all. Most independent churches today have little or no accountability at all to anyone other than themselves.

This brings us right back to the issue of relationships and the Christian community. Unless this problem is addressed, I fear that what will happen as the 21st century moves on is that evangelical Christianity will splinter into as many forms as there are independent churches!

3. Structuring community into theological training for spiritual formation

The third area where the concern for relationship needs to be structured into our training is spiritual formation. Some years ago when we were planning for a new seminary campus, it was suggested that we should have primarily double rooms for our students. One western missionary immediately asked, 'Why can't we have single rooms?'

In thinking about the question two incidents come to mind. The first concerned a woman student who had managed to quarrel with every one of her roommates over a two or three-year period. When gently confronted over this by a faculty member, she told him

in no uncertain terms that it was none of his business! But two weeks later, she came back rather apologetically to him and asked to speak to his wife. That began a path of healing for her brokenness which was caused by a wayward father who deserted the family when she was barely one or two years old. Today her ministry has been such that she is in process of being recruited to join the staff of one of Britain's leading evangelical churches.

I think of another man who managed to quarrel and fight with all the students from his part of the majority world while they were training for ministry together in a college overseas. When these friends gently confronted him about his attitude and behaviour, he turned round and accused them of being an insecure bunch, hence the real source of the relational difficulties. This man went back to his home country and left behind him two messed-up churches in his pastoral ministry before quitting the scene! These two incidents summed up my response to the question of why we should not have only single rooms!

It was the early Methodists under John Wesley in the 18th century Evangelical Revival who contributed greatly to the popularisation of the use of small groups for spiritual formation in the modern period. Their use of the class and band meetings as the primary means of pastoral oversight led the emergence of a holy people, which was one of the key reasons why the Methodist revival was sustained for a hundred years on both sides of the Atlantic.²⁹

Most seminaries use small groups in some form or other. But the question is how seriously are these treated as part of the curriculum, and how deep are the relationships? In one group that I had worked with, one student gently confronted another, 'From the time you came into the seminary, you wanted to show everyone that you know more than anyone else!' That was pretty hard stuff which the student concerned never really wanted to hear. Again, the end result was that he left the ministry after a few years under deeply grievous circumstances!

The above examples clearly point to the need to structure community into the life and curriculum of seminary. Apart from what have been discussed, another example is to get students to do some of their assignments as joint projects, putting academically strong and weak students to work together. Joint projects have long been used in places like business schools, so why not in seminaries? After all, in real life situations in church ministry, we rarely work alone.

One other example is the submission of confidential reports by seminary authorities to the students' sending churches. These were used both in the British theological college I went to, as well as in the seminary I taught in in Malaysia, although I understand that this practice can be legally problematic in a place like the USA. However, such reports should never be sent behind a student's back to the church authorities, but should always be openly discussed between the relevant

²⁹ See e.g. Howard A Snyder, *The Radical Wesley & Patterns of Church Renewal* (Downers

Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1980), especially 53-64 on small groups.

seminary authorities and student concerned before being sent. This maintains the Christian integrity of the practice, thereby strengthening relations because of the trust thereby engendered.

4. Structuring community into church for mission

This brings us to the role we assign to relationships and community in mission, something already highlighted by Vince Donovan's story of the Masai. Others have similarly drawn our attention to the same theme. And the question that it poses for us is how do we teach evangelism and mission in our colleges. In his book, *The Celtic Way of Evangelism*,³⁰ George Hunter, tells the story of the evangelisation of the British Isles and Western Europe by the Celtic church, under the leadership of St Patrick of Ireland from the 5th century onwards. He suggests that the Celtic model can teach us much about the re-evangelisation of the west today.

He notes that the community was central to their 'missionary ecclesiology'. They went out as monastic communities and reached out to whole pagan communities through building of relationships, before inviting them to faith. In contrast to the one-to-one individualistic approach so prevalent today wherein we present the gospel, invite a person to believe, and then welcome them into the church thereafter, the Celtic model took a different approach.

³⁰ George G. Hunter III, *The Celtic Way of Evangelism: How Christianity Can Reach the West...Again* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2000).

Hunter sums it as follows:

(1) You first establish community with people, or bring them into the fellowship of your community of faith. (2) Within the fellowship, you engaged in conversation, ministry, prayer, and worship (3) In time, as they discover that they now believe, you invite them to commit....The Celtic model reflects the adage that, for most people, 'Christianity is more caught than taught!'³¹

Hunter goes on to argue that, based on his own research and that of John Finney,³² most people come to faith through relationships and encounters with faith communities. He sums it up as follows: 'Finney cites Professor Robin Gill's observation that, for most people, "belonging comes before believing". For this reason, evangelism is now about "helping people to belong so that they can believe."³³ This, he suggests, is the way forward for the reaching the west again today.

Hunter's point finds support from various sources, including how some small groups are structured in a megachurch like Willow Creek. A *Christianity Today* article, 'Community is Their Middle Name',³⁴ tells of how community is fostered through many

³¹ Hunter III, *The Celtic Way of Evangelism*, 53f.

³² John Finney, *Finding Faith today: How Does It Happen?* (Swindon: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1992).

³³ Hunter III, *The Celtic Way of Evangelism*, 55.

³⁴ Verla Gillmor, 'Community is Their Middle Name', *Christianity Today* (Nov 13, 2000), 48-68.

small groups within the church. Two of the various types of groups used are particularly instructive. One kind is composed solely of divorced people, and any new comer finds immediate rapport because all have gone through similar pains and struggles. Another is made up of retired motor mechanics. They begin each day with prayer and worship, and then spend the rest of the day rebuilding old cars that have been abandoned. These rebuilt cars are then given by the church to poor people in the neighbourhood who cannot afford cars. Whatever criticisms Willow Creek has faced recently, no one can fault such an approach to mission!

5. The goal of our training

One final matter for our reflection concerns the goal that we seek in theological education. Often the answer to this question is that we are training leaders for the church. Further, carried along by the secular tide of the marketplace, many in the church have been emphasising the CEO model, based on the work of such as Peter Drucker.³⁵ This is particularly (but not solely) true within megachurch circles.

Clearly this model is open to serious critique. To begin with, where do we find an emphasis on training leaders in the New Testament, especially when the two key metaphors for ministry are servant and slave? But space precludes further discussions on this point. However, it is important to note that in reflecting on his Masai experi-

ence, Donovan suggested that the western church has been mesmerised by two idols: 'Individualism on the one side, and organization on the other, with little room for community in between'.³⁶ Perhaps we can now see clearly where the CEO model for the pastor comes from!

It is time that we recovered more appropriate models of leadership for the church of the 21st century. Whatever else needs to be emphasised, relationship and community must be central. These are required by the New Testament models of servant and slave (which call us to service in the community), as well as shepherd (wherein a clear relationship exists between shepherd and sheep). Moreover, the church often forgets that, as noted earlier, in the New Testament context leadership is primarily corporate in nature. The terms 'elders/presbyters' and 'deacons' invariably are in the plural or appear in a plural context.

One immediate implication of this is that we must avoid appointing faculty members primarily because of their academic achievements, based on the modern secular university model. This would not only lock us into the individualism of much of modern university training, but would also reinforce the false notion that we learn primarily through left-brain intellectual reasoning. If we are serious about recovering community then the faculty members must exemplify this to the hilt. They must be men and women with both learning and authentic life-cum-ministry experience, so that even in the

³⁵ See, e.g., 'Churches as Businesses—Jesus, CEO', *The Economist* (Dec 24, 2005), 51-54.

³⁶ Donovan, *Christianity Rediscovered*, 89.

training process they can impart these intellectually as well as relationally.

V Summing Up: 'Why mandated, for whom, to what end, with what limits?'

In the preceding sections I have attempted to answer from various perspectives the question with which we began: *In what sense might community be considered a mandated priority for theological education?* I will conclude by responding to each of the subsidiary questions by summing up briefly earlier arguments.

First, why the relational mandate? The answer is that this has to be reemphasised today because we need to move away from the autonomous individualism of modernity and to recover the proper Christian understanding of the human person as an individual-in-community. The latter is not only taught in Scriptures as God's purposes for humanity, but also rooted in the nature of God in himself as Triune God. Moreover, not only is there a realisation that in many parts of the majority world community takes precedence over the individual, but the need to recover community is increasingly being recognised even in the west today.

Secondly, the answer to the question for whom is this mandated is that it includes all Christians and, particularly, faculty and students involved in theological training. We do not come to the knowledge of God, nor can we communicate that knowledge, through logical and analytical reason alone. Effective learning, spiritual formation and

mission need to be done in the context of the community and strong relational bonds.

Thirdly, what ends would such a recovery of the community and relationships lead to? The first is that relational thinking enables us to arrive at a sounder and more relevant theology; the second is that it will help us produce more wholesome and holy ministers of the gospel; and the third is that the recovery of a relational mandate will lead to more effective mission.

This leads us to the final question: Are there limits to the emphasis on community and relationship? Certainly! Earlier it was said that the idea of the individual, with all his or her rights and freedom enshrined, clearly came out of Christianity, and not from any other culture and religion. From the Christian perspective, therefore, when the community predominates to the extent that the individual's identity and dignity as a person made in the image of God is lost, then the community has become manipulative, domineering and even destructive! This can happen everywhere, including in Marxist societies wherein an individual's identity is totally subsumed under the community, in the name of the collective good of the State and the Party. And we see expressions of the same in many parts of the majority world even today.

Thus the church's goal must always be clearly focused on guarding against a rampant individualism on the one hand, and a dysfunctional community on the other, in order that both the individual and the community will find true fulfilment in the Kingdom of God!

New Faces of the Church: An Indian Case Study: A Response

H. L. Richard

THIS IS A RESPONSE to the article, 'New Faces of the Church: An Indian Case Study' by Paul Joshua Bhakiaraj which was published in our issue of January 2010 (34:1), pages 79-83. The author of this response is H. L. Richard, of the Rethinking Forum, Institute of Hindu Studies, at the US Center for World Mission, Pasadena, California, USA. The author of the original article who has seen this response welcomes the discussion it has provoked and the valuable platform for dialogue provided by *Evangelical Review of Theology*. However, he is not able to make a rejoinder due to pressure of other work.

It is encouraging to see a sympathetic depiction of efforts towards truly Hindu discipleship to Jesus outlined in Bhakiaraj's paper. He gives a good summary of the issues and clearly understands the problems that have led to regular attempts for more than a century to develop new patterns of discipleship to Jesus among Hindus.

Bhakiaraj's paper concludes with what are clearly intended to be constructive criticisms, but this part of the paper cannot be so highly appreciated. It should be noted immediately that the author of this response is among those criticized in this section of the paper. With appreciation, I also immediately note that the criticisms are not vicious

or intentionally unfair, and I hope this rejoinder will match that standard.

Despite what appears to be the beginning of an enumeration of concerns, it seems that only one problem is identified.

First, if the vast majority of the church is painted with the same brush and thought to have had a negligible impact on the nation, the very notion of discussing alternative shapes to Christian discipleship will be superfluous since the Christian presence will be so miniscule it will perhaps attract little attention in its own right, let alone effort to rethink its shape. (page 82)

This rather convoluted sentence needs to be unpacked and challenged. Perhaps it is true that too broad a brush has occasionally been used to paint the diversity of Christian expressions in India, but that broad brush can be defended as well (see below). There is nothing in Bhakiaraj's analysis of Rethinking authors, and I think even nothing in the writings of the authors he refers to, that supports his statement that 'the church has had a negligible impact on the Indian nation'. The concern of the Rethinking Forum is not the impact of the church on the nation, but the impact of the gospel on Hindu peoples. Regarding the latter, I have

documented that that there is a Christian presence in only 339 out of 4,693 distinct sociological communities in India; less than 8% of communities have a Christian presence.¹

'Alternate shapes to Christian discipleship' is likewise not the concern of the authors who are criticized. The concern is precisely with areas where Christian presence (better gospel presence) is 'miniscule'. Reading Bhakiaraj gives the impression that some maverick critics ('less than noble approach', page 83) are seeking to undermine the church. But Hoefler clearly says 'with the help of the church' (quoted on page 83); the focus is on Hindus who are estranged from Christianity; perhaps most importantly, documentation is provided (but not addressed by Bhakiaraj) that the problem with the church is very real and quite severe.

It is not possible even to outline a discussion on 'church' in this brief rejoinder, but it is necessary to call attention to this as a central issue that needs to be addressed. Bhakiaraj makes no mention of documentation regarding the 'church as Christian community' (the title of a WCC study on the problematic separation of Indian Christianity from its surrounding milieu).² Similarly, there is no mention

of the striking Indian Christian conclave in Nasrapur in 1966 which stated that

baptism has been made to appear as an act by which a person repudiates his ancient cultural heritage and accepts an alien culture. So long as this is so we cannot judge those who while confessing faith in Jesus, are unwilling to be baptised.³

Yet Bhakiaraj does seem to understand the problem, as he refers to Hindu disciples of Jesus in these terms: 'They seem to be attempting the impossible; holding together the complex socio-religious context they inhabit and their indisputable devotion to Jesus' (page 81). Here again unpacking is needed; why does Bhakiaraj consider this equation to be impossible (or seeming impossible)? One could argue that 'holding together a complex socio-religious context and devotion to Jesus' is a very apt description of what contextualization is all about. Is contextualization in the Hindu world impossible? Are Jesus and church necessarily foreign in Hindu contexts?

In the end, Bhakiaraj is particularly opposed to efforts to 'reinvent the wheel...as far as the church is concerned' (page 83). But if the New Testament meaning of 'church' has been lost in the concept of 'Indian Christian community' (as the data of Hayward in note 2 above and other studies suggest), then some serious rethinking and reinventing is needed. This is the

1 H. L. Richard, 'Rethinking "rethinking"' in *International Journal of Frontier Missions* vol. 19 no. 3, (July-Sept. 2002), pp. 7-17.

2 E. W. Hayward edited the WCC study *The Church as Christian Community: Three Studies of North Indian Churches* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1966). See also my paper 'Community dynamics in India and the praxis of "church"' in *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* vol. 24 no.4, (Oct-Dec 2007), pp. 185-194.

3 David Lyon and Albert Manuel (eds), *Renewal for Mission* (Madras: The Christian Literature Society, 1968). This is also quoted in my paper referenced in note 1, which Bhakiaraj refers to in his paper.

case I have attempted to present, and despite the weakness of my efforts, it still seems legitimate to state that if Bhakiaraj wishes to oppose this position he needs to wrestle with the presentation and refute the data rather than merely affirm that it is not 'helpful' (page 83) to reinvent the church wheel.⁴

I may mention a final caveat where Bhakiaraj seems to have seriously misjudged the position he attempts to refute. He suggests that it is 'ironic that in such a pluralistic milieu like India, it is promoted as the "only" approach' (page 83). It is true that the word 'only' appears in a number of the few quotations Bhakiaraj pulled from Rethinking writings; but a more empathetic and contextual reading of those

papers is needed. The 'only' approach which is suggested is the 'contextual' approach. Bhakiaraj is certainly welcome to dispute the suggested analysis of the context(s) and what contextualization means, but to suggest that the position he critiques is somehow narrow and reductionist seems way out of line. Deeply contextual expressions of discipleship to Jesus will look vastly different across the multiple cultures and communities of India. However, insofar as there is conformity to the New Testament pattern of distinctly Gentile discipleship to Jesus (at times appearing to be proudly opposed to conformity to Jewish ways) there will be a similarity in missiological application.

Bhakiaraj calls for a 'mature dialogue' (page 83) on these issues. I thank the publishers of this journal for welcoming this rejoinder which I pray does contribute towards such a dialogue.

4 Note also Herbert Hofer, 'Church in context' in *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, vol. 43 no. 2, April 2007, pp. 200-08, which grapples with the meaning and implications of 'church'.

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Book Reviews

ERT (2011) 35:1, 81-82

**The Challenge of Being Baptist:
owning a scandalous past and an
uncertain future**
Bill J. Leonard

Waco: Baylor University Press, 2010
ISBN 978-160258306-1
Pb., pp 154, bibliog., index

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

Although the title identifies this work as
a study of denominational issues, it is

also presented by the author as 'a case
study in the changing nature of religion
and denominations in twenty-first century
American culture', thus giving it wider
appeal than initial impressions might indi-
cate. It therefore has multiple audi-
ences—a denominational one (especially
North American), then those interested in
church history, and finally, those follow-
ing the relationship between church and
culture in this modern globalised world.

For the first audience there is a wealth of
perceptive insights from a well-known
Baptist historian about the issues facing

Baptists, ranging from the significance of believer's baptism, the nature of the church, hermeneutics, to the dynamics of evangelism and conversion.

For the church historians with a particular interest in North America, it offers revealing glimpses of the largest denominational grouping in the country (especially the giant Southern Baptist Convention with its sixteen million or so adherents) which, as the sub-title indicates, is not always a comfortable story. But inevitably, such a story involves the wider culture, especially how a large and dominant church sits in relation to its social surrounds; therefore the book is of value to those who wish to understand this issue in other contexts where the church is coming to a place of similar strength.

Although occasionally repetitive (as if the book were composed of originally separately presented papers), there is a skilful use of original documents, earlier history, contemporary information, insightful analysis and wise judgements about the current trends, giving the book a satisfying feel for the past, present and future. It is therefore a fine example of how the craft of church history can serve the church today.

Even though the book is cast in decidedly denominational terms, many of the issues discussed are in fact applicable beyond the 'Baptist' family for there are many evangelicals who share these 'baptistic' convictions. But even for those evangelicals outside the 'baptistic' tradition, there is no mistaking the passion that drives this author and there will be a great deal of sympathy for his final plea for 'an audacious witness' based on enduring spiritual and doctrinal realities found in the history of the denomination. It is not difficult to understand that not only Baptists need to 'decide if they want to provide a prophetic witness to American or global societies or

retain religio-cultural dominance and privilege'. It is true for many more than conservative Baptists that they 'cannot seem to decide if they are dissenters, standing against the secularism that they believe to be the unofficial religious establishment of an increasingly antireligious nation, or establishmentarians, demanding a certain kind of religious privilege for their way of believing'. Calling on an original Baptist confession of faith composed in 1611 for inspiration, the author concludes his essay by calling for 'an audacious witness for the future'.

ERT (2011) 35:1, 82-83

Discovering Jesus in the New Testament

Keith Warrington

Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 2009
ISBN 978-1-59856-011-4
Pb., pp 226, bibliog., index

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

The author of this book has chosen a precise and unusual aim—to explore 'each NT author's presentation of Jesus' person and mission with reference to its commonality with that of other NT writers and its unique contribution to the larger portrait of Jesus' in the NT. This differentiates the work from many other books on the person and work of Jesus, and it is focused further by concentrating on Jesus' identity rather than his ministry.

There are 21 chapters, mostly devoted to a particular book but some are grouped; e.g., the synoptic gospels are treated together, first in overview and then individually, while there is an introductory chapter on Paul's letters as well as separate treatments. However, there is only a very short single page conclusion to tie

all the material together, and sometimes (especially with longer and more diffuse books), it is hard to see the relationship between the contents of the book as a whole and the particular material selected for treatment.

The purpose of *Discovering Jesus* is to present 'truths that should effect transformation', and for its readers to 'enjoy the experience of encountering Jesus'.

However, it is basically a mid-level academic book presenting NT information although at times it seems to be aimed at a lower, more popular target.

Furthermore, although the author wishes his readers to explore the text directly, there are few actual quotes (although dozens of references); it is not an inductive approach, but a simply a summary of the data. There are relatively few authorities quoted, and the author typically deals with classic controversial issues and ambiguities by presenting only his own view. Yet strangely, in several places, technical matters, usually aspects of Greek grammar, are mentioned without explanation.

Undertaking such an ambitious project as this within about 200 pages, it is not surprising that the result is not completely satisfactory. Understandably, the author has not been able to separate the person or identity of Jesus from his ministry and work. Furthermore, the treatment is sometimes uneven, with the exposition of books that focus more directly on the subject (e.g., Colossians) being more convincing than others. There are also difficulties with NT books with sparse references to the subject. Although the author has tried to collect common material together, this has not eliminated repetition from the exposition.

Yet the book is well worth reading. It includes, for example, some illuminating insights—such as helpful references to

background historical and cultural matters, especially a valuable account of the significance of sea journeys in reference to the book of Acts. Calling upon his own areas of expertise, the author gives a convincing explanation of the importance of the miracles of Jesus for his identity.

Taken as a whole, the unique approach of this book does focus the mind on its basic conviction, viz., that 'Jesus is central to the NT'. Even though the style of writing does not lend itself to the transformation of the reader that is intended, to be presented with such overwhelming evidence about Jesus in the NT does carry enough weight for us to agree that 'Jesus our Savior is worthy of being followed and obeyed, worshipped and adored, and recognized as the supreme subject of one's eternal exploration'.

ERT (2011) 35:1, 83-85

UK Version
**Spirituality without God:
 Buddhist Enlightenment and
 Christian Salvation**
 Keith Yandell and Harold A.
 Netland

Milton Keynes, UK: Authentic
 Media/Paternoster, 2009
 ISBN 978-1842276426

US version
**Buddhism: A Christian
 Exploration and Appraisal**

Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2009
 (USA version)

978-0-8308-3855-4

Pb, pp. xvii + 230, bibliog, index

*Reviewed by Amos Yong, regent University
 School of Divinity, Virginia Beach VA, USA*

Rigorous scholarship undergirds this volume and acute philosophical reasoning

permeates it—precisely what evangelicals would expect of a book co-authored by Yandell, the Julius R. Weinberg Professor of Philosophy at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and Harold Netland, former missionary to Japan and longtime faculty member in philosophy of religion and intercultural studies at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois. Between them, they have written or edited numerous books in the areas of philosophy of religion, epistemology, theology of pluralism, and theology of interreligious encounter, among other topics, along the way touching on many aspects of the subject matter of the book under review.

As might be expected of evangelical treatments and discussions of Buddhism, the outcomes of Yandell and Netland contrast the Buddha and the Christ, the dharma and the gospel. Their concluding words assert: 'These are not simply variations on a common theme, or different ways of expressing the same spiritual insight. The choice here is between two radically different perspectives on reality, on the nature of the human predicament, and the way to overcome it' (212). This culminates the argument of the sixth and final chapter which compares and distinguishes Christian views of God versus Buddhist conceptions of ultimate reality, Jesus vis-à-vis the Buddha, and the human fall into sin needing gracious forgiveness over and against human ignorance needing enlightenment. This closing argument builds on two chapters (four and five) which engage in negative apologetics on various aspects of Buddhist doctrine: views regarding rebirth and karma, impermanence and interdependent co-origination, the nature of the human self versus no-self, two levels of conventional and absolute truth, appearances and reality, freedom and determinism, the ineffa-

bility of the experience of Nirvana, etc. While there is little that will be new in these analyses of Buddhist ideas, especially for apologists familiar with the previous apologetic literature on Buddhism, Yandell and Netland's sustained interrogation of these central notions set the stage for their 'Christian exploration and appraisal' at the end.

What may be new for evangelicals in this volume is the respectful tone employed throughout. Yandell and Netland have paid the utmost of respects to the various traditions of Buddhism by taking their claims seriously and expending time and effort to expound their histories and ideas quite fairly. Thus the first three chapters of the book provide historical perspective on the emergence of early Buddhism and its basic schools and teachings, expansion into East Asia, including Mahayana developments in China, Japan, and, later, Tibet, and then the migration of the dharma to the western world in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. (The authors focus here on major events like the Parliament of World Religions in 1893, and then on important transmitters of the dharma like D. T. Suzuki and Masao Abe, probably reflecting especially Netland's knowledge of major advocates of Japanese Buddhism in its transplantation to the West.)

Throughout, our collaborators are careful to delineate the diversity of Buddhist schools, traditions, and viewpoints. Readers should thus come away from this volume clearly informed about the reality of a pluralism of Buddhisms East and West. There is also detailed information about the various internal debates about dharmic details. Thus by the time readers get to the more philosophically oriented assessments of the second half of the volume, the ground has been well ploughed. Buddhist apologists will thus find few

straw-man arguments for Yandell and Netland are careful to make their criticisms in very specific ways, often noting the conflict of interpretations even across the Buddhist spectrum on particular doctrines or points, and then extending such lines of consideration.

I cannot think of very many ways this book could have been strengthened since evangelicals who read it will come away alert to the need to be sensitive to the diversity of Buddhist traditions, to do one's homework, and to be measured in one's tone and rhetoric in engaging with interreligious apologetics of this sort, especially since there are not going to be many critical points to be made against Buddhism that have not already been registered by interlocutors within and across its various traditions.

However, I do believe that the conclusions of the authors—as represented in the quotation of their final sentences above—overreach a bit, especially in light of what the volume's subtitle presents as merely a Christian assessment. If evangelicals were indeed the target audience, perhaps the major thesis regarding the disjuncture between Christianity and Buddhism might have been strengthened by adding a short chapter on how other Christian and even evangelical interpreters of Buddhism view it as being complementary with, rather than 'radically different' from, Christian faith. In short, just as Yandell and Netland clearly show that there is no one Buddhist tradition, there is also no one Christian response to the teachings of the dharma. But perhaps this task has been kept for another day.

ERT (2011) 35:1, 85-87

Edinburgh 2010: Mission Then and Now

David A. Kerr and Kenneth R. Ross (eds)

Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2009

ISBN 978-1-870345-76-7

Pb, pp 343, bibliog, index

Reviewed by Klaus Fiedler, Mzuzu University, Malawi

In 1910 there took place, in the capital of Scotland, the most memorable international missionary conference. Ninety years later John Pobee of Ghana challenged the churches, mission agencies and academic institutions of Scotland to embark on a process of preparing for the centenary. The following year the *Scottish Towards 2010 Council* was formed. Under the leadership of Professor Kenneth Ross, formerly of the University of Malawi, and Professor David Kerr of the University of Lund in Sweden, annual Edinburgh 1910 Review Conferences took place.

As Edinburgh 1910 had presented its findings through the reports of eight Commissions, so the review conferences each took one such report as its starting point. David Kerr gave a concise presentation of the report, then two mission scholars of international repute gave full-length lectures, trying to (1) assess the Commission Report in its original context, (2) analyse key developments regarding the theme during the 20th century, and (3) consider the future prospects in relation to the theme. For the Commission Reports there are eight succinct summaries of three or four pages each by David Kerr, then each Commission's report is discussed, usually

in two articles, but Commission 3 (Preparation of Missionaries) and 4 (Home Base of Missions) have only one response article. To make up for that, Commission 8 (Cooperation and the Promotion of Unity) has five responses which seems to reflect the fact that Edinburgh 1910 shifted the central emphasis from Commission One (Carrying the Gospel to all the Non-Christian World) to Commission Eight (Cooperation and the Promotion of Unity).

The Conference was organized by the (classical) missions from the Great Awakening, so it is appropriate that the first response comes from the World Council of Churches. Samuel Kobia writes somewhat defensively that 'WCC has not abandoned the concern for evangelism' (248), though at times there had been 'uncritical appreciations of political and social developments' (245). To get it right, such evangelism 'has to be embedded as part of a holistic mission, and must be connected with the illumination and radiation brought by living missional communities' (248). His article seems to me to reflect faithfully the changes that Edinburgh 1910 initiated.

In Edinburgh 1910 the evangelical missions were the junior participants. Rose Dowsett, in her evangelical assessment, traces the roots of Edinburgh 1910 to the Great Awakening, which brought about two million new members into the churches of Britain and the United States and revival to the churches on the European continent (251); she then defines Edinburgh's 'fatal flaw' (253) to include, for the sake of [organizational] unity, both the liberal and the High Church wings of the Anglican Church, and bowing to the conditions imposed, inaugurating 'a gradual shift to include denominational leaders, and then for these leaders to take an increasingly influential role'

(254), moving the ownership of missions from the societies to the churches.

The Roman Catholic missions were not invited to participate, still the article by John Radano is appropriate to relate the Roman Catholic reaction to the developing Ecumenical Movement. The Orthodox churches also failed to participate, since they had no mission societies, and, as Viorel Ionita emphasizes, the Orthodox can see missions only as 'exclusively a task of the Church' (266).

Cecil Robeck, writing from the Pentecostal side, points out that the missions and churches participating in Edinburgh 1910 were a minority of world Christianity and have become so even more by now (292). He calls to our attention the deep divergence of views on unity and missions that surfaced around the 1925 Mission Conference in the USA, again chaired by John Mott (294) and that the Pentecostal Movement, not even seen at the Conference, took the lead while the main line churches declined.

Going back to Commission One and the attempt to reach all the non-Christians of this world, Andrew Walls puts the developments into the perspective of the shift of the centre of Christianity from the Global North to the Global South. While Edinburgh expected great missionary success in Eastern Asia (which turned out to be slow in coming) it had overlooked that that very thing had started to happen in Africa (35). Walls also observes the decline of the Christian West, arguing that the 'Western theological academy is at present not well placed for leadership' (38) in a world where the 'great European migration is in gradual dissolution' and reversal, with the powers of Asia awaiting the succession (39).

The responses to the eight commissions are enclosed by an Introduction (in reality more than an introduction) and an

insightful Conclusion by David Kerr and Kenneth Ross.

Having read all the book (and many sections more than once) I can do nothing else but highly commend it to all who want to enter into the Edinburgh 2010 discourse. The book takes careful note of the Evangelical position and contribution, and it offers much and detailed information for all who want to assess what happened at Edinburgh (and in the surprising 100 years thereafter) from an Evangelical perspective.

ERT (2011) 35:1, 87-88

Atlas of Global Christianity
Todd M. Johnson and Kenneth R. Ross

Edinburgh: Edinburgh University
 Press, 2009
 ISBN 978-0-748632671
 Hb, pp 384

*Reviewed by Klaus Fiedler, Mzuzu
 University, Malawi*

I have never seen such a book! As a child I wanted to become a statistician and after that a geographer, so I am intensely fascinated by the maps and the statistics. As I ended up being a church historian, I am equally fascinated by the tremendous amount of historical information in this atlas. It is one of the products of the celebration of the hundredth anniversary of Edinburgh 1910, the famous world missionary conference. In its 384 pages, crammed with information statistical and historical, it presents the status of World Christianity, and how it developed from 1910 to 2010, and for good measure puts Christianity in the context of all the religions of the world, not even forgetting Atheists, Agnostics and New Religionists. This atlas has brought the science of

International Religious Demography to new heights. It took its inspiration from the *Statistical Atlas of Christian Missions* published in 1910 for the World Missionary Conference as part of the work of its first Commission ('Carrying the Gospel to all the Non-Christian world'), and takes its strength from the tradition created by David Barrett, which first found its expression in the *World Christian Encyclopedia* of 1982 and 1995 and then in the *World Christian* (2001) and the *World Religion Databases* (2008).

The atlas presents the World Christian picture first by Christian Traditions, then by Continent and Region, and finally by Peoples, Languages and Cities. For every presentation there is a comparative analysis 1910/2010, and wherever feasible, the appropriate Edinburgh 1910 map is shown as an insert. These comparisons show 'how the vision glimpsed at Edinburgh 1910 became a reality in the course of the 100 years that followed' (Kenneth Ross, p. xvii). It shows that, though the percentage of Christians in the world has not grown since Edinburgh 1910, it has reached all the corners of the globe in the same hundred years, and that was indeed the wish, the prayer and the effort of the Conference.

A feature new to me is the presentation of information not by continents but by regions, like Eastern Africa from Eritrea to Mozambique, including Madagascar and the islands, and Western Asia, reaching from Georgia and Armenia to Yemen. The maps and statistics of the atlas do not distinguish between the 'native' population and temporary residents. While Edinburgh 1910 counted fifty Christians in Saudi Arabia, now there are 1,182,000, or 4.5% of the population. This must be related to page 37, where Saudi Arabia tops the list of the countries with the least religious freedom. *In 1910 that*

doubtful honour was given to Afghanistan, which has now moved to eighth place, competing for that position with North Korea.

The atlas is fascinating in its comprehensiveness and detail. It accounts for 2,300 million Christians in 4.85 million congregations, 300 minor and 6 major traditions. While many maps present the facts by country, a new feature are maps by provinces. The usefulness is best illustrated in Nigeria, where the South is mainly Christian, the North predominantly Muslim, and the Middle Belt (with Jos as its centre) mixed. Another new important feature is the presentation of religion in the cities, as these are becoming an ever more important feature of life. While Edinburgh counted London, New York, Paris and Berlin as the world's largest cities (with 19.2 million inhabitants), these are now Tokyo, Mexico City, Mumbai and New York/Newark (with 96.2 million).

A fascinating new concept is the 'centre of gravity', where 'an equal number of followers of the religion or tradition live to the north, south, east and west of this geographic point' (p. xix 'How to use this Atlas'). The concept of the 'centre of gravity' reveals much on religious change. For Hinduism and the Chinese Folk Religionists the points of gravity one hundred years apart touch each other while the centre of Muslim gravity moved from south east Pakistan to Oman, as the Muslim percentage of the world's population increased from 12.6 to 22.4. For Christianity the centre of gravity is given since its beginnings. From its inception the centre moved north west, reaching Hungary in 1500, moving a little to northern Italy in 1800. The modern missionary movement in its first 100 years moved the centre to Western Spain in 1910. By 1950 it had moved south west to Madeira, since then it moves fast south east, reaching Tessalit in northern Mali

in 2010 and is expected to reach Zinder in Niger in 2100, with the 'vast majority of Christians in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Oceania.'

Of special interest are pages 98 and 99, which show a decline of Evangelicals from 4.6 to 3.8% of the world population. This depends on the narrow definition chosen, with other definitions yielding up to three times the number of Evangelicals. Africa has the most Evangelicals, 104,475,000 (10.1%), while Melanesia has the highest percentage, 21.7.

If anyone wants to study World Christianity, this is a book to start from, full of information and resources; the understandably high cost would be well worth expending. Special credit must be given to Sandra Lee of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization as the Managing Editor and to the organizations that financed the project. An additional innovation is the Presentation Assistant on a CD at the end of the atlas, which contains all the maps (but not the articles) and offers enormous didactic opportunities.

ERT (2011) 35:1, 88-90

The Scofield Bible: Its History and Impact on the Evangelical Church

R. Todd Mangum and Mark S. Sweetnam

ISBN 978-1606570333

Colorado Springs, CO: Paternoster Press, 2009
Pb., pp. 245

Reviewed by Jason Bruner, Princeton NJ, USA

The Scofield Reference Bible remains among the most recognizable evangelical

Christian publications of the twentieth century. The relative paucity of scholarship on its history and legacy stands in stark contrast to its enormous market success and widespread presence on American evangelicals' bookshelves. Mangum and Sweetnam's *The Scofield Bible*, therefore, begins to fill a tremendous historiographical void in the history of British and American evangelicalism. The authors' previous research focuses upon the covenantal/dispensational rift among evangelicals (Mangum) and early modern Christianity and evangelical popular culture (Sweetnam).

The Scofield Bible offers a largely dispassionate assessment of Cyrus I. Scofield's life and the history and use of his reference Bible. The book provides a sweeping account that spans from Scofield's seventeenth century Irish forbearers to his reference Bible's influence upon the popular *Left Behind* novel series in the late twentieth century.

The authors' stated purpose is two-fold: first, 'neither to artificially praise nor unfairly denigrate Scofield's work' but rather 'to understand the enduring impact' of *The Scofield Reference Bible* and then, to provide an initial effort that encourages further Scofield research (pp. 5, 221). It is upon this two-fold purpose that their work is evaluated here.

Mangum and Sweetnam embarked on an ambitious scholarly project. They provide general descriptions of the European and American theological roots of *The Scofield Reference Bible*, its theology, and some of its popular and intellectual effects upon British and American evangelicalism. Additionally, Sweetnam and Mangum alternate authorship of portions of the book, with the former contributing sections dealing primarily with the European elements of the history, and the latter, the American dimensions. Each of the

subjects listed above is covered respectively in a chapter, each of which can stand independently. The book as a whole, however, reads smoothly and coherently, presenting a tremendous amount of historical and theological material in an accessible manner. The non-technical language of their writing and the sparse references hide what is often extensive consultation of primary and secondary source material. The interested researcher can find in-depth discussions in what are often dense endnotes, which can reach two pages in length.

This volume contains numerous scholarly strengths. It provides a balanced, basic account of Scofield and his lasting contributions to evangelical Christianity. Its attention to the hermeneutic of *The Scofield Reference Bible* and its theology is particularly illuminating (ch. 3). The breadth of the work allows the authors to introduce the reader to numerous dimensions of Scofield's influence upon evangelicalism, including theological disputes, popular Bible studies, and even popular American and British evangelical culture. As a seminal volume on Scofieldian studies it is a reliable account and offers material for both the interested layperson and researcher.

At the same time, however, Mangum and Sweetnam's work is an introduction, and scholars interested in particular aspects of Scofield or his reference Bible and its legacy will probably find their respective interests addressed in tantalizingly short segments. For example, chapter 2 ends with a brief, somewhat awkward, conclusion suggesting that social categories of race and class were a factor in Scofield's thought. This suggestion, however, remains largely unelaborated. Other portions of the text suffer from a lack of critical assessment of particular issues or a lack of evidence to buttress the authors'

claims. At times, such as in the brief discussion in Chapter 4 of the impact of *The Scofield Reference Bible* on British evangelicalism focusing upon the Plymouth Brethren, this is understandably attributed to the sparseness of source material. The authors' numerous claims of the unique or unilateral influence of *The Scofield Reference Bible* upon evangelicalism often call for more evidence than is cited. For example, the place of Scofield's Bible vis a vis numerous other study or reference Bibles is hardly addressed. Also, claims that *The Scofield Reference Bible* was single-handedly responsible for the popularization of dispensationalism by the mid-twentieth century need more substantial evidence.

The tone of the work is strikingly non-polemical, though the authors write from an evangelical perspective. Their even-handedness is evident from the book's first chapter, which offers a biographical sketch of Scofield's 'controversial life'. Mangum negotiates polarized traditions of Scofield biographers, most notably Charles G. Trumbull's hagiographical *The Life Story of C.I. Scofield* (1920) and Joseph M. Canfield's vitriolic *The Incredible Scofield and His Book* (1984). Here Mangum's balance is most welcome, though a full historical treatment of Scofield remains to be written. Mangum and Sweetnam also deserve praise for their careful navigation of the dispensational/covenantal rift among evangelicals (p. 185). In fact, much of their work seems to be aimed at healing this rift through a conciliatory investigation of the purpose and methodology of *The Scofield Reference Bible*. Overall, they remain appreciative of Scofield's contributions to evangelicalism and commend a reevaluation of his reference Bible in light of its numerous effects upon theology, Bible studies, and evangelical culture.

In the end, Mangum and Sweetnam provide a thoroughly accessible introduction to C.I. Scofield's life and *magnum opus* that synthesizes and balances previous strands of scholarship on the subject. Interspersed throughout the work are sections which future researchers will hopefully elaborate upon. In this sense, Mangum and Sweetnam's work will demonstrate its utility by serving as an impetus to deeper inquiries into the social, historical, and theological ramifications of Scofield's monumental work.

ERT (2011) 35:1, 90-92

**The Living Word of God:
Rethinking the Theology of the
Bible**

Ben Witherington, III

Waco, TX: Baylor University Press,
2007

ISBN 978-1-60258-017-6
Hb., pp 273, Indices

*Reviewed by Carlos Bovell, New Jersey,
USA*

The Living Word of God: Rethinking the Theology of the Bible by Ben Witherington, III, Professor of New Testament Interpretation at Asbury Theological Seminary, begins with two provocative excerpts from the writings of Gordon Fee and N. T. Wright. These quotes suggest that in the pages that follow the reader will be in for an avant-garde, albeit conservative, treatment of evangelical bibliography, or at least one that that will advance the discussion. Yet the end result is a meandering discussion of how scripture makes truth-claims of varied sorts through human authors (without dictation) and that the Bible, being the Word of God, must always express claims that are inerrant.

The preface sets the stage by recounting a well-known syllogistic presentation of the inerrantist position. Witherington remarks that the inerrantist view assumes 'a good deal about the nature of inspiration and revelation, and how inspiration works out in practice', but these assumptions do not always bear the scrutiny of empirical study of the Bible. In fact, 'most discussions about God's word do not actually involve a careful investigation of what the Bible has to say about itself, nor is the theory of inspiration usually promulgated based on an investigation of what is actually going on in the various texts within the canon'.

In response to these two tendencies, Witherington identifies a need 'to go forward in our discussion of such matters, not backward'. To this effect, there is no compelling reason to debate 'B. B. Warfield's old classic study, *Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, as good as it was in its day' or examine 'various modern statements on biblical inerrancy'. According to Witherington, '[t]hese are not the appropriate places to start our discussion'. A preferable approach would be to 'start with and stick closely to the Bible itself...'. The book covers a wide terrain of material and goes out of its way to give the impression that through historical study it is furthering bibliographical discussions. Notwithstanding, the inerrantist viewpoint is maintained throughout, specifically an inerrantism that purports to take the Bible's truth claims seriously as historical products without ever finding 'error' in them.

Chapter one considers what the phrase 'word of God' probably meant to people who lived in a predominantly oral culture. After reflecting on how the 'word of God' connoted a living and active proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ and that the Word of God also became flesh, a dis-

cussion ensues on how the Word of God became 'text'. Chapter two finds fault with a variety of conservative, liberal and neo-orthodox theories of inspiration. By contrast, the chapter stresses that 'God's breath or inspiration [should be seen] as a sort of truth serum that prompts the human speaker or writer to tell the truth about some subject'. '[T]he primary issue seems to be, what sort of truth is this text trying to tell us?' Passing over N. T. Wright's understanding of scripture as an agent of transformation, Witherington prefers that the central issues in a theology of scripture revolve around the 'truth claims' scriptures make in light of literary genre. Along these lines, chapter three critiques Peter Enns' recommendation of an incarnational analogy, concluding that Enns 'fails to pass the test of asking how a particular portion of the Bible can be the truthful word of God'.

Chapter four is entitled, 'Truth Telling As an Art Form'. The longest chapter of the book, it elaborates the idea that 'if you don't read the New Testament with a certain degree of literary sensitivity...you are bound to make wrong assumptions and ask wrong questions'. Witherington's main concern is to draw readers' attention to how the Bible teaches 'truths about God, about ourselves, about the interrelationship of the two, about human history and its meaning, about God's redemptive work, and about proper human belief and behavior'. Chapter five contains a discussion of a handful of historical and ethical problems in the New Testament along with a brief discussion on textual criticism. Chapter six provides an overview of canon formation and some remarks on the history of Bible translations. Chapter seven offers guidelines for choosing a contemporary Bible translation. Chapter eight delineates six 'rules' for New Testament interpretation and

goes on to suggest how to move from New Testament interpretation to application. Chapter nine presents postmodernism as being helpfully open to story and mystery but inordinately resistant to the historical, theological and ethical truth claims scripture makes. The book closes with an afterword that reaffirms the errorlessness of scriptural truth claims. An appendix contains selected 'Q & A's from the author's online interactions on Beliefnet.

Although Witherington spends a few pages in the preface analysing the popular deductive argument for inerrantism, it is not until a parenthetical remark in the second chapter that he explicitly presents his own line of reasoning: '2 Timothy 3:16 [claims] that every Scripture is God-breathed, and therefore [that], because of the very character of the document itself...it is truthful as God is truthful, the Bible is the Word of God given.' An off-hand illustration of how thoroughly Witherington believes this is seen in his explanation that God 'providentially guided' the author of Ezra to include in his writing a letter from the Persian archives that 'while not originally part of inspired Scripture, nevertheless was true, and so could be included in a sacred text...'. For Witherington, every biblical writer was 'trying to convey some truth, some word of God, to their audiences, and so secondarily to us as well'.

All in all, the topics covered are wide-ranging, at times so wide-ranging that it is difficult to see how they cohere. Witherington explains on his website: 'I have tried to make [*The Living Word of God*] a sort of one stop shopping kind of book.' Readers will find exactly that: a popular and pastoral overview of what conservative, inerrantist scholars today are thinking about the Bible.

ERT (2011) 35:1, 92-95

The Lord's Supper: Five Views

Edited by Gordon T. Smith

Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2008

ISBN: 978-0-8308-2884-5.

Pb, 159 pp.

Bibliography, indexes.

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

'The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread' (1 Cor. 10:16-17, ESV).

In this familiar passage, Paul gives first forceful expression to the Christian understanding that the Lord's Supper, the sacramental meal instituted by Christ on the night he was betrayed, unites his followers just as an ordinary meal unites the family members who share it. Yet among those followers there is an enormous variety of views concerning exactly what the Supper means and how it is intended to function. Ought it even to be celebrated today, or should the church set aside such physical activities, focusing instead on the spiritual truths they were intended to teach? If it is to be celebrated, is it primarily a memorial of Christ's death, or does it actually convey divine grace to the communicant who receives the consecrated elements in faith? If grace is indeed conveyed to the faithful communicant, is Christ therefore necessarily present in the elements? If he is present, is this spiritual or corporeal? If his presence is corporeal, is the presentation of his body and blood on the altar therefore sacrificial and even expiatory?

Such questions might be multiplied almost without end. Our answers to them differ, for one thing, because although the New Testament gives us four descriptions of the Lord's Supper's institution (Mt. 26:26ff, Mk. 14:22ff, Lk. 22:14ff, 1 Cor. 11:23ff), it gives us only one extended reflection on the Supper's theological significance (1 Cor. 10:14-22, 11:17-34). This might suggest that observing the sacrament is more important than understanding it, and so that, within limits, Christians with different doctrinal perspectives could still share in the church's common meal; this might both reflect and, following Paul, even reinforce our unity as the one body of Christ.

However, several theological traditions have strongly rejected such a conclusion. For example, Lutherans, beginning with Martin Luther himself, have insisted that 'table fellowship' requires broad agreement not only on the terms of the gospel but also on the theology of the sacraments, especially the understanding of Christ's 'real presence' in the consecrated elements. The Roman Catholic Church has added to this the stipulation that those who wish to be in communion with it must have maintained not only the traditional threefold order of church offices but also, giving validity to those offices and thus to the sacraments they administer, the apostolic succession as Rome understands that term.

Achieving unity on this maximalist basis seems very unlikely. But if theological union is beyond reach, perhaps at least doctrinal discord can be minimized, and a kind of confessional harmony may even be within our grasp. Deepening intra- and interdenominational understanding is the goal of the book under review, which brings together scholars representing the Catholic (Jeffrey Gros), Lutheran (John R. Stephenson), Reformed (Leanne Van

Dyke), Baptist (Roger E. Olson), and Pentecostal (Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen) traditions to defend their own and critique one another's perspectives on the Lord's Supper. The end result, edited by Gordon T. Smith, is both illuminating and frustrating.

The idea of bringing together theologians from diverse traditions in order to facilitate exploration of a topic on which those traditions sharply differ is not new. For example, more than twenty years ago InterVarsity Press published two such books that remain in print today: *The Water That Divides*, on baptism, and *The Meaning of the Millennium*, edited by Robert G. Clouse, on eschatology. Similarly structured works on a wide range of controversial doctrines have been issued by Zondervan, Kregel, and others. Comparable to Smith's volume for IVP is *Understanding Four Views on the Lord's Supper*, edited by John H. Armstrong, which was released by Zondervan in 2007 as part of its *Counterpoints* series.

Smith's volume has one clear advantage over Armstrong's: by including Kärkkäinen, it gives a voice to Pentecostals and Charismatics who have come to prominence and even dominance in the global Christian community but have seldom been heard from in such discussions. Yet this advantage exacerbates Smith's great disadvantage, the extreme brevity of his text; with five contributors' efforts shoehorned into just 159 pages, none of them gets more than 18 pages to make his or her case, and the others' responses take no more than two pages each. Armstrong's volume is 40 percent longer yet has only four contributors, hence each of them can afford to be more expansive in explaining his own position and more substantive in assessing those of the others.

Not that Smith's volume is without sub-

stance. In fact, the essays by Van Dyk and Olson are first-rate, and most of the truly second-rate material is from a single pen, that of Stephenson. It is interesting to compare Stephenson's strategy with that pursued by Gros. The former, a minister in the Lutheran Church of Canada and a member of the faculty of Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary, utilizes what might be called a 'maximalist' line of attack, deliberately playing up what sets Lutherans apart from other Protestants and unites them with Roman Catholics. The latter, a member of the order of Christian Brothers who has long been active in ecumenical circles, takes what might be called a 'minimalist' approach, deliberately playing down what sets Catholics apart from Protestants, including even conservative Lutherans like Stephenson.

Both Gros and Stephenson make a few tactical missteps in pursuit of their anti-theological goals. For example, Gros repeatedly refers to Protestant denominations as 'churches', a move that has been flatly rejected by Rome, most dramatically in the controversial declaration, 'Dominus Iesus', issued in 2000 by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, then headed by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI. Gros also tries to soften the terminology of transubstantiation so as to minimize its potential for polarization. It is true, as he notes, that the Council of Trent did not require use of the term itself; however, he fails to note that Pope Paul VI's encyclical, 'Mysterium fidei', issued in 1965 in response to theologian Edward Schillebeeckx's proposal that the transformation of the consecrated elements be described instead as transignification, insisted on the retention not merely of the traditional concept but also of the traditional term for that concept.

Stephenson's essay is more problematic, marred especially by his caricature of his fellow Protestants, as the Catholic Gros notes in his response (p. 59). From Stephenson's black-and-white point of view, the various Baptist and Pentecostal positions are all essentially Reformed, and the Reformed position itself is essentially Zwinglian (pp. 46, 86). His description of even Philipp Melancthon as a 'semi-Calvinist' (p. 47) and his use of needlessly pejorative language in referring to Philippist Lutherans (p. 51) suggest that he is still fighting the battles of the sixteenth century. He presses for the Gnesio-Lutheran grounding of Christ's corporeal presence in the consecrated elements in the theory of perichoresis, the claimed interpenetration of his divine and human natures so that each takes on the attributes of the other (pp. 43-45), not even noting, let alone responding to, the Reformed observation that this would violate the terms of the Formula of Chalcedon.

Stephenson's vices are Van Dyk's virtues; I appreciate the breadth of vision she shows in exploring the palette of subtle distinctions between Zwingli and Bullinger and between Bullinger and Calvin. Something similar might be said of Olson's fine essay, which stresses that there is no such thing as 'the Baptist view of the Lord's Supper' (p. 93) and makes room for Christ's 'special presence' in the sacrament (p. 95) while denying that 'special, supernatural grace' is received by the faithful communicant (p. 99). Likewise, Kärkkäinen stresses the remarkable range of modern Pentecostal insights on this subject, noting convergences with Reformed and even Catholic thought. Like Gros, these three are determined to build bridges wherever possible; Stephenson, the lone wall-builder, is thus something of an odd man out. With another

er 50 or 60 pages of text, both the bridges and the walls might have been more imposing.

ERT (2011) 35:1, 95-96

**Baptists through the Centuries
A History of a Global People**

David W. Bebbington

Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press,
2010

ISBN 978-160258204-0

Pb., pp 315, index, bibliog., illus

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

Despite the title, this book does not offer a detailed coverage of the history of the Baptist movement in every place around the world— it would take many more than its 300-odd pages to do that! But with its lucid explanations and well-chosen illustrations, it does succeed in offering a clear picture of ‘Baptists through the centuries’.

The first part of the volume consists of a masterly overview of developments from the early 17th century until the 20th, showing the key characteristics and features of the movement during this period of time. The remainder contains a thematic treatment of a range of issues which characterised the church in various ways, illustrated with many sample incidents and cameos of individuals. These topics include the social gospel, theological polarization, attitude to race, the role of women, understandings of church, ministry and sacraments, its record in regard to religious liberty and its work in international missions. One important strength of the work is the way it sets Baptists within their own cultural and historical context, not glossing over problems but making them understandable within their

settings.

Although most of the focus of the book is on developments in Europe, the United Kingdom and USA where so much of the Baptist story has occurred, one of the closing chapters is devoted to global outreach. This section offers a helpful analysis of the factors involved in taking the cause to so many countries around the world, making the denomination one of the most widespread and largest of the Protestant world; however, there is not enough space to give fully adequate attention to the vast range of Baptist life that exists today outside the historical British-European-American axis.

One of the concluding chapters is dedicated to a discussion of ‘Baptist identity’ which mainly describes developments in the Southern Baptist Convention in recent decades and presents a list of the prominent theological strands of Baptist life there and elsewhere (ranging from liberal and high church to Anabaptist, charismatic, Reformed and classic evangelical). Unfortunately, this treatment (which reflects the book’s origin as an American Seminary course) does not succeed as well as the rest of the book in which the distinctive character of the denomination is vividly portrayed with sensitivity and warmth.

The conclusion comprises a neat summary of the ‘findings’ of the whole narrative, followed by two key ‘implications’ of the survey— first that ‘Baptist history can best be understood internationally’ and secondly that ‘Baptists, in wanting to spread the Christian message, have been moulded by the contexts in which they have operated’. These two factors, the author explains, go a long way to understanding how Baptists have developed their particular character in whatever part of the world and at whatever time they have flourished.

This book shows the skill and mature judgement which has made its author such a celebrated historian. He seamlessly draws together a wide range of topics and illustrative material into a gripping story which is compact and yet comprehensive. Each chapter is concluded by an effective summary paragraph which enables the reader to review its contents with ease, although it would have been better if those paragraphs had been identified as summaries by a subheading. It is

also refreshing, but often tantalizing, when the author challenges accepted historical judgements and perspectives; although this is done only briefly, and sometimes only parenthetically, it often opens up fresh perspectives which leave the reading wanting more. Used in conjunction with other more detailed histories, this volume is certain to become another one of author's works to be found on standard bibliographies and reading lists.

Blues Music and Gospel Proclamation: the extraordinary life of a courageous East German pastor, by Theo Lehmann (edited by Richard V. Pierard, and translated by Edwin P. Arnold) (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2008). ISBN 978-1-55635-544-8 Pb., pp239, illus.

This memoir by a Lutheran pastor who, as the title indicates, was famous for his interest in American blues music and as a youth evangelist during the GDR period and later, has great interest and fascination in its own right. It tells the story of his birth in 1934 into the family of a missionary and academic pastor, and then traces the experiences of living in the Nazi period, the Second World War, the GDR and finally reunified Germany, studying for the ministry, gaining a doctorate on the topic of blues music and liturgy, and finally as a pastor and itinerant evangelist under extreme pressures from his church and the state.

However, readers of this journal will also find it to be an extremely useful case study in a range of fields, such as evangelism, worship, preaching, ecclesiology, contextualisation and above all social ethics— with an extremely distinctive focus. Dr Theo Lehmann (known as 'Dr Blues') saw in blues music the ideal channel for his life-long and often sacrificial appeal for freedom in Christ which was expressed at personal, family, pastoral, evangelistic and church levels. Perhaps one statement sums up the significance and appeal of the book: 'Because my sermons were strictly biblical, in the GDR they were de facto political statements' (p 111). The translator and editor deserve appreciation for their contribution in making available an English version of this valuable book.

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

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