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EVANGELICAL REVIEW OF THEOLOGY VOLUME 35, NO 3, JULY 2011

Evangelical Review of Theology

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



Volume 35 No. 3 July 2011



0144-8153 (201107) 35:3;1-I

Evangelical Review of Theology

GENERAL EDITOR: THOMAS SCHIRRMACHER

Volume 35 · Number 3 · July 2011

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

Published by



for
WORLD EVANGELICAL
ALLIANCE
Theological Commission

ISSN: 0144-8153

Volume 35 No. 3 July 2011

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The Editors welcome recommendations of original or published articles or book reviews that relate to forthcoming issues for inclusion in the Review.

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<http://www.worldevangelicalalliance.com/commissions/tc/>

Typeset by Toucan Design, 25 Southernhay East, Exeter EX1 1NS
and Printed in Great Britain for Paternoster Periodicals
by AlphaGraphics, 6 Angel Row, Nottingham NG1 6HL

Editorial:

A Century of Mission and MORE!

WE INTRODUCE THIS issue with a review of a century of mission by experienced missiologist, Rosemary Dowsett (Scotland) who examines the period from the original Edinburgh missionary conference in 1910 to the conference held to mark its centennial. She notes how it was 'a vivid expression of the phenomenal growth of the world church... [and how many] delegates came from places where a hundred years ago there was no known Christian witness, or maybe just an infant church'. A statement issued by the conference is also included.

Next, Adam Dodds (New Zealand) explores the relationship between the post-Pentecost mission of the Spirit and the mission of the church. This covers a broader historical scope than the last century but is in its own way, complementary to the first article because, Dodds argues, 'the missions of Spirit and church [are] inter-dependent' and therefore 'the church can be confident that the weight of God's mission does not rest on her shoulders and that the Holy Spirit will complete God's mission'. Thus the church 'has been invited to genuinely contribute to God's mission, to participate in the central meaning of creation itself, the summing up of all things in Christ'.

Some practical aspects of this calling are depicted by Samuel Jayakumar in his report on holistic mission in his country of India, focusing on the outstanding work of the Dornakal Mission amongst the Dalit people. He concludes, 'The chief purpose of the Edinburgh 1910 was to prepare the church

for the final onslaught on the powers of darkness—poverty, social evils, violence and injustice—that reigned supreme in the non-western world. The Asian church has done well to some extent, but has not yet realised the full expectation.'

Having been reminded of the needs of the poor and outcast, we can turn to three biblical articles—Michael Parsons (UK) provides insights from Martin Luther's exposition of the Psalms for the suffering church while Chris Wright (UK) provides balance with his treatment of the 'righteous rich' in the Old Testament. Then James Danaher (USA) reminds us of some of the most challenging aspects of our Lord's earthly ministry. Taken together, these essays show some of the complexity of our world and its inhabitants over against the richness of the gospel of grace. As Parsons observes, 'We can and should learn a great deal from Luther the pastor—his deep concern to apply Scripture directly to situations of suffering and struggle, his true and uncomplicated love of people whom he discerns to be in need, his vulnerability which allows him to get close to others in genuine empathy and fellowship.'

In our final article, John Hitchen (NZ) shows how a Christian scholars and educators can have a self-understanding of their role which will help them to contribute significantly to the type of ministry advocated in our other articles.

Thomas Schirrmacher, General Editor
David Parker, Executive Editor

The Tale of a Centenary: Edinburgh 1910 to Edinburgh 2010

Rose Dowsett

Keywords: Ecumenism, Mission, mission Dei, Majority world, colonialism, Global South, reconciliation, salvation

I What's so special about 2010?

Keeping anniversaries is a very human thing to do. The church calendar is bulging with them. We have personal anniversaries, too, such as birthdays, wedding anniversaries and other significant mileposts in our lives. In many cultures, some call for special recognition, especially centenaries, or multiples of centenaries. For instance, 2011 marks the 400th anniversary of the King James Bible, also known as the Authorised Version. In many countries, Bible Societies and churches this is an opportunity to draw special attention, well beyond the church itself, to God's Word and the gospel it declares.

However, some cultures are much more likely than others to observe anniversaries, or indeed to choose different events and historical markers to

commemorate. The year 2000 was an exception. All over the world, whether or not they acknowledged the Christ in whose honour the original date came into being, people marked the start of a new millennium. 'Big' anniversaries became global currency. It was in this context that the Ghanaian, John Pobee, came to Edinburgh to give a millennial lecture. 'What are you planning to do to mark the Edinburgh 1910 centenary?' he asked. As a result, by 2001 a council was formed, bringing together several church leaders, some mission agency leaders, and representatives of several academic institutions. The Scottish initiative 'Towards 2010' was born.

This was conceived initially as a purely domestic undertaking. That is, it would be based in Edinburgh, would draw in a largely Scottish clientele, and would primarily be for the benefit of Scottish churches and institutions. It was decided to establish an annual day conference, in turn revisiting each of the eight commissions which formed the basis of the Edinburgh 1910 gath-

Rose Dowsett, a missiologist who has served for 40 years with OMF International, in Asia and on the home staff in the UK, taught Church History and Mission Studies for nearly twenty years at Glasgow Bible College (formerly The Bible Training Institute, and now International Christian College). She is Vice Chair of the Mission Commission of the WEA, and is a member of the Lausanne Theology Working Group. She was one of the team of eight writing the Cape Town Commitment. She represented WEA on the Council and Executive of Edinburgh 2010.

ering.¹ Speakers might be invited from different parts of the world, but their common brief would be to summarise and analyse the original commission report of the topic assigned them, reflect on how its findings might have played out in the decades since, and then explore how that theme should be engaged in a new century and within the context of a radically different world and world church.

II ...and why celebrate 1910?

The overarching question behind the question, as it were, was this: what really happened at Edinburgh 1910 and what was and is its real legacy, especially when stripped of the revisionist myths that have come to be associated with it in some quarters? Brian Stanley, formerly of the Henry Martyn Centre in Cambridge, and now Andrew Walls' successor in Edinburgh, has given us a superb historical study in *The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910*.² This is invaluable in getting at the true story of 1910, neither editing out its flaws nor dismissing its real achievements.

It has often been said that the chief legacy of the 1910 conference was the birth of the ecumenical movement, culminating in the formation of the World

Council of Churches(WCC). This has been repeated so often that it is now widely assumed, and to challenge it is difficult. But careful study of the world missionary movement between 1910 and the WCC's inception in 1948 shows that there were many other out-workings of 1910's findings that had little to do with the powerful final call to unity as it later came to be understood. Further, with few exceptions the 1910 delegates actually strongly resisted the concept of any kind of structural unity, but were more concerned to develop good working relationships and the avoidance of competition in the mission fields. For almost all of them, plurality remained an acceptable fact, it was how that worked out in practice that was the concern.

It was in the aftermath of the Second World War that a number of world bodies came into being, among them the WCC, and this reflected the particular post-war context: the desire to find ways of developing interdependent relationships that would prevent such hostilities in the future, the need to stand together against Communism's expansion, the need for something to fill the vacuum left by the disintegration of European Empires, the model of increasing internationalism of some business and media conglomerates. So, the United Nations, the WCC, the World Evangelical Fellowship (now Alliance), and IFES (International Fellowship of International Students), among numerous other bodies, all established world structures within a few years of each other.

It is interesting that sixty years later, and with all the ambiguities of globalisation, many groups—including

1 The eight 1910 Commissions were: Carrying the gospel to all the non-Christian world; The Church in the mission field; Education in relation to the Christianisation of national life; The missionary message in relation to the non-Christian religions; The preparation of missionaries; The home base of missions; Missions and Governments; Cooperation and the promotion of unity.

2 Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2009.

parts of the world church—are negative towards centralised structures and wish to affirm local identity and sovereignty. Global structures need to have a very light touch, with plenty of space for local diversity, especially if they are to attract younger generations. It is yet to be seen how this will impact world Christian organisations with their roots in the 1940s and 1950s, and generated from the western world.

III Edinburgh—not the Centre of the World!

John Pobee was not the only person who urged that a centenary celebration of Edinburgh 1910—whether by process or event—needed to be based in Edinburgh once again. Many churches and institutions, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and some parts of India, but also in East Asia and Latin America, trace their roots to the missionary service of Scottish women and men, and links remain strong to this day. Further, the veteran missiologist, Professor Andrew Walls, and the Centre for the Study of Christianity in the non-Western World, part of New College in the University of Edinburgh, drew (and draw) a significant number of Christian leaders and scholars to Edinburgh.

Many of them, too, believed it to be important that centenary celebrations should be located in the same place where the first great World Missionary Conference was held. For them, this was of both symbolic and historical importance. At the same time, a little later on, other voices from the global south, including Africa, urged that a centenary needed to be located in the

southern hemisphere, underlining the geographical shift of the worldwide church. This was one factor among others that in time would lead to the Lausanne and World Evangelical Alliance congress in Cape Town. It illustrates how superficial and patronising (albeit sometimes convenient) it is to speak of ‘the church of the global south’ as if it were one entity with one voice.

The annual conferences arranged by Towards 2010 attracted a small but enthusiastic following of around 80 people. Most of those who attended came from Scotland, or were internationals studying in Scotland at the time, while the greater majority of the speakers, generally scholars of international standing, came from various parts of the global south. This provided a salutary and often inspiring perspective, a vivid reminder that mission is no longer (as it was assumed in 1910) from the west to the rest, and a clear testimony to the stature of the church in many parts of the world today.

Of course, with a few exceptions these speakers were not evangelicals, and consequently operated from a variety of theological frameworks and with different understandings of contemporary mission. Nonetheless, there was considerable common ground, and generally respect when speaking of other traditions. Unlike 1910, Roman Catholics, Orthodox and Pentecostals shared the platform with Evangelicals and with Protestants of every hue. A slightly abridged version of the lectures is captured in *Edinburgh 2010: Mission Then and Now*.³

3 Edited by David Kerr and Ken Ross (Oxford: Regnum, 2009).

IV 'Towards 2010' evolves...

Quite early on, the lecture series attracted the attention of Jacques Matthey, then the senior staff person of the World Council of Churches' Commission for World Mission and Evangelism (CWME), and of Knud Jorgensen and Birger Nygaard of the Areopagos Foundation. Soon interest gathered momentum, and from a number of directions came the repeated suggestion of an international research project, along the lines of the 1910 eight commissions, but with fresh topics and with participation of all Christian traditions. By 2004, a slightly odd assortment of interested individuals—some academics, some representing a denomination or its mission board, some involved in global networks such as the WCC, WEA and Lausanne, a few Scottish leaders—met in Edinburgh to dream dreams, agree possibilities, and hammer out some preliminary plans. This group met again in 2005 and 2006, laying the groundwork for the nine study themes⁴ with both topics and explanatory texts to suggest questions that might be addressed, methodology to ensure international and multi-denominational engagement in each topic, and objectives and desired outcomes for the whole enterprise.

It is always easy to be wise after the

event, and in retrospect the informal way in which this evolved, dependent entirely on voluntary (and self-funding) engagement, with no precedent or blueprint to work from, led to some definite weaknesses. In particular, there were too few representatives in those formative stages from the global south. That might or might not have changed the list of chosen themes or recommended methodology. While CWME, Areopagos, and the Church of Scotland Board of Mission, each supplied some staff time, it was hard to press forward speedily enough. With no legal status under Scottish charity law, the group could not directly employ staff, and with no guaranteed funds in hand or way of predicting accurately what a realistic budget might look like, progress was difficult.

There was also some ambiguity as to whether the study process was primarily an academic project, or something closer to the 1910 commissions where a large proportion of the very numerous respondents were missionary practitioners or home staff of mission agencies. Moreover, in 1910 the extensive research had the specific goals of establishing data about the growth of the church worldwide, of identifying where pioneer work still needed to be done and the challenges standing in the way of gospel progress, and of agreeing strategy to move forward. But now, in 2010, if the study process were primarily academic, how would this serve and educate grass roots congregations?

In many places, academy and pew are two separate worlds. Evangelicals might deplore that separation, but often are no better than anybody else at bringing them together. Was it possi-

4 Foundations for mission; Christian mission among other faiths; Mission and postmodernities; Mission and power; Forms of missionary engagement; Theological education and formation; Christian communities in contemporary contexts; Mission and unity—ecclesiology and mission; Mission spirituality and authentic discipleship.

ble to bridge that chasm? Was it possible to have a study process that satisfied the expectations of the academy but also stimulated more effective missionary engagement in the everyday life of ordinary Christians? That tension was never fully resolved, although in the end most of the convenors co-ordinating groups working on one of the themes were not professional academics.

The University of Edinburgh's New College, the locus of its theological studies, was interested in an academic research project, especially a global one, and agreed to be the legal employer of an executive director, provided that the committee could guarantee funds for his salary. The WCC through CWME were particularly key in this, although it is important to stress (as indeed CWME are sensitive to stress) that at no point was the project a WCC project. They were simply one player among many, and CWME staff were very careful not to exercise more influence than anybody else. It is important to spell this out because some people wrongly assume that Edinburgh 2010 was a WCC event, in contrast to Cape Town being a Lausanne and WEA event. As it happens, both WEA and Lausanne were involved in the process from the beginning. In 2007, Daryl Balia of South Africa was appointed by the University as project director. That same year, the original committee altered shape somewhat and became a formal Council.

V ...and evolves some more

The Council was still drawn mainly from the north, and strongly European, but there were representatives also from

Latin America (Ruth Padilla de Boorst, Latin American Theological Fraternity), Africa (John Kafwanka, from the Anglican Communion; Ganoune Diop, Seventh Day Adventists; Joseph Otubu, African Independent Churches; Femi Adeleye, International Fellowship of Evangelical Students; Des van der Water, Council for World Mission), Asia (Julie Ma, Asian Pentecostal Society) and North America (Blair Carlson, Lausanne). Most of the denominational representatives were from or based in Europe, and perhaps more than was entirely helpful were based in Geneva simply because their offices were there. The mission agencies which had been so prominent in 1910 were largely ignored, in favour of specifically denominational church structures, and that may have been one area where WCC assumptions prevailed.

But what was unique (and I use the word advisedly) was that everybody, of whichever denomination or tradition or network, sat around the table on equal terms: Roman Catholics, Orthodox, mainline Protestants, Anglicans, Pentecostals, Evangelicals, Independents. In that sense it was profoundly ecumenical in the very best sense of the word, and despite real differences of history or conviction, warm personal friendships developed, accompanied by respect and the dismantling of some unhelpful stereotypes.

The Council confirmed tentative ideas, already floated, for a conference as a culmination of the study process, to be held in Edinburgh as close as possible to the 1910 dates, with a closing celebration in the Assembly Hall where the original missionary conference had met and made history. It was initially hoped that the conference could draw

1,200 delegates from around the world, with allocations made to each community represented in the Council in proportion to its constituency's approximate numbers worldwide. Each delegation should include women as well as men, youth as well as older leaders, academics and practitioners, and as strong a group from the global south as possible.

Sadly, in 2009, in the light of the financial crisis worldwide (making it almost impossible for stakeholders to raise sufficient money for their assigned number of delegates), and with complications in practical logistics in Edinburgh, the Council reluctantly scaled down the conference to a quarter of its original numbers. Inevitably, it is not possible to represent every permutation of the worldwide church among a mere 300, and in the event some constituencies were absent, causing aggravation to some delegates.

The expense of gathering the Council together meant that it met only annually, that is, three times before June 2010, which again in retrospect was probably insufficient for such a complicated undertaking. Further, it was essential for local people to carry forward quite a lot of the practical arrangements; realities on the ground meant that local decisions and actions sometimes had to overturn the Council's wishes. That caused some strain, and tested relationships.

But the truth was that without considerable voluntary service from Scottish Christians, and several local committees taking responsibility for particular matters such as music and worship, relationships with local churches, and the detailed planning of the final

celebration, it would not have been possible to mount a conference at all. At the same time, the interests and expectations of University, Scottish churches, international Council members and fundraisers were sometimes in conflict with one another rather than always complementary.

The appointment of Jasmin Adam from Germany as Communications Officer marked a big step forward, and made possible the development of the website and multiple dimensions of international engagement. In early 2009, Kirsteen Kim took on responsibility for taking the study process into a higher gear, to ensure that each theme would have at least one competent report prepared for circulation in advance of the June 2010 conference.

In some cases, theological institutions in different parts of the world hosted a conference on a particular study theme, but on the whole it proved difficult or even impossible for them to develop a consultation that embraced respondents from all over the world and from all traditions of the church. That does not mean that their findings were not valuable, but it was less than had been envisaged. Positively, it made it possible for some regional conferences (for instance in Latin America and India) to operate in languages other than English, and to consider themes in a highly contextual way. Some conferences were also held on a confessional basis.

VI Countdown for the Study Process

By the end of 2008, in an attempt to bring some coherence out of the many

different ways in which different bodies had picked up a theme (or all of them!), two convenors were appointed for each theme, normally a man and a woman, and usually from different church traditions and different parts of the world. Their task, with the help of a core group of respondents, was then to assemble papers written for conferences or submissions by interested individuals, stimulate discussion mostly by email, and then to produce a 10,000 word summary report of all the data gathered for their theme. These reports were then published in the volume *Edinburgh 2010: Witnessing to Christ Today*⁵ and circulated in advance to all delegates to the conference. Further materials were available on the website.

There was considerable freedom for each group to develop its work as it wished, and to tackle its topic in whatever way suited best its participating group. This meant that the scope and structure of the reports varies considerably. Most groups worked hard to involve participants from different traditions and different parts of the world, though some achieved that better than others. There were of course the perennial barriers of language, which made it impossible for some to join in even if potentially capable of bringing valuable contributions. That was especially the case perhaps for East Asians and some Latin Americans. Stakeholders passed along recommendations of people to invite, but who knows everyone on a world stage who could contribute?

Most of the work had to be done by email, and as a means of discourse quite apart from internet practicalities, that suits some cultures far better than others. Despite all this it is doubtful that there has ever been quite such a multi-traditional, international consultation within the world church before. Certainly for many respondents it was the first time they had been involved in something so completely beyond the boundaries of their own tradition or region.

VI The Conference

The conference was held at Pollock Halls, part of the University of Edinburgh, and right at the foot of the stunning (extinct!) volcanic rock of Arthur's Seat. Not quite 300 delegates came from 77 nationalities, with 62 mother tongues. They represented 115 denominations, and 202 organisations. This diversity is a creditable achievement within such a small total. Men outnumbered women two to one, which is of course not reflective of world church membership (Cape Town did not succeed here either!). Nearly two thirds were ordained, with a very strong contingent of senior church leaders including bishops and archbishops and metropolitans, making for some very colourful apparel! It also indicated how significant some denominations regarded the occasion, not necessarily so much because of the centenary of 1910 but because of the extraordinarily ecumenical nature of the gathering. This may well prove to be one of the things Edinburgh 2010 is most remembered for in the future.

Each day John Bell of the Iona Community led plenary acts of worship,

⁵ Edited by Daryl Balia and Kirsteen Kim (Oxford: Regnum, 2010).

drawing music from many traditions and from many corners of the world. There were small group Bible studies on two occasions, but these were poorly attended. Roman Catholics and Orthodox held their own services before breakfast each morning. There were optional late night prayers for all. There was a genuine attempt to integrate worship and authentic spirituality with the more theoretical business of the conference, and probably for many of the delegates it was the first taste of something so multi-traditional.

Much of each of the three full days was taken up with presentations from each of the thematic groups. Delegates opted for three out of the nine topics, with three running in parallel at any one time, and convenors built on what had been already circulated in their published papers. Convenors were asked to include plenty of time for group and plenary interaction, and also to consider how a number of transversal themes might intersect with their topic. These seven transversals⁶ were regarded as pertinent to all nine themes, and were intended as critiquing perspectives on them all.

It had originally been proposed that each delegate would spend all three days working on just one theme, but the logistics of the conference site made it impossible to have nine parallel tracks running at the same time. This was a disappointment to some,

who claimed that there was not time to deal with any topic in depth. It is certainly true that a purely academic conference would probably limit itself to only one or two of these very large topics, and that not everybody with something valuable to contribute had space and time to do so. For other delegates, it was a warmly appreciated advantage that they could taste at least some of the scope of several themes.

Apart from mealtimes there was little free time, but many delegates enjoyed the Pilgrimage organised by Jet den Hollander, one of the Council. Although confined to the Pollock Halls site, it was remarkably effective. Delegates moved from stopping point to stopping point, at each one presented with strong visual material relating to someone from church and mission history, and with the invitation to pause and give thanks, to reflect on the person's ministry, and to pray. These figures were drawn from many different traditions of the church, and many different parts of the world, and amongst some well-known figures were some of those who do not appear in standard church history books but who might well appear in a heavenly update of Hebrews 11.

After joining local congregations for morning services, the conference closed with a memorable final celebration held in the Assembly Hall where all the 1910 plenary sessions took place. Many friends from local churches, some local civic dignitaries, and representatives of other faiths, joined the delegates for a three hour finale, with the closing address being given by Archbishop John Sentamu of the Anglican Communion.

In the course of this service, dele-

⁶ These were: Women and mission; Youth and mission; Healing and reconciliation; Bible and mission—mission in the Bible; Contextualisation, inculturation and dialogue of world-views; Subaltern voices; Ecological perspectives on mission.

gates were invited to stand and affirm, paragraph by paragraph, the 'Common Call'. The full text of this may be found in the Appendix. Each paragraph had its roots in one of the nine study themes. The whole conference had been invited to comment and request modifications the previous day, and while some requests or suggestions were left on the cutting room floor (especially some of the more bizarre ones!), the final document was very widely accepted.

In fact, in an extraordinary way, while leaders of all the traditions gave their full blessing to the document, some evangelicals might be surprised at how hearteningly orthodox the statements are. Others will want to argue that there are many omissions, and that is true, along with the fact that each paragraph is very slight by virtue of its brevity. Nonetheless, and despite the fact that this is in no way a binding document formally adopted by denominations as a kind of twenty first century creed, it is extraordinary to have significant agreement across such diverse confessions and traditions. In a world where different traditions are too often seen only to be damning one another, it may be salutary to ponder whether there are constructive conversations we can and should have with those different from ourselves.

VII More Publications

As in 1910, 2010 has generated many books, and it is expected that there will finally be at least twenty (published almost entirely by Regnum, Oxford) springing directly out of the Edinburgh study process and conference. They

gather together papers and reflections from many traditions and many corners of the world church, and as such are an important resource, whether or not you happen to agree with the assumptions behind each author or their findings. Probably most will struggle to find wide currency beyond institutional libraries, though they deserve a wider readership. Whether or not the University of Edinburgh regard the finished project as satisfying their academic criteria, they are not saying! But one part of the project which certainly meets with their approval is the superb *Atlas of Global Christianity*.

The *Atlas*, edited by Todd Johnson and Kenneth Ross, and published by the Edinburgh University Press, is a huge work in every sense of the term, and its production was certainly inspired by the centenary of 1910. Part of the objective of the 1910 conference, including the work of its commissions, was to ascertain the state of world Christianity at that time, to gather as much data as possible from as many places as possible, and to use that as the basis for formulating strategies for taking forward the grand calling of the church in its mission to the whole world.

In many respects, the *Atlas* is thus absolutely in tune with the spirit of 1910, indeed far more so than some elements of the study process and the conference. Sadly, the *Atlas* is eye-wateringly expensive, and will mostly be in the reach only of institutions and the wealthiest of individuals. However, it is of wonderfully high quality, and will be a definitive and unique resource and reference work for decades to come. It is a truly impressive volume.

Apart from maps and statistics, it has articles relating to all major traditions of the world church, articles by regions of the world, articles on other world religions, data regarding missionary personnel, and (do I hear evangelicals cheering?) a fine extended section on evangelism since 1910. In my view, the *Atlas* will be one of the most significant legacies of Edinburgh 2010.

VIII Was it worthwhile?

From an evangelical perspective, what were some of the weaknesses of the Edinburgh 2010 project? First, there was a disappointingly sparse reference to Scripture in some of the nine theme reports, and clearly sociology or church tradition is often more influential than biblical revelation in forming principles of defining mission. (Before we cast stones, how much is evangelical understanding, praxis and strategy in mission derived from the behavioural sciences and/or the business world rather than Scripture?)

Secondly, probably in an attempt to be eirenical and ecumenical and inclusive, some of the deep fault-lines that exist between different parts of the world church simply did not surface to be debated openly and honestly. (Did Cape Town open up some of the profound tensions among evangelicals in relation to theology, praxis and strategy, or were we too concerned to provide a united front?)

Thirdly, for reasons already described above, the project was still largely driven from the west and north; it is easier said than done to escape from history and habit and money, as indeed Cape Town also demonstrated, despite all attempts to the contrary.

Fourthly, the words 'evangelism' and 'missionary' were largely absent, although 'missio Dei' or 'the mission of the church' was acceptable, and of course some evangelicals involved in either study process or event wrote and spoke of both evangelism and missionaries. The concept of 'unreached peoples', where by definition the church does not yet exist, or of 'cross-cultural mission', did not seem to appear on the radar screen of many delegates. In some cases, for instance for Orthodox, there is the historic commitment to territoriality, and any other Christian initiative is *de facto* proselytism with strongly negative connotations. For some, inevitably in such a wide cross-section of church traditions, it was wrong to seek the conversion of anyone from another faith, though most would still claim it was our duty to 'witness to Christ' in a very fuzzy manner.

Our forebears in 1910, with very few exceptions, would have found this beyond their understanding—even if sometimes their view of mission was flawed by imperialistic assumptions and cultural superiority, their objective was the conversion of those among whom they laboured. They knew very well that all religions are not the same, and were unapologetic about claiming the uniqueness of Christ. Yet even in 1910, the cracks were already beginning to show.

Fifthly, there was little recognition of the role of mission agencies today, unless they were specifically the mission agencies within a denominational structure. Evangelicals, too, can have plenty of sterile disputes about the comparative roles of church and so-called para-church, but we also know

that a great deal of contemporary mission is carried out through interdenominational agencies and independent groups not under the direct jurisdiction of any denomination.

Further, much discipling is done by individual believers in the course of their daily life and relationships. Perhaps that is especially true of women, whether in relation to their children or to their neighbours. There was one bitter swipe from one plenary speaker against tele-evangelists, and sadly the implication remains that this is what all evangelicals look like and how they engage in mission. Who does what and how, and controlled by whom, remains a subject of disagreement.

Perhaps the connection between this and point four above is the assumption in some quarters that mission is only what a local church does, and only what it does locally, where mission is identified primarily with the congregation's internal life and not with outreach. While it is undoubtedly biblical that a local Christian community is to bear witness to Christ through all it is and does, its worship, its catechesis, its body life, mission also requires an intentional reaching out beyond itself to those outside. That witness beyond itself must include witness of word, life and character, the proclamation and demonstration of the truths, the facts, the demands, of the biblical revelation and supremely the revelation in Jesus Christ.

And following on, sixthly, for some undoubtedly the whole enterprise was more about ecumenism than about mission. As an ecumenical gathering, it was arguably indeed unique, and we should not immediately write that off as irrelevant. But, as the celebration of

the centenary of 1910 with its focus on world mission, it would have been good to have world mission more consistently at the heart of 2010.

IX Past history or future legacy?

Will any of the efforts relating to 2010 actually make any difference to the cause of the gospel around the world—to the effective discipling of men and women and children, of individuals and communities? Will there be transformed and transformative communities of believers as a result? Time will tell. Actually, that is what we have to say about Tokyo and Cape Town, too, not just about Edinburgh. Certainly, friendships and connections were made which would not otherwise have come into being. Books will remain, capturing thoughts, longings, visions from around the world. The *Atlas* will be a powerful resource for decades.

Edinburgh 2010, like other events held during the year, was a vivid expression of the phenomenal growth of the world church in the past century, in the grace of God. Many delegates came from places where a hundred years ago there was no known Christian witness, or maybe just an infant church. Unlike some other events Edinburgh also brought together those from very ancient churches as well as from the younger churches, in equal partnership, and explored commonalities as well as diversity. These things, I think, will remain.

Some evangelicals (and indeed some of many other traditions, too) will no doubt say that involvement in such an enterprise is at best a waste of time

and at worst a betrayal of the gospel. I would have to disagree strongly, though I do not think it would have been a suitable arena for everyone. At no point was I required to surrender my evangelical beliefs. There were many occasions, especially within the Council and committees, where it was fully possible to find deep consensus around biblical fundamentals, transcending traditions and tribes, and a great desire to see the Lord glorified and honoured.

In these early years of the twenty first century, for some Christians in acutely minority situations, surrounded by another religion or aggressive secularism, the need to find common ground with others claiming the name of Christ, and some measure of respect, support and solidarity, is par-

ticularly urgent. For all of us, the Lord's prayer that we should be united and at one, reflecting the unity within the Trinity itself, in order that the world might believe, is as crucial as it has ever been. Evangelicals have historically been fragmented even among themselves, and we need to repent deeply over that. Christian disunity remains a huge stumbling block to the unbelieving world, destroying the credibility of our message and claims. If we are truly committed to the Lord and his clear word, and to the cause of the gospel, how can we shut our eyes to our costly disobedience?

So now, where will the Lord lead his people for the future? Whatever that future holds, may the glory of the Lord increasingly fill the whole earth as the waters cover the sea.

Appendix

Edinburgh 2010: The Common Call

We believe the church, as a sign and symbol of the kingdom of God, is called to witness to Christ today by sharing in God's mission of love through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.

1. Trusting in the Triune God, we are called to incarnate and proclaim the good news of salvation for a fallen world, of life in abundance, and of liberation for all poor and oppressed in such a way that we are a living demonstration of the love, righteousness and justice that God intends for the whole world.
2. Remembering Christ's sacrifice on the Cross and his resurrection for our salvation, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we are called to authentic, respectful, and humble witness among people of other faiths to the uniqueness of Christ, which is marked with bold confidence in the gospel message, and which builds friendship, seeks reconciliation and practises hospitality.
3. Knowing the Holy Spirit who blows over the world at will, reconnecting creation and bringing authentic life, we are called to become communities of compassion and healing, where young people are actively participating in mission, and women and men share power and responsibility fairly, where there is new zeal for justice, peace and the protection of creation, and bold and creative liturgy reflecting the beauties of creator and creation.

4. Disturbed by the asymmetries of power that divide and trouble us, we are called to repentance, to critical reflection on and accountable uses of structures of power, and to seeking practical ways to live as members of One Body in full awareness that God resists the proud, Christ welcomes and empowers the poor and afflicted, and the power of the Holy Spirit is manifested in our vulnerability.
5. Affirming the importance of the biblical foundations of our missional engagement and valuing the witness of the Apostles and martyrs, we are called to rejoice in the expressions of the gospel in many nations all over the world, in the renewal experienced through movements of migration, and in the way God is continually using children and young people in furthering the kingdom.
6. Recognising the need to shape a new generation of leaders with authenticity to minister to a world of diversities in the twenty-first century, we are called to work together in new forms of theological education which draw on one another's unique charisms, challenge each other to grow in faith and understanding, share resources more equitably worldwide, involve the entire human being and the whole people of God, and respect the wisdom of our elders while also fostering the participation of children.
7. Hearing the call of Jesus to make disciples of all—poor, wealthy, marginalised, ignored, powerful, young, and old—we are called to communities of faith receiving from one another in our witness by word and action, in streets, offices, homes and schools, bringing reconciliation, showing love, demonstrating grace and speaking out truth.
8. Recalling Christ, the host at the banquet, and committed to the unity for which he lived and prayed, we are called to ongoing co-operation and to work towards a common vision, while welcoming one another in our diversity, affirming our membership through baptism in the One Body of Christ, and recognising our need for mutuality, partnership and networking in mission, so that the world might believe.
9. Remembering Jesus' way of witness and service, we believe we are called by God to follow it joyfully, inspired, anointed and empowered by the Holy Spirit, nurtured by Christian disciplines in community, to bring God's transforming and reconciling love to the whole creation.

The Mission of the Spirit and the Mission of the Church: Towards a Trinitarian Missiology

Adam Dodds

Key Words: *Church, missio Dei, Trinity, sonship, koinonia, pluralism, divine risk, evangelism, election, service*

I Introduction

In this paper I investigate the inter-relation between the post-Pentecost mission of the Spirit and the mission of the church. The ultimate goals of the church's mission are the first three petitions of the Lord's prayer; the hallowing of God's Triune name, the coming of his kingdom, and his will being done on earth as in heaven.¹ This includes evangelism, healing, feeding the poor, transforming unjust political

and socio-economic structures, the stewardship of creation, relief and development work. In short, the church's mission is world transformation which is itself stupendous and therefore '...presupposes the anointing and empowerment of the Spirit... A powerless church can hardly consider it.'²

The mission of the Spirit is to be the agent of the Father's summing up of all things in Christ, '...to bring history to completion and fulfilment in Christ'.³

1 Johannes Verkuyl, 'The Kingdom of God as the Goal of the Missio Dei', *International Review of Mission* 68 no. 270 (April 1979: 168-175), 169.

2 Clark H. Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1996), 147. Ion Bria similarly says, 'Only by the Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit is the mission of the church possible...' Compiled & Edited by Ion Bria, *Go Forth In Peace: Orthodox Perspectives on Mission* (WCC Mission Series; Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1986), 11

3 Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 194.

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Although this description is necessarily broad and general, it includes the specific work of regeneration, sanctification, conviction of sin, endowment of gifts, empowerment, instruction and other facets of the Spirit's work.

From these descriptions it is clear one cannot describe the missions of church or Spirit in isolation; they are mutually referential. This is unsurprising given that in the New Testament the work of the Holy Spirit is primarily described through two foci: the church and eschatology.⁴ So, the church is central to the mission of the Spirit, and likewise, the Holy Spirit is 'The chief actor in the historic mission of the Christian church... He is the director of the whole enterprise. The mission consists of the things that he is doing in the world.'⁵ Before proceeding to examine the inter-relation between the missions of the Spirit and the church, it is necessary to consider briefly their theological context.

The missions of Spirit and church belong to the theological nexus in which christology, pneumatology, missiology and ecclesiology are all inextricably related. Clearly the mission of the Spirit is incomprehensible apart from the mission of the Son. H. B. Swete says, 'Without the mission of the Spirit the mission of the Son would have been fruitless; without the mission of the Son the Spirit could not

have been sent.'⁶ The missions of the Son and Spirit constitute the outward works of God *ad extra*, which are undivided but not indistinguishable.

Hence, I contend that it is appropriate to speak of the mission of the Spirit. The mission of the Holy Spirit is not a *replacement* of the mission of Christ as the Eastern Orthodox conceive it.⁷ Nor is the mission of the Spirit merely a function of Christ's ongoing mission, thus subjecting pneumatology to christology. Neither is the Spirit's mission merely a continuation of Christ's historical mission, although in certain ways the Spirit does continue Jesus' work, such as teaching truth to the disciples (Jn. 16:12-14).

Rather, with David Coffey and the Eastern Orthodox '...there is a proper mission of the Holy Spirit',⁸ but since the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus (Acts 16:7; Philp. 1:19) there is an inextricable, deep, mysterious and extraordinarily close relationship between the on-going mission of Christ and the post-Pentecost mission of the Spirit, as there was between the work of the Spirit in the life of the incarnate

4 Wesley Carr, 'Towards a Contemporary Theology of the Holy Spirit', *Scottish Journal of Theology* 28 (1975: 501-516).

5 John V. Taylor, *The Go-Between God: The Holy Spirit and the Christian Mission* (London: SCM Press, 1972), 3.

6 *The Holy Spirit in the New Testament* (1910 repr. ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1964), p. 206, quoted in Gordon Fee, *Paul, the Spirit and the People of God* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 85.

7 C.f. John 14. David M. Coffey explains that '...the Eastern Orthodox position is that there is a proper mission of the Holy Spirit, that it began at Pentecost, and that in a real sense it replaced the mission of Christ, which ended at that point'. 'A Proper Mission of the Holy Spirit', *Theological Studies* 47 (1986: 227-250), 227.

8 Coffey, 'A Proper Mission', 227, emphasis original.

Son. The work of Son and Spirit are perichoretically related because their work substantially constitutes the one *missio trinitatis Dei* and because the Triune Persons are constituted in and by their perichoretic mutual relations.⁹

Fiddes says that 'we associate some functions in a particular, but non-exclusive way with particular persons... because we find one movement in God takes the 'leading edge' in a particular context'.¹⁰ In this age of mission between the time of Christ's incarnation and his *parousia* it is the Holy Spirit who takes this 'leading edge' among the Triune Persons for it is he who is the chief agent implementing and accomplishing God's mission, though not without nor apart from Son or Father. Therefore as we discuss the inter-relation between the *missio Dei* and the *missio ecclesiae* it is appropriate to speak particularly of the inter-relation between the missions of *Spirit* and church, for as Newbigin rightly says, 'It is he who is, properly speaking, the missionary'.¹¹

9 I affirm this with Gunton and Pannenberg, and against Moltmann who argues that the being of God is constituted by the monarchy of the Father. Colin E. Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1997), 39. Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology Vol. 1* trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 325. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God* trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 165.

10 Paul S. Fiddes, *Participating in God: A Pastoral Doctrine of the Trinity* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2000), 103. By 'movements in God' Fiddes means the Triune Persons.

11 Lesslie Newbigin, *Trinitarian Doctrine For Today's Mission* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1998), 40.

The mission of the church, like the mission of the Spirit, makes sense only in light of the historical and ongoing mission of the Son, who trained and commissioned the disciples, poured out the Holy Spirit upon them, and continues to draw people to himself through the church. As Blauw says, 'The Church's work of mission is bound both to Easter and to Pentecost. The Easter message can be brought to the nations only by the reality of Pentecost'.¹² It is the inter-relation between the *missio ecclesiae* and Pentecost that is the focus of this article.

II The Mission of the Spirit in Church History

As is clear from *Acts of the Apostles*, the mission of the Holy Spirit births and thus *constitutes* the church. Jesus' community of disciples can be understood as the proto-church but they do not become the church until their reception of the Spirit on Pentecost, for it is by the Spirit that they were baptised into one body, the church.¹³ The Spirit, this 'go-between God',¹⁴ descended on Jesus' disciples in the upper room and incorporated them into the sonship of Jesus, so that they might share in the Son's relation to the Father and cry out 'Abba, Father'. This incorporation is necessarily communal, '...for the Spirit brings together humanity into

12 Johannes Blauw, *The Missionary Nature of the Church: A Survey of the Biblical Theology of Mission* (Guildford & London: Lutterworth Press, 1962), 89.

13 Cf. 1 Corinthians 12:13.

14 Cf. Taylor's *The Go-Between God*.

the *unity* of Christ.’¹⁵

In this adopted sonship the church looks to the Father, and in doing so looks to the world to which the Father sent his Son and Spirit. Therefore, in the same sending of the Spirit he directs this *koinonia* outwards, mirroring, however dimly, the divine Triune *koinonia* which is open to the world. Historically, the Spirit not only constitutes the church in Christ but also leads and inspires her in her mission.¹⁶

It is the work of the Holy Spirit that leads to the missionary outreach of the church. The Spirit filled the apostles who then boldly spoke the word of God (Acts 4: 31), led Philip to explain the gospel to the high-standing Ethiopian official (Acts 8:29), prompted Peter to go to the Gentile Cornelius without hesitation (Acts 11:12), and set apart Paul and Barnabas and thus instigated the first intentional missionary journey (Acts 13:2). The Spirit continues to lead the church in her mission.

Consider the words of J. Roswell Flower, the first general secretary of the Assemblies of God. Emphasising the missionary nature of the Holy Spirit he says, ‘When the Holy Spirit comes into our hearts, the missionary spirit comes in with it; they are insepa-

able.’¹⁷ It is the Holy Spirit who initiates and inspires the mission of the church.

Andrew Lord speaks of the ‘need for an authentic Christian spirituality to undergird all our attempts at mission’. He continues, ‘Without spirituality our mission will be dry and lacking the presence and power of the Holy Spirit—we may try hard, but achieve little.’¹⁸ That the Holy Spirit animates the church’s mission with himself, the breath of life, is a historical fact and needs to continually be the church’s living experience.

1. The Spirit Goes Ahead of the Church

In *Acts*, and in the history of missions, we see that the Spirit’s mission activity is not confined to the boundaries of the church, for the church reaches only as far as those who confess Jesus as Lord and who worship by word and sacraments. By contrast, the Holy Spirit was poured out on *all* flesh which must at least mean that he is omnipresent. Furthermore, since God desires all to be saved, it is reasonable to believe that in his omnipresence the Spirit is redemptively active in all people everywhere.

The Spirit is active in all peoples testifying about Jesus (Jn. 15:26), convicting the world of sin, righteousness

15 Khaled Anatolios, ‘The Immediately Triune God: A Patristic Response to Schleiermacher’, *Pro Ecclesia* Vol. X No. 2 (Spring 2001: 159-178), 176, emphasis original.

16 Cf. McIntyre’s comment that ‘...it was the Holy Spirit who was responsible for the birth, survival, growth and development of the early Church, through his inspiration of, and involvement with, the disciples’. John McIntyre, *The Shape of Pneumatology: Studies in the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1997), 53.

17 Quoted in Allan Anderson, *Spreading Fires: The Missionary Nature of Early Pentecostalism* (London: SCM Press and Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2007), 65.

18 Andrew M. Lord, ‘Mission Eschatology: A Framework for Mission in the Spirit’, *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 11 (1997: 111-123), 119.

and judgement (Jn. 16:8-11), thereby preparing peoples to receive the gospel. It is a truism to say that the church's missionaries do not take God to a people, but the omnipresent God is already at work in all people and he brings missionaries to those in whom he is already at work. It has been the experience of countless missionaries that God has been at work in non-Christian peoples and cultures, preparing them for the reception of the gospel often centuries before missionaries arrive.¹⁹

The Holy Spirit goes ahead of the church '...preparing men's hearts in ways that no man could have planned, so that the Church has all that it can do [*sic.*] to follow after to make open and visible what the Spirit has already begun in secret before any churchmen knew of it'.²⁰ The Spirit does not work alone but carries out the will of the Father who sent him, and the Son through whom he was sent, for the purposes of uniting people by faith to Jesus. Indeed, the *opera trinitatis ad extra* are hypostatically distinguishable, perichoretically united and perfectly mutual.

The global nature of the Spirit's mission is to be contrasted with the geographical limitation of the church's mission, which is not a fault but simply

an aspect of its creaturely finitude. This ecclesial limitation has been exploited by some scholars in order to drive a wedge between pneumatology and ecclesiology and suggest that the Spirit can reach people without the church engaging in mission. This is often further combined with an abandonment of the claim to the uniqueness of Christ, *en route* to religious pluralism, by arguing that the Holy Spirit is salvifically working within non-Christian religions and therefore evangelistic work amongst people of other faiths is inappropriate and unnecessary.

This creates a further dichotomy between pneumatology and christology which is highly problematic because the two cannot be separated since there is no separation *within* God. D. T. Niles' statement, 'Jesus Christ is the content of the Gospel...[and] The Holy Spirit is the missionary of the Gospel'²¹ ought to be affirmed whilst also affirming that Christ proclaims himself through the Spirit. Christology and pneumatology are inseparable. When proponents of this pluralistic view seek biblical support they frequently appeal to the story of Cornelius, for according to S. Wesley Ariarajah, this story shows that '...there is no need to channel God to people; God has direct access...'²²

¹⁹ Don Richardson documents many examples in his popular book *Eternity In Their Hearts* revised ed. (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1984).

²⁰ Lesslie Newbigin, *Unfaith and Other Faiths* (unpublished address delivered to the 12th Annual Assembly of the Division of Foreign Missions, NCCCUSA, 1962), <www.newbigin.net> accessed 17 Sept 2010, pages not numbered.

²¹ D. T. Niles, *Upon The Earth: The Mission of God and the Missionary Enterprise of the Churches* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1962), 67.

²² *The Bible and People of Other Faiths* (Geneva: WCC, 1985), 17, quoted in Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (London: SPCK, 1989), 167.

2. The Spirit's Free Election of the Church

God's omnipresence entails his direct access to all people, but the method God chooses to use to reveal himself is not by direct access but through the church by means of election. According to Newbigin the central theme of the biblical story is election: 'God's choosing (election) of a people to be his own people, by whom He purposes to save the world'.²³ Thus election must be understood as missionary in character.

Under the new covenant the elect people are those *in Christ*, the church, and we see that throughout the New Testament God's mission of summing up all people in Christ advances by means of election, including in the story of Cornelius. In Acts 10:3-6 the Holy Spirit indeed speaks to non-Christian Cornelius through an angel in a vision, without ecclesial mediation, as Ariarajah has said. However, the Holy Spirit does not reveal the gospel to Cornelius but rather instructs him to send for Peter who will tell Cornelius what to do. The Spirit is free and sovereign and goes ahead of the church, '...but it is (if one may put it so) the *church* that he goes ahead of'.²⁴ Peter arrived and as he explains the gospel of Jesus Christ 'the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word'.²⁵

As Carr has said, along with eschatology the New Testament most often

associates the Holy Spirit's work with the church. Ariarajah rightly wants to give priority to *God's* activity in mission, but the Bible makes clear that this does not preclude but includes the church's mission. As Bosch helpfully puts it, 'The Christian mission is always christological and pneumatological, but the New Testament knows of no christology or pneumatology which is not ecclesial'.²⁶

In Christ God has irrevocably bound himself to his covenant people, the church, as Paul's metaphor of the church as Christ's body illustrates (1 Cor. 12). Newbigin makes clear that '...this work of the Spirit is not in any sense an alternative way to God apart from the church; it is the preparation for the coming of the Church, which means that the Church must be ever ready to follow where the Spirit leads'.²⁷

The New Testament teaches that the sovereign Holy Spirit, who moves as he wills, wills to act salvifically *through* the church's witness. Prior to the church's arrival, the Holy Spirit's work amongst an unreached people is one of *praeparatio evangelica*, whereas the church's unique task is to communicate the gospel. Hence Newbigin says, 'To use this story to suggest that the missionary journey is unnecessary or even improper is to distort it beyond recognition. It is indeed true, gloriously true, that God goes ahead of his church. But it is also true that he calls

23 Lesslie Newbigin, 'Why Study the Old Testament?' *National Christian Council Review* Vol. 74 (1954: 71-76), 75.

24 Newbigin, *Trinitarian Doctrine*, 80, emphasis added.

25 Acts 10:44.

26 David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1991), 385.

27 Newbigin, *Trinitarian Doctrine*, 53-54.

the Church to follow.²⁸

On this basis I disagree with scholars such as John McIntyre who suggest that *Acts of the Apostles* might just as easily be called *Acts of the Holy Spirit*.²⁹ His main point, that the Holy Spirit is utterly central to *Acts of the Apostles*, is entirely valid. Nevertheless, I believe that *Acts of the Apostles* is correctly entitled because God has uniquely charged the church to proclaim the gospel, a proclamation which is ineffective without the sovereign work of the Spirit. There can therefore be no separating of the Spirit from the church, but nor can there be a blurring of their distinctive missions. Neither can there be '...a severing of the Spirit from Jesus Christ...', suggesting that the Spirit's direct access is in itself redemptive apart from faith in Christ as explained by the church.

This is simply because 'If the Spirit relates created beings to God—thus making them holy, in the sense of finally acceptable to God—he achieves this through the Son, the mediator of creation, for there is no other way.'³⁰ Missiology has good reason to insist that Christ, the Spirit, the church, and mission belong together.

The Lordship of the Holy Spirit over the church and her mission includes not only creating her and directing her mission, but also the work of human regeneration, which is uniquely a work of the Spirit. The church cannot convert people because they must be born of the Spirit.³¹ Regeneration depends upon God's self-revelation and God's chosen instrument for this work is the witness of the church, but the presence of the latter does not guarantee the former.

Barth explains, 'In His revelation God controls His property, elevating our words to their proper use, giving Himself to be their proper object, and therefore giving them truth.'³² Describing this divine self-revelation which is regeneration, Barth says '...God's Spirit, the Holy Spirit, especially in revelation, is God Himself to the extent that He can not only come to man but also be in man, and thus open up man and make him capable and ready for Himself, and thus achieve His revelation in him.'³³

Given the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit in regeneration it is curious to note that in the story of Cornelius, which I take as indicative of the whole

28 Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 168. There are a plethora of extra-biblical accounts of God revealing himself to those beyond the church's bounds, such as Bilquis Sheikh's popular *I Dared To Call Him Father: The True Story of a Women's Encounter With God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, 1980). Interestingly, in that story the author was directed to find local Christ-followers, as was Cornelius.

29 McIntyre, *The Shape of Pneumatology*, 53-55.

30 Gunton, *The Promise*, xxviii.

31 For the purposes of this article I use regeneration and conversion synonymously, for with Emil Brunner, I believe they are different aspects of the same happening. *Dogmatics Vol.3: The Christian Doctrine of the Church, Faith and the Consummation* (trans. Olive Wyon, London: Lutterworth Press, 1952), 281.

32 Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, ed. and trans. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance, 13 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1957-75), III/1, 230.

33 Barth, *Church Dogmatics I/1*, 450.

New Testament witness, the Spirit chose *not* to communicate the gospel because that is the church's role. (This is not to take away from the historic significance of Cornelius' reception of the Spirit, which needed apostolic verification, that God had granted to the Gentiles repentance that leads to life [Acts 11:18].) It appears that, ordinarily speaking, in his sovereignty the Spirit will not save without the witness of the church, and yet the church's witness alone does not and cannot convert people.

There is an interdependency between the missions of Spirit and church, not by necessity, but by the design and purpose of God. This undermines Andrew Kirk's comment that 'if God's mission is largely tied to the Church then God's freedom is seriously compromised.'³⁴ Kirk is right, unless of course we believe that God in his freedom does choose to make the church central to the *missio Dei*. The Holy Spirit is Lord over the church's mission in that he is the agent of revelation and regeneration. This lordship resembles the lordship of Jesus, unusual, unexpected, and overturning our human notions of lordship, but it is still a lordship nonetheless.³⁵

Describing the church's relationship to the Holy Spirit Barth says, 'There does not belong to it the power of the sending and outpouring and operation of the Holy Spirit. It does not 'possess' him. It cannot create or control him. He is promised to it. It can

only receive Him and then be obedient to Him.'³⁶ The relationship is thoroughly asymmetrical since the Holy Spirit is both the Lord and the giver of life over, in and through the church's mission.

III The Delegation of Evangelistic Mission to the Church as Risk

The Holy Spirit's lordship over the *missio ecclesiae* includes delegating to the church the specific task of evangelism—the communication of the gospel. In his wisdom God desires to make the completion of his mission partially dependent upon ecclesial cooperation. In God's providence and wisdom he has limited himself by freely choosing to depend upon ecclesial cooperation to accomplish his mission.

John Sanders, who explores the nature of divine risk-taking vis-à-vis the doctrine of providence says, 'According to Paul, God has chosen to be somewhat dependent upon us [the church] to accomplish the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18-20), for God desires collaboration in this task.'³⁷ Nevertheless, any talk of divine dependence requires careful elaboration.

First, the notion of divine dependence is not completely novel, for in the incarnation the Son was dependent upon the empowering Holy Spirit and, humanly, upon Mary and Joseph in the same way that all infants depend on

³⁴ J. Andrew Kirk, *What Is Mission? Theological Explorations* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1999), 206.

³⁵ Cf. Mark 10:42-45.

³⁶ Barth, *Church Dogmatics* IV/2, 655.

³⁷ John Sanders, *The God Who Risks: A Theology of Providence* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1998), 125.

their parents. Even in the ontological Trinity dependence, in at least some sense, is not alien to God, for each Triune Person depends upon the other two for his being since God is constituted in and by his intra-trinitarian perichoretic relations.

Second, God's dependence upon the church is freely chosen and wholly gracious, for God does not need anything. Third, this dependence is partial and not total. Fourth, there is a strong argument made by some scholars such as Terence Fretheim that dependence is an intrinsic aspect of divine providence due to the kind of world God freely created. For example, in Genesis 2:5 and 2:15 Fretheim sees that '...the presence of a human being to till (*'bd*) the ground is considered indispensable for the development of the creation.'³⁸

Fifth, however God's dependence upon the church is to be conceived it can never be a total sharing of authority, for the biblical Creator-creature distinction always remains.³⁹ Fiddes puts it well: 'God who does not need dependence freely desires to be dependent on us for the completeness of fellowship, for the joy of the dance.'⁴⁰

Having thus qualified God's dependence upon the church it is nevertheless true that *any* concept of such a dependence is extremely humbling for the church, a theme we shall return to

shortly. The question remains, *how* dependent is God upon the church? If the church fails in her evangelistic mission, does that entail the failure of God's mission?

The enormity of divine risk is dependent upon one's views of predestination, providence and divine foreknowledge with which it is directly related, but a full discussion that those subjects deserve is beyond the scope of this paper. That this risk has been actualised and is not merely a theoretical possibility is readily apparent. Notwithstanding the presence of ancient Christian communities, the majority of people in Africa, India, east and south-east Asia and the South Pacific have had access to the gospel only in the last three hundred years, some seventeen hundred years after the inauguration of the new creation through Christ's resurrection.

Offering a suggestion as to why God might risk making his mission somewhat dependent upon the church, Sanders states, 'God's project is to develop people who love and trust him in response to his love...'⁴¹ The mission of the Spirit includes a reconciled human fellowship, and the church is both a means to God's desired end and part of that end itself, a foretaste and first-fruits of God's mission. In God's wisdom he has made what might be interpreted as the foolish decision to risk making his mission partially dependent upon the church, but this decision is made by the God who said, 'My power is made perfect in weakness'.⁴²

38 Terence E. Fretheim, 'Divine Dependence Upon the Human: An Old Testament Perspective', *Ex Auditu* 13 (1997: 1-13), 5.

39 Andrew E. Hill, 'A Response to Terrence Fretheim's "Divine Dependence Upon the Human"', *Ex Auditu* 13 (1997: 14-16), 15. Fiddes, *Participating in God*, 108.

40 Fiddes, *Participating in God*, 108.

41 Sanders, *The God Who Risks*, 124.

42 2 Cor. 12:9.

Still, God's risk is real, but it would be irresponsible and unacceptable to suggest that the risk is total. Sanders believes that God's risk is a relative and not an absolute risk, and the final outcome of God's mission is never in question.⁴³ Similarly, I contend that although the church's mission is marked by failure as well as success, it will nonetheless, by the enabling of the Spirit, certainly complete it.

God committed part of the work of salvation to the church and this confidence is not misplaced because, although human, flawed and fallible, the church is far more than simply this. God is confident that the church's mission will succeed because the church is animated by the Holy Spirit, and God can completely trust the work of the Spirit in and through the church. In Matthew 16:17-18 Jesus says that he will build his church on the rock, and that rock is the Father's work of revealing the Son by the Spirit, for as Jesus said to Peter 'flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but my Father who is in heaven'.⁴⁴

43 Sanders, *The God Who Risks*, 229. Gregory A. Boyd, who also espouses this view of providence, explains in greater detail how the risk-taking God can be assured of attaining his overall mission, in 'Chapter 5—Love & War: Risk and the Sovereignty of God', *Satan and the Problem of Evil: Constructing a Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2001), 145-177.

44 Matthew 16:17. In this passage Jesus attributes this revelation to the Father, but elsewhere revelation is clearly depicted as a work of the Spirit (John 3:4-8 & 1 Corinthians 12:3). This simply underlines the truth to which the trinitarian rule *opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa* bears witness.

Jesus' confidence is supremely on the work of the Spirit in and through the church, and that is why Blauw says God does not delegate the mission to the church. He continues, 'Nothing is left to men, not even to the apostles; *that*, however, is why everything *can* be delegated to the Church...', because 'The Holy Spirit guarantees the power of life in the Church, the presence of God in the world, and the publicizing of the Gospel'.⁴⁵

God has committed an essential role to the church within his mission, but it is simultaneously true that this delegation is encompassed and underwritten by the mission of the Spirit. When Jesus commissioned his disciples to be witnesses to the ends of the earth he instructed them to wait in Jerusalem because he had also delegated his ongoing mission to the Spirit who creates, builds, inspires, sanctifies, leads and is Lord over the church.

In this as in so many other ways, the missions of Spirit and church are intertwined. So, God took a significant risk in partially delegating mission to the church, to which the blunders in church history bear witness, but this delegation and this risk were not absolute because he also entrusted his mission to the Holy Spirit on whom he could absolutely depend.⁴⁶

The Holy Spirit is the continuity between the saving work of Jesus and

45 Blauw, *The Missionary Nature*, 90, emphasis original.

46 Studying the ground between these two points would be a fascinating and worthwhile enterprise which I believe would show how the missions of Spirit and church are different and distinct from one another.

the missionary work of the church. Re-conceiving traditional Roman Catholic terminology of the church as *Christus prolongatus*, the continuation of the incarnation,⁴⁷ Clark Pinnock avers 'The church is an extension not so much of the incarnation as of the anointing of Jesus'.⁴⁸ Pinnock suggests that the delegation of Christ's mission to the church coincides with and derives from the transferral of Christ's anointing to the church, and this seems to have strong exegetical support from both Luke (Luke 24:46-49 and Acts 1:4-5, 8) and John (20:21-23). He says,

At Pentecost the church received the Spirit and became the historical continuation of Jesus' anointing as the Christ... He transferred the Spirit to them so that his actions could continue through their agency. The bearer of the Spirit now baptises others with the Spirit, that there might be a continuation of his testimony in word and deed and a continuation of his prophetic and charismatic ministry.⁴⁹

This ought to be conceived christocentrically, for the transferral of the anointing from Jesus to the church is in fact the church's participation by the Spirit in Jesus the Christ, the anointed one. Indeed, transferral language is slightly misleading for the church's reception of the Spirit is not separate

from Christ's reception of the Spirit. Rather, the church is anointed by the Spirit for mission by participating in the Spirit-filled and anointed vicarious humanity of Christ.⁵⁰

Having examined the inter-relation between the missions of the Holy Spirit and the church, in what way does the Spirit's inspiration of the *missio ecclesiae* actually shape and form that mission?

IV Pneumatological Mission— The Church's Mission as Shaped by the Spirit

The church's mission is both christological and pneumatological and so the *missio ecclesiae* is defined by both the person of the Son and the person of the Spirit. It is commonly recognised that the church's mission is to be understood as in the way of Christ, and excellent work has been published on the incarnational nature of mission.⁵¹ I aim to supplement this necessary insight by exploring the suggestion that the *missio ecclesiae* is also to be understood as in the way of the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit is literally the life of the church, or in Schleiermacher's words

47 As suggested by the evangelical missiologist Timothy C. Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions: A Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-first Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2010), 87.

48 Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 114.

49 Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 118.

50 Thomas F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God, One Being Three Persons* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1996), 148.

51 For example, Lesslie Newbigin, *Mission In Christ's Way: Bible Studies* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1987) and Darrell L. Guder, *The Incarnation and the Church's Witness* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity International Press, 1999); "Incarnation and the Church's Evangelistic Mission", *International Review of Mission* Vol. 83 No. 330 (1994: 417-428).

'the common Spirit of the Church',⁵² so it is no accident that aspects of the Spirit's character 'rub off' on the church, for the Spirit imprints his personal nature upon the church. In other words, as the church walks by the Spirit and is led by the Spirit she bears the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5: 16-23) which reflects the person of the Spirit. The work of the Spirit is by no means restricted to the work of the church, but the church's work must be pervaded by the Spirit for it to be of any consequence.

The task of the church in her mission is not to imitate the work of the Spirit but to sensitively obey and keep in step with him. Drawing on William Hill, Tan notes that three distinctive traits that mark the Holy Spirit's identity and work are interiority, anonymity and community formation.⁵³ Mission in the way of the Spirit means that missiology needs to be pneumatological as well as christological. Consequently, Tan explains that 'The basic posture of the Spirit-filled church and pneumatically empowered missionary must be one of humility, anonymity and

other-centredness'.⁵⁴ What does it mean to say that the church in her mission ought to be humble, anonymous and other-centred?

1. Humility

The missionary church remains humble as she recognises that her successes are in fact the work of the Spirit. When churches are successfully established and grow, when the sick and emotionally scarred are healed, when the poor are fed and empowered, when the illiterate are educated, when those afflicted by evil are delivered and protected, when injustices are set to right, then the church can humbly celebrate her own contribution to these successes which rightly belong to the Holy Spirit.

The church is humble as she recognises her place in the *missio Dei*, to be Christ's ambassadors through which God reconciles people back to himself. She did not earn this right, for she was saved by grace in order to do the good works that God had prepared for her beforehand (Eph. 2:8-10). As the church goes about her mission she is aware, sometimes painfully, that she is '...the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing...' (2 Cor. 2:15-16)

It is humbling for the church to realise she is the aroma of Christ, charged with preaching the gospel in a world of sin and death, knowing that as she witnesses to the gospel it is only the work of the Spirit which can actu-

52 Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, English translation of the 2nd German edition ed. H. R. Mackintosh & J. S. Stewart (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1928), 738. McIntyre suggests this, saying that the Spirit's work in the early church is so all-pervasive '...that he might be said to stamp his character upon the Church...', *The Shape of Pneumatology*, 57.

53 Seng-Kong Tan, 'A Trinitarian Ontology of Missions', *International Review of Mission* Vol. 93 No. 369 (April 2004: 279-296), 290. Cf. William J. Hill, *The Three-Personed God: The Trinity as a Mystery of Salvation* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1982).

54 Tan, 'A Trinitarian Ontology', 290.

ally bring life that conquers sins and death. The church remains humble in her mission by living according to the truth that she can do nothing apart from Jesus, and yet *through Jesus* she can do all things by his strength (John 15:5; Phil. 4:13).

2. Anonymity

Jesus' ministry stood in the long line of Hebrew prophets and like them he called people back to God, his Father, but unlike these prophets Jesus also called people to himself.⁵⁵ Unlike Jesus, the Holy Spirit never draws attention to himself but always leads people to Jesus and through Jesus to the Father. T. F. Torrance explains that 'The Holy Spirit does not manifest himself or focus attention upon himself, for it is his mission from the Father to declare the Son and focus attention upon him'.⁵⁶ Elsewhere Torrance states, 'The Spirit does not utter himself but utters the Word... He does not show his own Face, but shows us the Father in the Face of the Son'.⁵⁷

The Spirit is self-effacing and thus anonymous in that his working brings attention not to himself but to God the Son and God the Father, which also helps explain the neglect of pneumatology in theological history. The church in her mission ought also to have these characteristics of pointing away from herself toward Jesus and the Father.

This ought to be especially true of

church movements that strongly emphasise the Holy Spirit such as Pentecostalism, and according to Anderson this is precisely what we find.

Most Pentecostals throughout the world have a decidedly Christocentric emphasis in their proclamation and witness. The Spirit bears witness to the presence of Christ in the life of the missionary and the message proclaimed by the power of the Spirit is of the crucified and resurrected Jesus Christ who sends gifts of ministry to humanity.⁵⁸

Thus Pentecostal pneumatocentrism leads directly to christocentrism as the self-effacing Spirit does his work in and through the church. As the church goes about her life and mission she should forever be drawing attention to the One who alone is worthy of all praise. In her works of love and service the church does not seek to be honoured or recognised (Matt. 6:1f), and to that extent anonymity should characterise her mission.⁵⁹

Although the church's anonymity is important it also needs to be qualified. Jesus said, 'You are the light of the world... let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven' (Matt. 5:14-16). Her motive for her good deeds must be love of God and neighbour, and as she goes about her

55 Cf. Matthew 11:28; John 14:6.

56 Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine*, 63.

57 Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1965), 252.

58 Anderson, *Spreading Fires*, 67.

59 Despite the common usage of the word anonymous there are no intended parallels with Rahner's concept of the 'anonymous Christian.' Cf. Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations Vol. 5: Later Writings* trans. Cornelius Ernst (Baltimore, Helicon Press, 1966).

good deeds, she is not to hide them but rather to let others see them in order that God whom she serves may be glorified.

For example, the Salvation Army are widely recognised and respected for their humanitarian work, and surely this reputation glorifies God. To this extent the church's mission ought *not* to be completely anonymous, that is, unidentified, nameless and secret, otherwise God will not be glorified from the church's good deeds.

To summarise, Tan is correct in saying that anonymity should characterise the church's mission in that she should seek for her God to be made known rather than herself, but in this process she too will be rightly noticed as his ambassadors, and this too will bring glory to the Father.

3. Other-Centredness

Hill said that the third distinctive trait of the Spirit's work is community formation which Tan said corresponds to the church's mission being other-centred. I believe both elements are captured in Taylor's description of the Holy Spirit as the 'go-between God'. This description draws on deep wells within the western theological tradition; specifically it is a development of Augustine's notion of the Spirit as the *vinculum caritatis*, the bond of love. Gunton describes the Spirit as the '...one whose distinctive function is to bring persons into relationship while maintaining their otherness, their particular and unique freedom'.⁶⁰

Tom Smail elaborates on this uniquely pneumatological role, describing the Holy Spirit as '...the Spirit of *perichoresis*, the person who eternally established and maintains the fellowship (*koinonia*) in which two become one without losing their twoness. Put in less formal terms, the Spirit is the Spirit of love'.⁶¹ Gunton and Smail are describing the Spirit's work within the Triune God as well as in the economy of salvation; indeed the latter corresponds to and is rooted in the former.

As the church is birthed by the Spirit and caught up in his mission, so the Spirit's 'go-between' nature and work both encompasses and incorporates the church and impresses itself upon her. Accordingly, the church is Christ's ambassador to the world, going-between God and the world which he loves. This is the priestly mediatorial role of the church as a whole (1 Pet. 2:9), which derives from him who is its High Priest.

This 'go-between' role includes the work not only of ambassadors for reconciliation with God, but also for human reconciliation between estranged parties, whatever the cause of the estrangement. This can be in peace-making,⁶² or can take the form of advocacy on behalf of the oppressed, the poor, the neglected and the disadvantaged. In this 'go-between' role the

⁶¹ Tom Smail, 'Trinitarian Atonement', *Stimulus* Vol. 15 Issue 2 (May 2007: 43-48), 48.

⁶² See, for example, the work of Christian Peace-Maker teams (<http://www.cpt.org/>) or the work of Rev. Canon Andrew White, commonly known as the Vicar of Baghdad, for the Foundation for Relief and Reconciliation in the Middle East.

⁶⁰ Gunton, *The Promise*, 133, emphasis original.

missionary church is other-centred as the focus is both on her Lord whom she serves and those to whom she is sent. Therefore, loving God and loving her neighbour should be the focus and characteristic of the church in mission.

V The Inter-Relation of the Missions of Spirit and Church

Numerous connections between the Spirit and the church's mission can be articulated. Blauw states that 'The close connection between [the Church's] call to mission and Holy Spirit cannot be exaggerated'.⁶³ We see this in accounts of the giving of the Spirit described in John 20:21-23 and Acts 2, which are both for the purpose of mission. The two missions are related in that both are sent from the Father through the Son. Acts 2:33 teaches that the Father sends the Spirit to Jesus, whom he receives and then pours out on the disciples. In John 20:21-23 Jesus sends the disciples as the Father sent him and with their sending Jesus breathes the Spirit onto them.

The missions of Spirit and church are profoundly related to each other and constitute part of the one mission of the Triune God. The unity of these missions can also be seen in that at Pentecost, the new-born church is caught up into the mission of the Spirit which coincides with the on-going mission of Christ. There is continuity in the Spirit's mission in Jesus and then in the church but the character of the

Spirit's presence in each is somewhat dissimilar. As Hong explains,

In biblical terminology, Jesus was given the Spirit 'without measure' (John 3:34); in the church, the Spirit operates 'according to the measure of faith' (Rom. 12:3). In the terminology of later tradition, Jesus was endowed with the Spirit 'by nature'; the church is endowed with the Spirit 'by grace'.⁶⁴

Newbigin was therefore right in saying that one cannot understand the church's mission, and I would add the Spirit's mission, apart from the doctrine of the Triune God.⁶⁵

The mission of the Spirit *creates* the church as he unites people to Jesus to share in his Sonship, thus forming a redeemed and adopted community. The church and her mission are also a central component in the Spirit's mission, for she is God's elect people through whom he will save the world. The church herself is part of the Spirit's mission of uniting people to Jesus, because as Cyprian and Calvin have affirmed, you cannot have God as Father without having the church as Mother.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Young-Gi Hong, 'Church and Mission: A Pentecostal Perspective', *International Review of Mission* 90 no. 358 (Jl 2001: 289-308), 306.

⁶⁵ Newbigin, *Trinitarian Doctrine*, 82. See also my 'Newbigin's Trinitarian Missiology: The Doctrine of the Trinity as Good News for Western Culture' with *International Review of Mission* 99.1 Issue 390 (April 2010: 69-85).

⁶⁶ Drawing on Cyprian, *On the Unity of the Church*, 6, cited in John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* trans. & indexed Ford Lewis Battles & ed. John T. McNeill (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), IV.I.1, 1012.

⁶³ Blauw, *The Missionary Nature*, 89.

The Holy Spirit is the chief actor in the church's mission; he is the primary missionary. Newbigin says, 'We are not sent into battle by a commander who stays behind.'⁶⁷ The Spirit acts in and through the church's mission. Jesus' words in John 15:26-27 suggest that the witness of Spirit and church occur *alongside* one another, for the Spirit will bear witness to Jesus (v.26) and the church will also bear witness to Jesus (v.27). The Spirit also works alongside the church as she experiences opposition.

As the church goes about her mission of advancing God's kingdom in what C. S. Lewis calls 'Enemy-occupied territory...' ⁶⁸ opposition is inevitable. Greg Boyd goes as far as saying, 'The New Testament tells "good people" to expect bad things!' ⁶⁹ So, when the church is arrested for carrying out her mission, as is still all too common in many parts of the world, Jesus says, 'When they bring you to trial and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say; but say whatever is given you at that time, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit.'⁷⁰

In addition to describing the missions of Spirit and church as *alongside* one another it is perhaps more accurate to say, with D. T. Niles, '...the mis-

sion of the Church is a mission *within* the mission of the Holy Spirit'.⁷¹ The Spirit constitutes the church in Christ and oversees her mission. Therefore, the Spirit's mission is not coextensive with the church's mission but broader in range and scope.

Johannes Verkuyl rightly suggests that non-ecclesial human activity, '...as long as it counters any type of evil and is purposefully performed in ways that help and heal, is connected either knowingly or unknowingly with the *missio Dei* in the world'.⁷² This should be affirmed whilst simultaneously upholding the centrality of the church to the Spirit's mission in order to avoid the unhealthy speculations that dogged the 1960s and 1970s that God is more at work in the world than in the church.⁷³

Lastly, the missions of Spirit and church have the same overarching purpose; they are instruments of the Father's summing up all things in Christ. This summing up in Christ includes evangelism toward those outside Christ, and movements toward church unity for those already in Christ. Newbigin says, 'Mission and unity are two sides of the same reality, or rather two ways of describing the same action of the living Lord who wills that all should be drawn to Himself.'⁷⁴

67 Newbigin, *Mission In Christ's Way*, 29.

68 C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (London: Fount Paperbacks, Harper Collins, 1997), 37.

69 Gregory A. Boyd, *God At War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1997), 283.

70 Mark 13:11. Lesslie Newbigin develops this in *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission* revised ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 61.

71 Niles, *Upon The Earth*, 70, emphasis added.

72 Johannes Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology: An Introduction* trans. & ed. Dale Cooper (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1978), 4.

73 This theological tendency has been caricatured by the saying *intra ecclesiam nulla salus*.

74 Lesslie Newbigin, 'The Missionary Dimension of the Ecumenical Movement', *Ecumenical Review* 14 (1962: 207-215), 208-9.

In its mission the church is '...invited to participate in an activity of God which is the central meaning of creation itself. We are invited to become, through the presence of the Holy Spirit, participants in the Son's loving obedience to the Father.'⁷⁵ The two missions can be understood only within the framework of God's trinitarian redemptive activity, aspects of the one mission of the Triune God.

VI Practical Implications

What, then, briefly, are some of the practical implications of understanding this inter-relation between the missions of the Spirit and the church?

First, since the Holy Spirit is the primary missionary, the church mission consists in following his lead. As the story of Cornelius and Peter clearly teaches, the Spirit goes ahead of the church and calls the church to follow. Newbigin explains that

Because the Spirit himself is sovereign over the mission, the church can only be the attentive servant. In sober truth the Spirit is himself the witness who goes before the church in its missionary journey. The church's witness is secondary and derivative. The church is witness insofar as it follows obediently where the Spirit leads.⁷⁶

In her mission the church needs to rely upon the leading of the Spirit in her missional praxis. The Spirit is also Lord over the church-in-mission as he directs it. The Spirit opens certain

doors, like Paul's vision of the man from Macedonia (Acts 16:9), and closes others, such as the Spirit forbidding Paul to enter Asia (Acts 16:6). According to Newbigin, and Roland Allen, this confidence in the Holy Spirit is *the key* to the apostolic missionary method and the spontaneous expansion of the church.⁷⁷

Second, God's decision to entrust the communication of the gospel to the church has several practical consequences, two of which will be mentioned. It should lead to the prioritising of evangelism as one of the church's most important activities. This should be extended to include working towards proclaiming the gospel to unreached people groups worldwide.

The Spirit's partial dependence upon the church for gospel proclamation further underscores the urgency of worldwide evangelisation. As God's chosen representative the church's being needs to bear witness to the gospel she proclaims with integrity and authenticity in order to substantiate the truth of her message. This means, for example, that as God's reconciling people the church needs to work towards healing the disunity and schism within her communion. Newbigin said, 'His [Christ's] reconciling work is one, and we cannot be His ambassadors reconciling the world to God, if we have not ourselves been will-

⁷⁵ Newbigin, *Trinitarian Doctrine*, 83.

⁷⁶ Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 61.

⁷⁷ Newbigin, *Trinitarian Doctrine*, 71. Cf. Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods—St. Paul's or Ours: A Study of the Church in the Four Provinces* (London: Robert Scott, 1912); *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church: And the Causes That Hinder It* (London: World Dominion Press, 1927).

ing to be reconciled to one another.⁷⁸

Third, mission in the way of the Spirit reminds the missionary church that her character needs to increasingly bear the fruit of the Spirit. It also reminds the missionary church of her humble and go-between nature, thus complementing helpful insights concerning the incarnational nature of the church's mission.

Finally, that God would so summon and commission the church to such an important role within the *missio Dei* creates within the church an extraordinary sense of humility, privilege, and excitement. Furthermore, the fact that the Spirit has freely made himself par-

tially *dependent* upon the church for gospel proclamation causes the church to humbly recognise the eternal significance of her missionary responsibility. It also leads her to depend upon the empowering, quickening and enabling of the Spirit to fulfil her designated mission.

This makes both the missions of Spirit and church inter-dependent, though not equally or in the same way, for the Holy Spirit remains Lord over his church. Thus the church can be confident that the weight of God's mission does not rest on her shoulders and that the Holy Spirit will complete God's mission. So, in astonishment and joy, the church realises that she has been invited to genuinely contribute to God's mission, to participate in the central meaning of creation itself, the summing up of all things in Christ.

78 Lesslie Newbigin, *The Household of God: Lectures on the Nature of the Church* (London: SCM Press, 1953), 18.

Edinburgh 2010

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Edited by David A. Kerr and Kenneth R. Ross

To understand the modern Christian missionary movement one must engage substantially with the World Missionary Conference, held at Edinburgh in 1910. This book is the first to systematically examine the eight commissions which reported in Edinburgh 1910.

David A. Kerr served, until his death in April 2008, as Professor of Missiology and Ecumenics at the University of Lund. **Kenneth R. Ross** is Council Secretary of the Church of Scotland World Mission Council.

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Milton Keynes, MK8 0ES**

The Work of God as holistic mission: An Asian Perspective

Samuel Jayakumar

KEYWORDS: *Edinburgh 1910, caste, Dornakal Mission, Dalits, poverty, evangelical, awakening, Gandhi, education, prosperity theology, signs and wonders*

I Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to describe the work of God as holistic mission as carried out by the church in Asia. During the last hundred years, the church in Asian countries has grown in quality as well as in quantity. Asian churches have contributed to a great extent in developing indigenous leaders, articulating wholesome theologies, and in establishing various types of missions and ministries as well as training institutions.

The impact of the modern missionary movement was so pervasive that its impact continued through the first half of the twentieth century. Some of the eminent leaders such as V.S. Azariah played an important role in shaping the mission of the church. The next half of

the century witnessed a tremendous growth of cross-cultural missions, congregations, organizations for relief and rehabilitation and seminaries. Christians in Asia got involved in various types of new forms of ministries as the situations demanded. In a number of ways churches contributed to nation building, correcting injustice and opposing social oppression.

To illustrate the holistic mission since Edinburgh 1910, as understood and practised by the Asian church, I have drawn lessons, first, from the Dornakal mission—a single great movement of this era among the Dalits headed by V.S. Azariah; and secondly, I have made references to two remarkable evangelical movements of this century, namely Friends Missionary Prayer Band (FMPB) and Evangelical Church of India (ECI) being singularly influenced by the teaching of D. A. McGavran who was a missionary in India for about thirty years. Finally I describe the contribution of Pentecostals to holism.

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II Holistic Mission—A Christian heritage that overflows

The gospel of Christ has always been *holistic* and never been un-holistic. The four gospels present a holistic transformation of individuals, families and communities. The command of Jesus was to *preach the gospel, heal the sick and drive the demons (social evils)*. The early apostles and their followers were committed to *holistic transformation* in the contexts they served. The early church was sympathetic towards the slaves and prisoners and often worked for their deliverance by paying their ransom. The early Christians took care of the poor, the destitute, orphans and widows. During medieval times, the monks offered a dedicated service to common people, especially to the poor peasants and the victims of the barbarians.

As Ralph Winter has pointed out, the European and American Evangelical Awakenings of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were characterized by a broad dual social/personal, earthly and heavenly spectrum of concern, ranging from foreign missions to changing the legal structure of society and even war. This period was significantly characterized by evangelicals in a position of civil leadership. For the most part the nineteenth century missionaries were committed to combining evangelism and social concerns. They worked within the window of awareness which made the transformation of society feasible—something which was within their grasp. They could readily believe not only in a profound transformation of individuals, but also in a wide range of different

aspects of social transformation and God-glorification.¹

However, from the turn of twentieth century there has been growing an undue polarization over the meaning of Christian mission. Since the Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910, the traditional models of missions have come under severe criticism, especially through the latter half of the century. Also from Edinburgh came two major streams of the modern missionary movement: the first was evangelical and the second ecumenical. After Edinburgh theological changes quickly swept the whole world, weakening evangelistic fervour, especially among young people. Furthermore, the two world-wars caused further hindrances and discouragements to the world-wide church.

Yet there was a brighter side, with challenges for the gospel engagement. Asians, including national leaders like M.K. Gandhi, were ready to accept Christian humanitarian services in the fields of education and healthcare as well as Jesus' teachings on ethics, but they were not willing to confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord. However, the 'good works' carried out by missionaries and Christians have always been understood to be an expression of their love and obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ. 'The underlying motivation, of course, was their obligation to proclaim the salvation of God through faith in Jesus Christ.' Asians have by and large been willing to receive the

1 Ralph Winter, 'The Future of Evangelicals in Mission', *Mission Frontiers* (Sept-Oct, 2007), 5-7.

former, but many have rejected the need for the latter as the upper castes in particular, would say that 'we have our own saviours'.²

As Graham Houghton maintains, the Christian community has still felt that they have contributed to the building of the nation. This is because for those who have decided to follow Jesus, any encounter with him has precipitated a personal and social transformation. The outcomes have been an effective cause of upward social mobility which has changed lives, benefited families, neighbourhoods, villages and entire ethnic/caste communities. It needs to be added that this is particularly the case among the poor and the disenfranchised, namely, those who today are classified as backward classes and *dalits*, i.e., the oppressed.³

Although Gandhi was a convert to modernity in terms of the education he acquired and his exposure to western ideas, he did not cultivate cultural openness, whereas his contemporary, V.S. Azariah, more positively recognized Christian faith not as a cultural contradiction but as a fulfilling of the imperfect native culture. He was of the opinion that the Christian gospel was a refinement of the culture of natives to enable them to live a civilized life, free from the negative and oppressive aspects of their culture such as ignorance, illiteracy, spirit worship,

immorality and other traditional practices.⁴

The gospel of Christ confronts the culture of poverty to bring about transformation. India is known the world over for its ancient culture and belief systems as well as for its poverty. All these elements are quite inter-related—so much so that poverty is very much linked with culture and religion. Traditionally, Indian belief systems have always determined Indians' lifestyles. For the majority of Indians life has been one of negation rather than affirmation.

Rightly or wrongly, Indian sages chose to renounce the world and run away from all the goodness of life rather than face the challenges of it. These ascetics lived off alms in abject poverty and want. Although modernity and western culture have affected our Indian belief systems and cultures, poverty is still regarded as the outward sign of 'spirituality' for the *swamijis* and *mahatmas*.

While these *swamijis* and *mahatmas* adopt this type of 'austere and simple life', theirs and the message of the priestly class to the masses, the poor and the oppressed is a little different. They say that they are poor, untouchable and handicapped because of their karma—retribution of the sins they have carried with them into this life! The belief in '*karma janmanthra*' destroys the spirit of enterprise and the inner urge for development and

2 Graham Houghton, 'The Foundation Laid by Christian Missionaries', Bishop M. Ezra Sargunam (ed) *Christian Contribution to Nation Building* (Chennai, Mission Educational Books, 2006), 2.

3 Houghton, *The Foundation Laid by Christian Missionaries*, 2.

4 V.S. Azariah, 'The Bishop's letter', *DDM*, (1934), 4. S. Harper, *Azariah and Indian Christianity During the Late Years of Raj*, Unpublished D.Phil Thesis, University of Oxford, 1991, 249f.

growth. Any belief system that does not liberate the people from the shackles of poverty and misery, but rather compels them to accept the sufferings as their fate, needs to be jettisoned.⁵

Even so, at the turn of the twentieth century, Christian mission among the poor and outcaste communities in Asian countries such as India still envisioned a new society. This was humanly speaking very odd for the Indian church. In reality the Indian Christians were hoping against hope, because still the church had to work in a society that was deeply religious, deeply caste-ridden, the lower castes of which were terribly oppressed. The Christian task was still a battle against *sati* (burning of widows), untouchability, child marriage, temple prostitution, infanticide, slavery, illiteracy, and the oppression of women and children. Nevertheless a new society was taking shape before their very eyes as the church worked towards it.

From the inception of the modern missionary movement, Christian mission and social transformation of the poor and oppressed were always inseparable. The Asian Christian leaders believed that the gospel of Christ was not only the power of God for salvation but also the power of God for socio-economic and political liberation.⁶ They saw conversion to Christ as related also to 'the prospect (or envisioning) of India's regeneration'.⁷ Against this

background let us examine the kind of mission carried out by the Asian national leaders such as V.S. Azariah and his successors.

III The Dornakal Mission—holistic mission among the Dalits

V.S. Azariah (1874-1945), the first Indian bishop of the Anglican Church in India, was a champion of ecumenism among the younger churches of South India. Along with a few other Indian Christians he founded the first indigenous missionary society, the Indian Missionary Society (IMS) of Tirunelveli, in 1903, and the National Missionary Society (NMS) in 1905. Azariah had great zeal for missionary activities combining evangelism and social concerns.

He was modern India's most successful leader of the Dalits and of non-Brahmin conversion movements to the gospel of Christ during early twentieth century. His evangelistic work among the Telugus resulted in enormous growth of Christian congregations. He contended that churches had to become missionary churches.

He was consecrated Bishop of Dornakal in 1912. By the year 1928 his diocese contained 158,000 Christians. All the pastoral work was organized under a system of pastorates and these were grouped into district church councils. While the Indian clergymen were directly responsible to the bishop, the Indian lay workers were responsible to their own clergy. Accordingly each of the out-caste villages had its own corporate church life with independent activities: village schools,

5 M.Ezra Sargunam, 'Culture as an element of development', Unpublished Paper, Oct 13-14, 1999.

6 V.S. Azariah, *DDM*, Vol.XIII, No.4, (April, 1936), 3-4.

7 R.D. Paul, *Chosen Vessels* (Madras: CLS, 1961), 145ff.

morning and evening prayer in each village, Bible study and classes for catechumens.

The work in Dornakal had general and liberal support from foreign money. Year after year Azariah and his associates wrote numerous letters and travelled to many countries to promote the work they were carrying out among the oppressed classes. He evolved an elaborate network through which parishes in England were linked to Christian villages in Dornakal. Azariah insisted that older churches around the world whom God had blessed with wealth must give, must give with abandon, and must give cheerfully for the work of God among the poor and the oppressed communities.

From the beginning Azariah had the conviction that the gospel of Jesus Christ was meant for the poor and the oppressed, and when it was preached to them it evoked their response. As he loved the rural poor and rural congregations, he understood their problems and needs so that he could serve them effectively in many ways.

The Church in India, therefore, is essentially a village church. Its problems are village problems, its education needs to be adapted to the conditions of village life and its leaders must be men and women able and willing to live and work among village folk. And it is the church of the poor. This fact has often been cast in its teeth as a reproach.⁸

The Dalits were struggling hard with Christian discipline and character

formation. As the first generation of the converts were from illiterate and poverty stricken groups, their understanding and knowledge were very limited. They often had to endure persecution from the Brahmins and caste Hindus. Even so among them spiritual and moral achievement was imperfect. However, Christian teachings had been accepted as a challenge by the Dalits so that they were continually helped with their all round advancement.

He, like his missionary predecessors, regarded the gospel of Christ as a social religion and Christian conversion as an instrument of social change. He showed a harmony between evangelism and social action. He understood the church as not only an agent of evangelism but also the bearer of civilization. He wrote, '[W]here Christianity goes, education, civilization, and habits of cleanliness in body, dress, and food, in speech and conduct, are the concomitant results.'⁹

Azariah and his co-workers accepted social change as 'the very essence of the gospel of Christ and therefore an integral part of the Christian message'. They asserted that, 'its sure sanction was Jesus Christ himself'.¹⁰

Azariah maintained that rural uplift and awakening of outcaste villagers was effected through Christian education. He wrote,

Through Christianity too illiteracy is being chased out of rural India. It was well known that the first thing

8 V.S. Azariah and H. Whitehead, *Christ in the Indian Villages* (London: SCM, 1930), 18.

9 V.S. Azariah, 'The Church in Rural India', *DDM*, Vol.5, No.10, (Oct 1928), 3-4.

10 V.S. Azariah, 'Rural Reconstruction', *DDM*, Vol.VII, No.8, (Aug, 1930), 6.

done for a village which desires to join the Christian Church is to send a resident teacher there to instruct the village in the Christian Faith and open a school for their children. The teacher and his wife—if he has one—are truly the introducers of Light and Learning.¹¹

He often asserted that 'to teach, teach, teach'—is one of the needs of the hour.¹² According to Azariah the education of a single girl means the uplifting of the whole family. He rightly understood that in India among the poor and the oppressed the success of male education depended on women's education. Azariah encouraged the education of girls and women. He made elaborate arrangements to promote adult literacy and education among the illiterate women.¹³

The purpose of education among the outcaste Christians of Dornakal was to empower as well as enlighten the Dalit converts so that they might be restored to personal awareness. Moreover, he wanted the education given to them to prepare them for life, believing that thus trained, Christians would become centres of light wherever they were. Hence he maintained,

Any education given to such people must, we believe, include education to prepare them for life. Our aim then is to produce through this school a new generation of men—

men who will not be ashamed of manual labour, men who will be willing to go back to the village with knowledge of some handicraft, and settle down there to earn an honest livelihood and to become centres of light, in their turn, creating a sturdy, self-respecting rural Christian manhood.¹⁴

Christian education greatly awakened the Dalits' consciousness of the injustice and deceit caused by the caste Hindus. Azariah's co-workers reported that the young adults who learnt to read and write, generally at night schools, in due course began to question their Hindu masters about their 'debts' and became aware in many cases of how they had been deceived.¹⁵ Azariah observed that Dalit Christians 'on account of integrity, command higher field wages; that Christian labourers are in demand for transplantation and harvesting because they do not require close supervision'.¹⁶

Azariah understood education as something that belongs to the Judeo-Christian tradition. Furthermore, Azariah's concept of education was very much value based. It was offered as an instrument to correct, to direct, to change and to transform the lives of the Dalits. Education offered by the mission was useful to them in their day to day living. It prepared them to take up jobs and earn their livelihood. It pro-

11 V.S. Azariah, 'Church in Rural India', *DDM*, Vol.5, No.10, (Oct 1928), 4.

12 V.S. Azariah, 'A Charge Delivered to the Clergy of the Diocese of Dornakal', (Nov, 14, 1923), 9-10.

13 V.S. Azariah, 'The Bishop's Letter', *DDM*, Vol.VI, No.1, (Jan, 1932), 12f

14 V.S. Azariah, *Society for the Propagation of the Gospel Dornakal Letters*, India II, (Feb 27, 1930), 2.

15 A.F.R. Bird, *Telugu Mission*, Society for the Propagation of the Gospel Report, 1922, 7.

16 V.S. Azariah, 'The Church in Rural India', *DDM*, Vol.5, No.10, (Oct, 1928), 5.

vided them with strong self-awareness which in turn established their sense of individuality. It assisted them to be careful with their wages and to maintain their health and hygiene.¹⁷

The first generation Dalit Christians of South India confessed that,

Christianity has brought us fellowship and brotherhood. It has treated us with respect, and it has given us self-respect. It has never despised us because of our lowly origin, but on the contrary has held us as individuals who are as valuable before God and man as any man of any origin.¹⁸

The need then of Dalits was not a false hope or even a positive feeling, but faith and confidence in a tangible personal God, the Saviour who removes guilt, both real and false, such as karma. Proclamation of the gospel provided the poor and the oppressed with a general confidence that life is meaningful and that it was possible to change one's quality of life by one's efforts. Bishop Picket came up with a similar conclusion after undertaking a thorough study of Dalit conversion movements.

The depressed classes in India are desperately poor. But their chief economic need is not financial; it is an antidote to the poisonous ideas that have made them incapable of struggling successfully with their environment. As severe as is the physical oppression to which they

are continuously subjected, the depressed classes could not have been reduced by its operation alone to the low state in which they have lived for centuries. Much more devastating than physical oppression has been the psychological oppression inflicted by the Hindu doctrines of karma and rebirth, which have taught them that they are a degraded, worthless people suffering just retribution for sins committed in earlier lives. It is, then, a true instinct that makes the depressed classes respond more eagerly to the preaching of the Christian Gospel than to any direct ministry to their social and economic ills. The concepts that the Christian Gospel gives them of themselves and of God in relation to their sufferings and sins are worth incomparably more to them than any direct social or economic service the church could offer.¹⁹

The experiences of Indian leaders who are involved in community development among the poor concur with this view. V. Mangalwadi wrote,

Perhaps the most devastating effect of the centuries of poverty and oppression is total loss of self-respect, self-confidence, trust in others and hope for any change.... Poverty is not their main problem. The lack of hope (for a better future), lack of faith (in man, government or God) and lack of initiative (born out of dehumanizing oppression and loss of self-confi-

17 V.S. Azariah, 'The Bishop's Letter', *DDM*, Vol.VII, No.6, (June, 1930), 2-3.

18 V.S. Azariah, 'Open Letter to Our Country Men...', *Indian Witness*, (Sept 17, 1936), 598.

19 J.W. Picket, *Christ's Way to India's Heart* (Lucknow: Lucknow Pub Co.,1938), 173.

dence) are paralyzing mental/cultural factors which prevent them from any action towards freedom and development.²⁰

IV Holistic mission in evangelism and church growth

The foreign mission in the Indian sub-continent (including Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Burma, Nepal, etc) began to end following the exit of the British in 1947. By the early 1960s all missionaries who required visas had been withdrawn. However, the native Christians for the most part continued the legacy of the missionaries, combining evangelism and social concern; churches continued with medical, educational and other philanthropic enterprises. But the primary motivation for mission in India was the spread of the gospel and the growth of churches.

In the 1950s and 1960s, although Christian mission for evangelicals was the mission of saving the souls, it never lost sight of human misery. Missions and ministries that are started with soul winning and church planting could not ignore social concerns such as community development; they involved themselves in health care, poverty alleviation programmes, providing drinking water, opening up of schools and orphanages, and other rehabilitation activities. For example, the Evangelical Church of India (ECI),

Friends Missionary Prayer Band (FMPB), the Indian Evangelical Mission (IEM), the Indian Missionary Society (IMS), and the National Missionary Society (NMS) as well as many other missions and ministries, speak of evangelism as their priority. However, in practice they were holistic, engaging in mission that combines evangelism and social concern.

Here we may refer to two outstanding missionary statesmen of the twentieth century, J.R. Mott and D.A. McGavran, who made a great impact on the minds of the Asian Christian lay leaders, especially in India. Mott's ideas of mission originally come from the Enlightenment,²¹ being influenced by the popular evangelist D.L. Moody, whereas McGavran's ideas emerged from his three decades of missionary work in India. Both persons insisted on implementing the Great Commission.

Mott wrote about implementing the Commission in this generation and created a sense of urgency among evangelical Christians. He maintained that,

²¹ Being affected by the liberalism of Enlightenment and the Victorian discourse of social development the missionaries were anxious to see a visible Christian social order. In Britain evangelical belief was that the regenerative power of the Gospel would drive a society along basically the same path of socio-economic and political progress. This is perhaps one of the reasons why Mott wanted to see the evangelization of the world in this generation. Cf. For details see Brian Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag: Protestant Missions and British Imperialism in the 19th and 20th centuries* (Leicester: Apollos, 1990), 173. David Hempton, 'Evangelicalism and Reform', in J. Wolffe (ed), *Evangelical Faith and Public Zeal* (London: SPCK, 1995), 17ff.

²⁰ V. Mangalwadi, 'A Theology of Power in the Context of Social Development', *TRACI Journal*, (April, 1981), 15.

If the Gospel is to be preached to all...it obviously must be done while they are living. The evangelization of the world in this generation, therefore, means the preaching of the Gospel to those who are now living. To us who are responsible for preaching the gospel it means in our lifetime; to those to whom it is to be preached it means in their lifetime. The unevangelized for whom we as Christians are responsible live in this generation; and the Christians whose duty it is to present Christ to them live in this generation. The phrase 'in this generation', therefore, strictly speaking has a different meaning for each person. In the last analysis, if the world is to be evangelized in this or any generation it will be because a sufficient number of individual Christians recognize and assume their personal obligation to the undertaking.²²

After about fifty years, in the 1960s and 1970s, Mott's slogan, the *Evangelization of the world in this generation* came alive in some circles in South India. The slogan created urgency, especially among the Tamil Christians, and paved the way to a further thinking of what will happen to the people who are unevangelized. Indian lay Christian leaders and evangelists began to preach categorically that the unevangelized are lost. Indian missions such as the Friends Missionary Prayer Band

were founded on this premise.²³ The lay leaders were very successful in recruiting hundreds of young men and women as well as forming prayer groups for prayerful support for cross-cultural missions in the northern parts of India. Indeed mission was understood in terms of *rescuing* the people who would be otherwise lost.

The same idea of the 'loss of the unevangelized' was introduced among the seminary students. For instance, the Hindustan Bible Institute (HBI) founded in the city of Madras (now Chennai) by an upper caste Hindu convert by the name of Paul Gupta instilled this doctrine into the minds of young boys and girls and prepared them for cross-cultural missions. During the 1960s and 1970s almost all the graduates of HBI went to northern parts of India as missionaries.²⁴

Many Bible Schools like HBI were founded, especially in the city of Madras, professing to train young people for cross-cultural missions in North India. These seminaries were established exclusively for equipping the people of God to fulfil the Great Commission. They did not train 'parish priests'²⁵—they were committed only to training 'harvesters' for harvesting.

22 John R. Mott, *The Evangelization of the World in This Generation*, (New York: SVM, 1900), 3, 6-7, 15-16, 105, 109, 115, 116-117.

23 The FMPB is indigenous both in its finance and personnel. It is a non-denominational, a trans-denominational and a non-sectarian society aiming at saturation evangelism among 300 people groups.

24 Files maintained by the Student Missionary Secretaries provide this information.

25 The tradition of the Bible school movement is related to the modern missionary movement.. See B. Ott, 'Mission Oriented Theological Education', *Transformation*, Vol.18, No.2, (April, 2001), 75f.

Consequently, these schools did not see theological education in India as primarily for the ministry of the church. For them the urgency of the evangelistic task should determine the nature and purpose of seminary training and not the ministerial needs of the church.²⁶

The revival²⁷ that was going on in Tamil Nadu was further fuelled by the ideas of McGavran who spent much of his life trying to overcome social barriers to Christian conversion. He promoted aggressive evangelism among the responsive people groups. Asian Evangelicals were challenged by his slogan 'win the winnable while they are winnable'. He often critiqued World Council of Churches for its omission of a clear statement on the priority of the Great Commission as the heart of its theology of missions. During the late 1960s and early 1970s McGavran wrote in a response to Uppsala's draft document on mission, 'Do not Betray the Two Billion'. He insisted on the importance of the evangelization of non-Christians, baptizing them and making them disciples.

This is a time to emphasize disci-

pling, not to turn from it. This is not a time to betray the two billion but to reconcile as many as possible of them to God in the Church of Jesus Christ. For the peace of the world, for justice between (peoples) and nations, for advance in learning, for breaking down hostilities between peoples, for the spiritual health of countless individuals and the corporate welfare of (humankind) *this is a time to disciple nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and teaching them whatsoever our Lord has commanded us.*²⁸

It is noteworthy that the ideas of Mott and McGavran spread in India in the early 1960s and 1970s when secular theologies were popular in the West. The whole idea of that period was that the world will be secular. At the same time in South India there was much revival among the lay Christian leaders.²⁹ Consequently they reacted very strongly to secular and liberal theologies; instead they appropriated any teaching that was conservative and orthodox.

McGavran's thinking greatly influenced the evangelical churches especially. Many evangelical missions and ministries adopted the church planting approach to mission and still cherish this singular aim. Their mission is nothing but pioneer evangelism and planting churches. This is the way most of the missionaries understand and practise mission. Consequently

26 This is still one of the weakness of this type of seminary. For details see Gnana Robinson, 'Theological Education in India Today', *NCC Review* Vol.CXV, No.4, (April, 1995), 292-293.

27 In the recent decades Christians in some parts of India in particular and in the South Asian countries such as Singapore, Indonesia and Nepal in general have been experiencing a new vitality, life and vision. S.P. Athayal, 'Southern Asia', in J.M. Philips, and R.T. Coote (ed), *Toward the 21st Century in Christian Mission*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 61-62.

28 A. Glasser and D.A. McGavran, *The Conciliar Evangelical Debate*, (Waco: Word, 1972), 233-234.

29 Most of the indigenous missions were founded during this period.

they continue to carry on their work of preaching the gospel and conversion of people to Christ.

Some of these missions were very successful and led thousands of people to Christ and formed hundreds of new congregations. For instance the Evangelical Church of India (ECI) within the span of the last forty years planted over 2500 churches across the country and paved the way for three new dioceses and consecration of two additional bishops.³⁰ The ECI has established a large number of schools, children's homes, and relief and rehabilitation structures. In a unique manner it address social injustice through its body, the Social Justice Movement of India. ECI Bishops, particularly Ezra Sargunam have easy access to top leadership of the Indian state and central governments to address social evils. Sargunam was the chairman of the State Minority Commission and several other positions while being a bishop.

Similarly the Friends Missionary Prayer Band (FMPB) has seen a phenomenal growth of congregations especially in North India and has laid the foundation of three new dioceses in the Church of North India. The FMPB grew out of the evangelistic concern in 1958 of a group of young people belonging to the diocese of Tirunelveli, South India. Bands of concerned Christians were formed to pray for the unevangelized.

The field work of the mission began in 1967 when the first missionary was sent to one of the hill tribes in South

India. In 1972 the vision was enlarged to include the eleven states of North India. A target was set to send 440 missionaries to the 220 districts of these eleven states by 1982. The goal was steadily realized. At present FMPB has over 1100 cross-cultural missionaries serving all over India. It has won 4,000,000 people for Christ, founded 60 homes for children, erected 900 church buildings, prepared 1,100 local evangelists, translated Bible into 13 languages, and reached 240 people groups.

Further, the mission has established about 5,500 worshipping communities/congregations and still hundreds of smaller congregations are emerging among the tribals. Evangelism, church planting, Bible translation and social uplift are the main ministries of the organization. It works in 23 Indian states based in 260 mission fields. FMPB is a missionary movement of Christian Indians to present the Gospel of Jesus Christ personally to all the people of India particularly to those who have never heard the gospel.³¹

For the most part Asian indigenous missions and ministries adopted holistic mission practice. For example, both FMPB and ECI partnered with NGOs such as EFICOR, World Vision, CASA, and Compassion to minister to their poor and oppressed believers.

Roger Hedlund reports on partnerships like this for uplifting the tribal communities in the case of Malto.

The experience of the Malto people in Jharkand is an impressive story

³⁰ Recently two Dioceses (Delhi and Chennai) have been formed with more to follow.

³¹ Cf. Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden (ed), *Mission as Transformation*, (Oxford: Regnum, 1999), xv1.

of social and spiritual redemption. Decimated by malnutrition, tuberculosis, goitre, jaundice, cholera, malaria and various water-born diseases, the Malto people were also exploited by rapacious money lenders. Addiction to alcohol and other substances was a further degrading influence. This dehumanized tribe had declined from one million to less than 70,000 during the past 40 years and was moving toward extinction... Into this context of human despair, missionaries of the Friends Missionary Prayer Band and other social development workers came to live and serve. Despite opposition by vested interests, community development is underway, and the Malto people are no longer a population in decline. From the work of the FMPB among the Malto people of North Bihar has arisen an entire new diocese. Previously illiterate, oppressed and exploited, and decimated by rampant diseases today the downward trend has ended. The Malto people are receiving rudimentary education, learning basic norms of health and hygiene, resulting in a new sense of human dignity. Today the Malto people find their self-identity in Christianity...³²

Pentecostal and charismatic leaders had been using the *rescue model* in many parts of Asia in the same way that evangelicals did. Great crowds followed leaders who offered salvation for their souls. Their slogans were,

'Believe the gospel of Jesus Christ, you can be saved today. You shall be saved today.' They vowed 'to plunder hell, to populate heaven.'³³ However, many Charismatic and Pentecostal leaders who were known for 'winning souls' also opened orphanages and old-age homes in the Asian countries.³⁴

Among the Pentecostals in Asia, as we shall see below, the use of the *rescue model* has given birth to prosperity and blessing theologies (or health and wealth gospel). Jesus saves people from sin, sickness and Satan. Blessings and prosperity are available through Jesus Christ who has triumphed over Satan. The messianic signs that 'the blind see, the deaf hear, the cripple walk, the dead are raised' are once again repeated now in front of their eyes. Jesus *rescues* people from all sorts of sorrows and troubles.³⁵

V The Pentecostals and Holism

In Asia Pentecostals are challenging the mission practitioners to under-

³³ See 'Plundering Hell to Populate Heaven', *Missionaries*, (London: BBC Books, 1990), 100ff.

³⁴ In India a number of orphanages, children's homes, and old age homes are run by evangelical and Pentecostal missions and ministries. See Rebecca Samuel Shah (ed), *HandBook on Christian Missions and Ministries* (Oxford: OCMS, 1998).

³⁵ The rescue model seems to be based on compassion. For details see Michael Bergunder, 'Ministry of Compassion: D.G.S. Dhinakaran Christian Healer-Prophet from Tamil Nadu', in Roger Hedlund (ed), *Christianity is Indian: The Emergence of an Indigenous Christianity* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2000), 158-174.

³² Roger E. Hedlund, 'The Witness of New Christian Movements in India', paper presented at the IAMS assembly, Malaysia 2004.

stand holism not only in terms of evangelism and social concern, but also in terms of signs and wonders as well. Peter Kuzmic writes, 'The whole gospel... is in word, deed, and sign.'³⁶ In his book, *By Word, Work and Wonder*, McAlpine defines holism in this way: 'The Christian community is to be a sign of the kingdom, in which evangelism, social action and the Spirit are present and inseparably related.' For the most part, it is because of the contributions of Pentecostals that definitions for holism are increasingly reflecting the work of the God in terms of signs and wonders.³⁷

An OCMS alumnae, Ida Samuel, who is a development worker active among the villages of Erode district, South India, says that

[N]on-Christians are coming to know Christ only when they experience miracles in their lives. People accept the gospel in order to get rid of their problems, sufferings, incurable diseases, etc. When someone is miraculously healed in a family, then the whole family embraces Christ.

She adds,

[W]e carry on our ministry through preaching the Word, by doing social Work, and expecting miracles—Wonders from God.

Samuel concludes,

The Jesus Miracle Ministry combines all these three [ie, evangelism, social concern, and signs and wonders]. We are committed to the whole gospel which is in word, deed, and sign.³⁸

An emerging trend in the Asian church growth is the rise of mega churches in cities. In fact the whole world is witnessing a mega-church movement.

Mega-churches are changing the global makeup of Christianity to the extent that some scholars are characterizing them as the harbingers of 'The Next Christendom' and the 'African Century of Christianity'.³⁹

As we know, Asia has the largest mega-church in the world—in South Korea (the Yoido Full Gospel Church), and many other mega-churches have sprung up in China, Malaysia, India, Indonesia and Singapore. The Asian mega-church movement is largely Pentecostal, growing mainly in secularized and urbanized societies that allow religious freedom.

According to Bryant Myers, at present about seventy per cent of evangelical Christian live in non-Christian world. During recent years there has been a phenomenal increase of independent, non-denominational Christians from ten per cent up to about twenty per cent, mostly in the global south.

These Christians of the global south, including the mega-church

³⁶ Peter Kuzmic, 'Pentecostals Respond to Marxism', in Murray W. Dempster, Byron D. Klaus, and Douglas Petersen (ed), *Called and Empowered: Global Mission in Pentecostal Perspective* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 160.

³⁷ Thomas H. McAlpine, *By Word, Work and Wonder* (Monrovia: MARC, 1995), 2.

³⁸ Ida Samuel, *Jesus Miracle Ministry News Letter* (April, 2010), 2.

³⁹ S. Gramby-Sobukwe and Tim Hoiland, 'The Rise of Mega Church...', *Transformation* Vol.26, No.2 (April, 2009), 105-106.

movement, are changing the face of Christianity with local insights and interpretations, sending missionaries abroad themselves and challenging Christians of the world to reconsider old paradigms.⁴⁰

In the past compared to the present, the missionaries who worked among the poor and marginalised communities for the most part considered themselves as God's agents to rescue/deliver the people from the dominion of sin and Satan. They envisaged the Christian mission as a great liberating force, commissioned by God to save men and women from the bondage of ignorance, false religion and oppressive social customs and practices.⁴¹ This led them to crusade against native belief systems, particularly idolatry. The missionaries did not see the Indians or the Africans as religious people, but simply considered them idolaters.

But now the approach is different. The church is seen as an agent of spiritual and social transformation—transforming all of life for all of the people of God. Also, because of the two factors mentioned above, independent congregations, including mega-churches, are showing interest in advocacy, dealing with poverty and other social evils.⁴²

In South India mega-churches are becoming a phenomena in cities such

as Chennai and Bangalore where the underclasses, the Dalits, live in large numbers. For the most part mega-churches are neo-Pentecostal, led by activist theologians who focus on preaching God's blessings. As they exegete and interpret Scripture according to the conditions around them, these independent preachers are consciously developing a new hermeneutic that is contextual and relevant to the situations of extreme poverty and oppression.

The poor and the oppressed, especially the Dalits, treat the Bible as an *Answer Book* for the day-to-day need such as deliverance from poverty, sickness, financial debts, and other problems. For them the Bible is a *Success Book*. They believe that if you want to be successful then you have to find your success from the Bible. The Bible is also considered as the new covenant—a will or testament or agreement or contract given to believers.

Sermons are preached under topics such as, Who you are in Christ? Who are you and what do you have? You are born to reign; you are justified; you are righteous; you are free from sin; God is on your side; the laws or principles of increase; living under open heaven; you are more than conquerors, and many others.

For the Asian poor the key question today is not: 'Does God exist?', but, 'Does God care?' The core concern of Pentecostal theology is to witness to this caring God in the day to day praxis of faith.⁴³

40 Quoted by Gramby-Sobukwe and Hoiland, 'The Rise of Mega Church...', 106.

41 S. Jayakumar, *Dalit Consciousness and Christian Conversion* (Delhi, ISPCK, 1999), 170-171.

42 Gramby-Sobukwe and Hoiland, 'The Rise of Mega Church...', 106.

43 For Prosperity Theology, Philip Jenkins, *The New Faces of Christianity: Believing the Bible in the Global South* (New York, OUP, 2006), 95, 97.

VI Conclusion

There is no doubt that at present many of the Asian missions and ministries are holistic in their practice, although some of the native missionaries of Indian missions who are involved in cross-cultural evangelism and church planting continue to see mission as *rescuing souls* for heaven. They often try to provide a Scriptural basis for what they are doing. Mission is seen as a matter of winning the lost souls, reaching the unreached, evangelizing the unevangelized.

The *rescue model* often works well with those who understand salvation in terms of personal and individualistic terms. But those who use it do not get the maximum out of it because their

interests limit the power of the gospel of Christ. It can never affect the situations in which people live and the forces that control them. So the *rescue model* is not complete in itself, because it does not lead to holistic mission practice. However, at present, for the most part, Asian missions are partnering with NGOS so that their practice becomes holistic.

The chief purpose of the Edinburgh 1910 was to prepare the church for the final onslaught on the powers of darkness—poverty, social evils, violence and injustice—that reigned supreme in the non-western world. The Asian church has done well to some extent, but has not yet realised the full expectation.

Luther as a Spiritual Adviser

The Interface of Theology and Piety in Luther's Devotional Writings

Dennis Ngien

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Carl R. Trueman

Dennis Ngien is Research Professor of Theology at Tyndale University College and Seminary, and founder of the Centre for Mentorship and Theological Reflection, Toronto, Canada.

978-1-84227-461-3 / 229 x 152mm / 208pp / £19.99

**Paternoster, Authenticmedia Limited, 52 Presley Way, Crownhill,
Milton Keynes, MK8 0ES**

Luther, the Royal Psalms and the Suffering Church

Michael Parsons

KEYWORDS: *Scripture, persecution, despair, hope, faith, pastoral care, social unrest, Satan, victory*

THROUGHOUT THE WORLD today there are Christian pastors and their congregations who suffer because of prejudice, through slander, mistreatment and even violence. They do so generally with a dignity and a faith that comes through Jesus Christ and an understanding of where they fit into the *missio Dei* in the twentieth century. They realize in the midst of suffering that there is something in the salvation that is theirs which is worth sacrifice because it is quite literally life in the midst of death.

There are others of us who suffer loss and indignity to a lesser degree, but who do so because of the truth of the gospel we profess. What keeps us going? What motivates us to the end? How do we suffer the injustices of a fallen and fractured world and con-

tinue in the faith? Not surprisingly, these are the sorts of questions that true Christians have been asking in every century. With Luther, in the sixteenth, it was much the same.

I Luther and the Royal Psalms¹

The Lutheran church in the 1530s was not a comfortable community in which to exist and to which to belong. Undoubtedly, political, social, economic and ecclesial factors played their part to ensure that this was the case. Noticeably, for instance, Luther's expositions of Psalm 2, covering nearly twenty years of his ministry (1513-32), indicate a growing anxiety, a develop-

¹ It should be noted that the designation 'royal psalms' is recent, of course; and, that Luther and his contemporaries certainly would not have employed it in the sixteenth century.

ing intensity of expression and pastoral urgency in the face of increased and explicit opposition.

By the last lectures on Psalm 2, in 1532, the reformer frames his thoughts in an apocalyptic and confrontational mode, applying the psalm's message directly to sixteenth century Germany, and to a weak church struggling to keep its faith. Luther comments that 'for the sake of the Word of God we are attacked by Satan and the world with force and deceit, with various offences, and every kind of evil'.² This development should alert us to the realities of the situation faced by the evangelical church in that decade.³

Luther discerns the church's weakness and its capacity for suffering in sixteenth century Germany; and, his pastoral inclination is to strengthen believers, to give them hope and to empower them in their will to live faithfully in Christ. And, it is as a pastor, with the responsibilities that that office entails, that Luther is mindful of the difficulties—indeed, he is mindful of his own doubts and trials of faith. Nevertheless, throughout the 1530s he encourages suffering believers to be strong in the situation and to work and to focus upon profoundly Christian priorities—priorities that are embedded in the gospel, centred in Christ and his spiritual kingdom.

T. F. Lull is correct in saying that in later years Luther's work in the area of pastoral care 'often took the form of

commentaries on the Psalms',⁴ and it is clear on a close reading that these priorities are demonstrated for Luther in David's royal psalms, for the declaration that God reigns is the centre of those psalms, and involves a vision of reality that is theological at its core. In a very real sense the assertion that God reigns is a metaphor that transcends concrete life and defines present reality at the same time. The reformer is well aware of this and calls upon his followers to grasp hold of its truth by faith and to persevere in their calling in Christ.

In his application of the royal psalms Luther employs the concept of the kingdom of Christ (the spiritual kingdom—*das geistliche Reich*) to encourage and to comfort believers in their present distress. At times, this distress is caused by personal sin and temptation, but it is also the direct result of persecution and hardship—or the fear of such. The following brief essay is an attempt, in summary form, to indicate how the reformer brings pastoral insight from his reading of five royal psalms—Psalms 2, 45, 82, 110, and 118.⁵

II The pastoral problem

1. Intimidation

It becomes clear from reading Luther's later lectures on Psalm 2 (1532), for

² LW 12.5 (WA 40.195).

³ The Peasants' War (1525) casts a discernable shadow over Luther's writing of this decade.

⁴ T. F. Lull, 'Luther's Writings' in D. K. McKim (ed.), *Cambridge Companion to Martin Luther* (Cambridge: CUP, 2003), 45.

⁵ These particular psalms were chosen because Luther's exposition of each of them occurs around the same troubled period of time.

example, that the evangelical church is facing many difficulties that seem, at times, almost to overwhelm the believers who adhere to it. They are acutely aware of the weakness of the church at this time, its limited numbers and its apparent lack of success and progress. Understandably, believers feel intimidated by what they discern to be the greater power and influence of the Roman Church and its adherents.

Together with this they are conscious of social unrest and discord that their opponents blame upon the novelty of the gospel they espouse. This, in itself, appears to demonstrate their opponents' conclusion that it is the 'new' gospel that they profess that is in error. We can only imagine the disquiet that this would have engendered.

2. Persecution

It is apparent throughout Luther's expositions of the royal psalms that the church is being physically persecuted by its opponents. At one point in his lectures on Psalm 82 the reformer comments that it is 'as if it were a game or a joke to destroy people'.⁶ Elsewhere, he speaks of persecution taking on various forms: derision, contempt, ridicule, defamation, harassment, being hated, disgrace, and, more physically, as poverty, the loss of home and property, banishment, prison, chains, torture, drowning, hanging—being 'trampled underfoot', and the like.

Their cross-marked lives emphasise that the church is clearly under attack from what they perceive and experience to be a hostile world. Their adver-

saries are numerous and restless in their enmity. Believers naturally feel anxious, fearing for their lives.

3. Troubled

Understandably, this situation seems to have given rise to feelings of fragility and sorrow, to troubled consciences and to an anxiety that is hard to suppress.⁷ Believers are obviously disturbed by a sense of personal sin, a longing for peace and, at times, a desperate lack of hope. Apparently, some few have already committed suicide. No wonder Luther uses an extremely poignant phrase to describe these believers: he calls them, 'those who sigh and breathe heavily beneath the cross', underlining their despondency and cruciform existence.⁸

Luther himself asks, 'What hope is there for the church?'⁹—a question that appears to parallel questions being asked by those to whom he speaks: Does God really care? Why does God act in this way? Is he able to help? Can he protect and defend his own people? Where is our hope? It is in answer to such questions that Luther seeks to bring comfort and peace to those who are suffering.

III Luther's pastoral method

1. Acknowledgement

Luther acknowledges his audience's present and ongoing troubles and

⁷ Expounding Ps. 118, Luther speaks of anxiety being the habitual abode of the church, *LW* 14.58 (*WA* 31.92).

⁸ *LW* 12.33 (*WA* 40.232).

⁹ *LW* 12.22 (*WA* 40.217).

⁶ *LW* 13.68 (*WA* 31.214).

affirms the fact that it is terribly difficult to contend with the situation that they face on a daily basis. Pastorally, this is the first step in providing genuine consolation. He wants them to know that he is aware of their trials and that he empathizes with them in their anxiety. At one point he strongly asserts the idea that it is actually a defining quality of the true church to suffer and that each individual believer ought to be 'ready to do and to suffer whatever he must'.¹⁰ In his exposition of Psalm 110, for instance, he assures them that suffering is a sign of the presence of the true gospel, not of its absence. In this way he can underline that they are on the side of truth, and on the side of Christ and his kingdom of truth.

Nevertheless, in acknowledging the church's struggle, Luther often lists its adversaries¹¹—sometimes to the point of naming individuals and groups, always (and increasingly)¹² including Satan who stands at the foundation of their mischief. We see this particularly in his exposition of Psalm 2.

Largely on the basis of the psalm's first verse, Luther repeatedly names those he considers to be enemies of the gospel and of Christ.¹³ Strung together they establish a formidable list: kings, rulers, tyrants, princes, burghers,

peasants, popes ('pontiffs'), bishops,¹⁴ papists, monks, the orders, Turks,¹⁵ Jews,¹⁶ nations, peoples, Anabaptists, sacramentarians,¹⁷ peace-disturbers, sectarians, pagans, the self-righteous—that is, 'the whole company of the godless'.¹⁸ More specifically, he mentions by name Thomas Müntzer, Andreas Karlstadt and Huldrych Zwingli as those who disturb the peace of the church.¹⁹ However, behind all of these adversaries the reformer significantly posits Satan.

We might notice, too, that elsewhere the reformer makes the point that attitude to the Word is central to how he decides who the church's opponents are. In his *Letter to the Princes of*

14 See Luther's earlier comment, *LW* 10.222-23 (WA 3.263), where the reformer complains about the bishops and then states that they should follow the example of Jesus Christ, who (unlike them) rules over the church, the people of God, in truth, in meekness and in righteousness.

15 See G. J. Miller, 'Luther on the Turks and Islam' in T. J. Wengert (ed.), *Harvesting Martin Luther's Reflections* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 185-203; A. S. Francisco, *Martin Luther and Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), particularly, 67-79.

16 Jews and Turks are linked by Luther because, according to him, they both deny Christ his true worth as the Son of God and as mediator of divine grace. See Bodian, 'Jews in a Divided Christendom' in Hsia (ed.), *A Companion to the Reformation World*, 471-85.

17 That is, those who reject infant baptism or the bodily presence of Christ in the sacrament.

18 *LW* 12.64 (WA 40.274). Luther's lists of adversaries become a continual refrain throughout the lectures. See also, *LW* 20.25 (WA 13.567); *LW* 19.37 (WA 19.187).

19 For example, *LW* 12.7, 10 (WA 40.197, 202); *LW* 12.15-16 (WA 40.209).

10 *LW* 13.293 (WA 41.152).

11 Luther gains this sense of embattlement from experience, of course. Nevertheless, the psalms, themselves, add to his awareness.

12 See Luther's increasing use of this motif in his expositions of Psalm 2—1513, 1518, 1532.

13 For a general overview of this see M. U. Edwards, Jr., 'Luther on his Opponents', *LQ* 16 (2002), 329-48.

Saxony concerning the Rebellious Spirit, Luther writes,

The pope, the Emperor, kings and princes lay hold on the Word with violence, and in madness would suppress, damn, blaspheme, and persecute it, without recognizing it or giving it a hearing.

Then, having quoted Psalm 2:1-2, he says,

God has so blinded and hardened them that they rush on to their ruin. They have had warning enough. Satan sees this and knows right well that such raving finally accomplishes nothing.²⁰

It is not without significance that whereas Luther mentions Satan only once or twice in his 1518 exposition, here in 1532 he pinpoints Satanic activity no fewer than seventy-two times, often in the repeated, somewhat formalized phrase ‘Satan and the world [*Satana et mundo*]’, but often not. The assertion is that behind each of these enemies lie Satan and his antagonism against the kingdom of Christ.²¹

It seems to me that he lists the church’s opponents for several pastoral reasons.

- The use of lists helps to establish the ‘true’ church’s self-identity. In times of difficulty and persecution it is fitting to be assured that those suffering do so because they belong, they are within the boundedness of a

group that is somehow ‘true’ because of Jesus Christ and his gospel.²²

- The rhetoric of listing opponents appears to cut them individually down to size—they are on a list, one of many. (Another method that Luther employs to reduce the opponents to a manageable size is the frequent use of images that indicate the futility of the enemies’ wrath and the stability of the church under Christ.)²³
- These lists of opponents align the cause of the sixteenth century church with the cause of the apostles in Acts 4, for instance; and, more importantly, with Jesus Christ himself who also suffered for his faith and obedience before God.
- Lists give a sense of embattlement which, in turn, allows Luther to focus attention on Christ by stressing the enormity of the problem that confronts the church.

Luther believes that it will help if those who suffer know that their enemies (thus listed) are, in fact, essen-

²² See D. Brown, *Boundaries of our Habitations* (New York: State University of New York, 1994), 77, 85, 114.

²³ This strips away the authority and mystery of the opponents. See C. M. Furey, ‘Invective and Discernment in Martin Luther, D. Erasmus, and Thomas More’, *HTR* 98 (2005), 475. Luther employs graphic imagery in this context: strong waves that fade away before doing damage; the ill-fated inhabitants of Sodom, empty bubbles that suddenly vanish, a man laying siege to a tower with a stick, a tiny spark next to the Sun (on Ps. 2); corpses lying on a battle-field (on Ps. 110); and so on.

²⁰ *LW* 40.49-50 (WA 15.210-11).

²¹ *LW* 12.41 (WA 40.243); *LW* 8.240 (WA 41.754); *LW* 41.178 (WA 50.653); *LW* 41.185-256 (WA 51.469-572).

tially *Christ's* enemies, not merely *their* enemies. In his lectures on Psalm 110, for instance, he says that [Christ] must deal with them as enemies who attack his person. Everything that happens to *the individual Christian*, whether it comes from the devil or from the world, such as the terrors of sin, anxiety and grief of the heart, torture, or death, he regards as though it happened to him.²⁴

In their smug arrogance, says Luther, these opponents are enemies of Christ and therefore the church suffers 'for Christ's sake'. It seems to me that this approach does not really ease the pain—they still suffer—but it puts that suffering into a worthy context as well as indicating that though the opponents defeat individual Christians they cannot ultimately overcome Jesus Christ.

Therefore, according to Luther, believers must, by faith, 'view [Christ] as the Enemy of our enemies'.²⁵ This is the assurance that Luther continually offers. Explicitly, in his lectures on Psalm 2 (1513), Psalm 45, and Psalm 110, elsewhere by implication, the reformer repeatedly emphasizes that Christ (or God) is intimately involved with his suffering church. Not only does he suffer injustice when we suffer it,²⁶ he also fights 'for us' and 'in us'—and that, according to Luther, renders the church invincible.²⁷ In that limited context, the temporal kingdom will fail; the spiritual kingdom is bound to succeed—Christ, the King, will gain the victory. Being clothed in Christ, we

must allow Christ to reign in us.²⁸

2. Appropriate vulnerability²⁹

It is clear that Luther, the pastor, chooses to be vulnerable with those to whom he speaks. Having acknowledged their distress, he acknowledges his own. In expounding Psalm 2 (1532) Luther writes with evident despondency. If evangelical believers, generally, are troubled, he is troubled too. He admits that his faith is weakened, that he is sorrowful and that he sometimes experiences feelings of failure. He asks the rhetorical question, 'Shall we allow ourselves to be tormented to death on this account?'³⁰ Importantly, he continues,

For truly, I did so once and, since I wish to help heal these evils, I felt I was wounded, so that (God is my witness) my faith was gravely endangered and weakened. But finally through God's kindness [*Dei beneficio*] I saw that these very thoughts, cares, sadnesses, and sorrows of the heart were born of a genuine ignorance of the kingdom of Christ and a harmful stupidity.³¹

Luther's own anxiety is implied in the following quotations as well.

[W]e are not held in esteem even by our own people. On that account they surely despise us and the

²⁴ LW 13.262 (WA 41.119), emphasis added.

²⁵ LW 13.262 (WA 41.120).

²⁶ LW 14.316 (WA 5.50).

²⁷ LW 12.216 (WA 40².497).

²⁸ LW 12.281 (WA 40².585).

²⁹ On this concept in pastoral ministry see the excellent short work, Vanessa Herrick, *Limits of Vulnerability* (Cambridge: Grove, 1997), particularly, 18-19.

³⁰ LW 12.16 (WA 40.209).

³¹ LW 12.16 (WA 40.209).

Word which we preach and do not fear ruin or power, dignity, and riches. Consequently they laugh as at pleasant follies when we warn that sure punishments will follow upon such contempt of the Word.... Even our own hearts oppose us and attempt to throw doubt on this consolation which we have through Christ.³²

This is the sin of Germany, which threatens certain ruin. For even if we exhort with great zeal to embrace the Word and cast aside impious rites, nevertheless bishops and some princes do not listen, but are even more inflamed against us.... Nor can we today hear the blasphemies and the idolatry of the pope without great sorrow of heart. But what should we do? They do not wish to be healed.³³

He confesses to having been disheartened and humiliated by the laughter, to having been tempted to have wished that he had kept silent, to having been anxious. In his lectures on Psalm 118 Luther shows a similar sensibility. He admits that Satan has tempted him to think of himself as worthless; and he underlines the fact that it is even worse when the devil seeks to make the reformer glory in his own works.

The reformer is open about his realisation that he can do little to maintain his faith and later bemoans 'what an art it is to believe in Christ'.³⁴ In the

same way, on Psalm 45, he uses similar self-disclosure and pastoral openness. His vulnerability allows him to demonstrate the normality of fear and anxiety in this difficult and ongoing situation, and enables him to commend Christ the more stridently—to commend him as the only powerful and effective answer to the problems that suffering believers are going through.

3. Spiritual kingdom

That being said, Luther still wishes to bring comfort and help where he can, so he puts the pastoral problem of suffering into a wider context—the context of the spiritual kingdom of Christ. As early as the reformer's lectures on Psalm 2 (1513) he maintains that the psalm's purpose is to point out and to underline Christ and his kingdom. Then, as late as 1535 Luther claims that the emphasis of Psalm 110, another royal psalm, is on the kingdom of Christ *in order* to 'comfort... all miserable, poor sinners and disturbed hearts' by which phrase he means the church of his own day.³⁵ Clearly, the royal psalms with their stress on the spiritual kingdom, together with its King, give Luther the matrix in which he sees suffering and in which he responds to those who suffer.

Though both the temporal and the spiritual kingdoms originate with God, Luther gives eschatological priority to the spiritual kingdom over against the temporal one. The latter is primarily a holding and restraining realm; the former is a kingdom in preparation for the Last Day, a kingdom awaiting Christ's

32 LW 12.64, 65 (WA 40.274).

33 LW 12.34, 35 (WA 40.233, 234).

34 LW 14.84 (WA 31.148); LW 14.98 (WA 13.175), respectively.

35 LW 13.335 (WA 41.215).

return. The reformer's exposition of Psalm 82 (his *Fürstenspiegel*—a manual of the Christian prince) clearly evidences an evaluation of the temporal kingdom which sees it as currently failing and which demonstrates an urgent 'need for another kingdom'.³⁶

Over against this, the spiritual kingdom is often largely identified with the church and, though the latter is evidently not perfect, it is the dwelling place of Christ and the platform from which he speaks his Word, through the empowering of preachers by his Spirit. This has enormous ramifications for those who suffer: most importantly, it positions Christ, the King, within the church; and it centralises the church and its preachers in the divine program.

Christ is central to the church and its life. Because the church exemplifies the kingdom of Christ, the spiritual kingdom, believers can take heart that Christ, the King, is central to its life and existence—even in the midst of terrible suffering. In his comments on the psalmist's prayer, 'Rise up, O God, judge the earth' (Ps. 82:8), for example, Luther asserts that the coming of Christ and his present ministry among them are actually the divine response, the answer from a caring God to the psalmist's heartfelt cry. The psalmist prays for another government and kingdom in which things will be better, where God's name will be honoured, his Word kept and he himself be served; that is, the kingdom of Christ.... This is the kingdom of Jesus Christ; this is the true God, *who has come and is judging*.³⁷ Christ is therefore

pivotal to understanding the believers' lives.³⁸ Christ becomes for Luther the basis for certainty in an uncertain world.

Luther claims that Christ is central to the church in two ways: First, Christ is central in its preaching ministry. It is in that way that 'God stands in the congregation' (Ps. 82:1).³⁹ That, in itself, is a pastorally-charged statement for the reformer is attempting to give confidence to those who suffer for believing what is preached. The reformer asserts that the very purpose of Christ's kingship is to preach the gospel, which he does today, says Luther, through the church's preachers week after week, sermon after sermon.⁴⁰

The wisdom of Christ is channelled through those who open up the Word: through it Christ helps, comforts, raises up, justifies and gives life. The Word, thus preached, effectively changes and transforms peoples' lives which, according to Luther, makes the church invincible because it is through the preaching that God accomplishes his purposes.

Pastorally, this assures Luther's audience that Christ *is* powerfully present in the church despite the opposi-

38 The apostle Paul has something of this in mind in Colossians 3:4, 'Christ, who is your life'.

39 See J. G. Silcock, 'Theology and proclamation: towards a Lutheran framework for preaching', *LTY* 42 (2008), 131-140, particularly, 134-36, where he speaks of the sermon as 'battle ground' (in which Christ battles against the forces of darkness) and as 'speech act' (in which God speaks).

40 'Christ speaks in us,' says Luther—*LW* 14.331 (*WA* 5.61).

36 *LW* 13.72 (*WA* 31¹).

37 *LW* 13.72 (*WA* 31¹.218), emphasis added.

tion that they are currently facing. Especially is this true when Christ's kingship is discerned and people gain a true perception of themselves and their situation. Through Christ preached God offers the grace to continue and eternal life.

Then, secondly, Christ is central to the church as an example of one who, himself, suffered. Luther often spells out the weakness of Christ in his human nature and experience, the apparent weakness of Christ's incarnate life. This is particularly to be seen in his exposition of Psalm 110:7 in which he asserts that Christ was like any other man—poor, suffering, despised and a 'damned human being'.⁴¹

What Luther intends by this is to stress the paradoxical truth that Christ's defeat is actually 'the means and cause of his glorification'.⁴² Nevertheless, though Christ was humbled and rejected he could not be kept under death (the last enemy); he was resurrected to new life, divinely accepted and securely positioned at the right hand of God his Father.

Therefore, pastorally, Luther intends his audience to understand that in their impotence, yet humble and obedient willingness to suffer for Christ, they follow the perfect example of Christ, their King. He is the model to which they aspire; his is the faith to which they hold; his is the resurrection to which they move. This is Luther's Christological basis for certainty. This is also an urgent call for a living and strong faith in Jesus Christ—the sort of

strong faith that can overcome the trials of life.

Additionally, the church also is central to God's purposes. Luther emphasizes the fact that Christ (who is equal to God and, therefore, is God) has been established or appointed as King by God—it is a *fait accompli* within the divine plan. He possesses his kingship by right and on divine oath.⁴³

In his lectures on Psalm 45 (1532) Luther speaks of the church as Christ's for they have become one body. It is noticeable that he speaks of Christ as a 'conquering King and a King of the miserable'⁴⁴ for the oxymoronic nature of the assertion is itself a pastoral plea to believe in the sovereignty of Jesus Christ over lives that appear to contradict that sovereignty. The King is unshakeable and undefeatable even though his people suffer, for his purposes are towards the 'miserable' members of the true kingdom.

At another point, Luther stresses 'the glorious and unspeakable power' of Christ, a power which he freely bestows upon with the church. So when believers think of the spiritual kingdom as nothing but 'a sloppy affair'⁴⁵ Luther encourages them to reconsider—for Christ, he says, demonstrates his wisdom, authority and power by their opposites: foolishness, frailty and 'nothing'.⁴⁶

4. Appearance and reality

One of the persistent ways in which

41 LW 13.345 (WA 41.237).

42 LW 13.346 (WA 41.235); LW 11.361 (WA 4.229).

43 See especially on Ps. 2:6; Ps. 110:1.

44 LW 12.229 (WA 40.514).

45 LW 13.247 (WA 41.103).

46 LW 13.253 (WA 41.110).

Luther seeks to bring comfort and strength to struggling believers is by asserting the difference between the concrete life in which they now suffer and what he discerns to be the spiritual reality of the situation. This important theme significantly enters his discussion of Psalms 2, 45, 110 and 118, for example. This pastoral strategy is perhaps the most difficult to apply to people whose suffering trials and persecution for their cruciform experience appears to belie the reality that Luther wants them to grasp. However, the way he does this has two components.

First, he acknowledges the experience of suffering and admits that that appears to define the church as weak, pitiful, forsaken, afflicted, 'off-scurings' (1 Cor. 4:13), 'a beggar's kingdom'.⁴⁷ Outwardly, he admits, the church is death and hell. But, second, he claims the spiritual truth that in Christ (that is, in reality) the church is the 'fragrance of life (2 Cor. 2:16), she 'reigns and triumphs in Christ', he even speaks of its 'glorious victory'.⁴⁸ Luther, therefore, claims what he sees to be theological or spiritual reality over against temporal appearance: the true characteristics of the kingdom are hidden under their opposites.⁴⁹

If you look at the external aspect of this kingdom, everything is the opposite: where in this spiritual kingdom life is proclaimed, there, judging by appearances, is death; where glory is preached, there is the ignominy of the cross; where wisdom is preached,

there is foolishness; where strength and victory are preached, there is infirmity and the cross.... So everything you will now hear of Christ's kingdom you must understand according to the article 'I believe in the holy church.' Whoever says 'I believe,' does not see what the situation is like, but sees the opposite.⁵⁰

As the reformer recognizes, this inevitably sets up a crisis of belief, for those suffering affliction are asked to discern *in that affliction* its opposite. Nonetheless, the reformer claims that their experience of suffering is *not* ultimate reality, and urges those in his charge to embrace invisible things, to refuse to be overcome by circumstances and to abandon the feeling of sorrow. He calls upon them to discern what is happening, not as the world discerns it, but as God discerns it—that is, through spiritual eyes.

This necessitates strong faith on their part, as well as skill and grace to discern reality, but in their daily struggles they are to behold God and Christ and to 'ascend' to the Lord through the Word of his promise.⁵¹ For Luther, this is not merely empty rhetoric, of course. On many occasions he speaks of the spiritual reality evidenced by transformed lives.

5. Eschatological perspective

In many ways an eschatological perspective is a natural or, rather, a theological consequence of a stress on the kingdom of Christ as much as it is a

⁴⁷ LW 13.250-51 (WA 41.106-107).

⁴⁸ LW 12.263 (WA 40².560).

⁴⁹ See, for example, LW 12.208 (WA 40².487).

⁵⁰ LW 12.204 (WA 40².482).

⁵¹ See, for example, LW 12.25-26 (WA 40.222).

theological reaction against the worsening situation in which Luther and his followers find themselves during the 1530s. This is certainly reflected in the reformer's reading of the royal psalms in this period.

This is demonstrated, for example, by an examination of Luther's developing understanding and application of Psalm 2. It is noticeable that, progressively, the exposition becomes more eschatological as the situation becomes increasingly confrontational, to the point at which (in 1532) the reformer calls upon his listeners to understand the eschatological moment in which they live. This moment can be primarily discerned through the antagonism between the church and its opponents—an antagonism that reminds Luther of Jesus' sayings concerning the strong man in Matthew 12:29—and, also, through the Scriptures themselves.

Pastorally, Luther wants believers to be aware of the times in which they live. He requires them to discern 'the latter days', together with the enmity of Satan, himself. This allows them to make some sense of their own experiences of suffering, of course. He also calls upon them to pray for strength and grace. By defining the present moment in this way Luther is able to assert the certainty of Christ's coming victory (in which they are involved) together with the certainty of judgement.

In his sermon on the psalm's words, 'The Lord... will shatter the kings on the day of his wrath' (Ps 110:5), Luther makes the following comment.

There you learn what the power and might of His right hand is and

how serious He is about His intention to use it against them.... *It only seems*, while they are busy raging against Christendom, that they have succeeded in crushing it; and *they only appear* to sit firmly and strongly in their places, where no one is able to resist them or to weaken their power. But God says no! He is not that weak and powerless! He has such power over them that when He begins to take them on, they will be not merely beaten or overthrown but shattered and smashed as a potter's vessel is dashed to pieces (Ps. 2:9). Together with their lands and people, they will lie in dust and ashes and never arise again.⁵²

Later, he uses a graphic image twice in close proximity to underline the gravity of his thought: 'It will be like a massive defeat in a huge battle,' he says, 'where the field is full of corpses'.⁵³ The rhetorical language of conquest makes victory seem assured.

6. Rigorous application

Though some of Luther's pastoral advice has been underlined in the previous section, here I want to emphasize briefly that the reformer does not want suffering believers to have what we might term a 'victim mentality', to be intimidated into a depressed inactivity

⁵² LW 13.338 (WA 41.220), emphasis added. This idea becomes a refrain in his sermon. See, for example, LW 13.338 (WA 41.221); LW 13.340 (WA 41.223); LW 13.341 (WA 41.225).

⁵³ LW 13.342 (WA 41.226). He uses almost the same words again, LW 13.342 (WA 41.227).

or lethargy. Though it would have been understandable for them to suffer passively, for the suffering in its diverse manifestations must have worn them down and tempted them to give up altogether, Luther urges them to work at a counter reaction, to apply all their energy at persevering in their faith and their walk with Christ.⁵⁴ As a pastor he seeks to give his hearers an agenda that was specific and immediate, something *to do*.

Luther encourages them to apply the gospel to their own lives. For example, he calls upon believers to realise that cross and persecution are inherently part of the Christian journey,⁵⁵ to be ready to make sacrifices, not to let Satan get a grip, to be obedient—particularly within their specific vocation—to fix their hope on spiritual things (not upon temporal things), to believe the divine promises, to see and discern the works of God, to focus on reigning with Christ, to pray the royal psalms, to hear the Word of God and to listen to Christ in it, to rejoice in tribulation, to be ‘ready to yield... to suffering’⁵⁶ to be patient, and to persevere. The infinitives are very significant, of course. They speak of action and imperative urgency in Luther’s application.

However, mostly, the reformer centres his application on faith in Christ in the midst of his spiritual kingdom. He urges those who listen to grasp hold and to trust in Jesus Christ, to put their confidence in him alone, to have a strong faith during difficult days. Faith, he claims, is not based on knowl-

edge, human reason or what the senses discern. Rather, faith is a gift of God the Holy Spirit to those who look only to Christ, their King, for their security here and in eternity. It comes through the faithful preaching of the Word, and through the creative activity of the Holy Spirit. Consequently, he asks from those with faith for a different level of perception in which everything is radically redefined by Christ and his kingdom.

IV Conclusion: a model for pastors

Ultimately, Luther wants to comfort those who suffer trials and affliction. As a pastor he realises that men and women only can comfort in a very limited manner—he speaks of this as ‘miserable and uncertain comfort’. The sobering reason for this is that people die. Though they mean well their comfort is short-lived and limited because they, themselves, need the comfort that they seek to give to others. Therefore, Luther’s pastoral concern is to comfort suffering believers with the comfort that is uniquely a gospel-gift of God.⁵⁷ That comfort derives from divine grace that stems from faith in Christ through the Word of God.

Therefore, as we have seen, Luther is able to bring pastoral comfort and advice through a reading of the royal psalms that, for him, clearly display Christ in his kingly authority and power.⁵⁸ It is noticeable, then, that in

⁵⁴ See, for example, *LW* 12.271 (*WA*².571).

⁵⁵ *LW* 12.198 (*WA* 40².473).

⁵⁶ *LW* 13.279 (*WA* 41.138).

⁵⁷ See, for example, *LW* 14.57 (*WA* 31.90).

⁵⁸ See D. Ngien, *Luther as a Spiritual Adviser* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2007), 133.

the face of suffering and human inadequacy Luther turns to Christ.

In his interesting, short essay on 'Martin Luther as Human Being', J. McNutt states that

To seek to learn from Luther, to have him 'speak' today, does not necessarily mean imposing a present day agenda on him, or ripping him out of his time so as to serve us in ours. It means allowing him to witness from the distance of his day and age.⁵⁹

Through his interpretation of the royal psalms Luther continually seeks to interpret what he sees and experiences; he deals with a very real human condition—that of suffering, persecution and hardship. Mark Thompson helpfully states that

Struggle is a sign of life; indeed it is a sign of the genuine intersection of the work of God and the brokenness or hostility of the world.⁶⁰

Martin Luther appears to be aware of that. His pastoral concern is to bring the 'work of God' as this is evidenced in and through Christ and his kingdom (as Luther interprets the royal psalms) to bear upon the cruciform existence of believers in his day.

In summing up Luther's legacy, Timothy George claims that his true legacy 'does not lie in the saintliness of

his life', nor upon 'his vast accomplishments as a reformer and theologian', but in 'his spiritual insight into the gracious character of God in Jesus Christ, the God who loves us and sustains us unto death, and again unto life'.⁶¹ In this respect, Luther is clearly a pastor who seeks to comfort, to encourage, to strengthen God's people in their daily suffering. One of the ways he attempts that, as we have seen, is through rigorous application of the royal psalms into their fragile and difficult lives—presenting the power, authority and grace of Christ and his kingdom to those who experience distress and weakness in this life.

We can and should learn a great deal from Luther the pastor—his deep concern to apply Scripture directly to situations of suffering and struggle, his true and uncomplicated love of people whom he discerns to be in need, his vulnerability which allows him to get close to others in genuine empathy and fellowship. Above all, as pastors today, perhaps we need to learn again to put Jesus Christ as absolutely central to our theological and pastoral thinking and application, so that he may gain the honour he deserves and that those struggling may learn not only to focus on his grace rather than the situation but also to be transformed by the Spirit into his likeness to the glory of the Father.

59 J. McNutt, 'Martin Luther as Human Being: Reflections from a Distance', *Ch* 108 (1994), 265-70. Here at 266.

60 Thompson, 'Luther on Despair', 64.

61 T. George, *Theology of the Reformers* (Nashville: Broadman, 1988), 106.

The Righteous Rich in the Old Testament

Christopher J. H. Wright

KEYWORDS: *Wealth, divine blessing, justice, loyalty, interest, slaves, redemption.*

MUCH IS WRITTEN AND preached about the problem of poverty from a biblical perspective, and much of what is written and preached acknowledges the fact that most poverty does not just happen—it is caused. There are, of course, those who are poor for reasons that have little or no human or moral causation (e.g. as a result of devastating weather, or disabling illness or disastrous bereavement, or the aftermath of locusts or blight), but it is still the case, and probably always has been, that the greatest cause of poverty is to be found in the wide range of direct or indirect forms of oppression, greed and injustice by which those who are not poor sustain their advantageous position. In other words, in most discussions of wealth and poverty, the rich are the bad guys. And in scholarly discussions about poverty in the Bible,

that is also frequently the case.

So it is refreshing to look at the matter from the more unusual angle of our title, which may seem somewhat oxymoronic to those immersed in the kind of writing and preaching mentioned above. Righteous and rich are words not often found in each other's company. Perhaps it is to the familiar rhetoric of Amos that we owe the dominance of the reverse word association. For it was Amos who challenged a culture in which the rich may well have been using a distorted Deuteronomic logic to claim that their wealth was a proof of their status of righteousness and blessing before God. On the contrary, thundered Amos, it was the oppressed poor who were 'the righteous'. This did not mean that the poor were morally perfect or not sinners like the rest of us, but that they were the ones whom the divine judge's verdict deemed to be 'in the right', in a situation where the wealthy, by their oppressive actions, were clearly 'in the wrong'—i.e. 'the wicked'. Amos used

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the terms in a forensic sense, but the association had an enduring moral flavour summed up in a deceptively simple and familiar binary alternative: the righteous poor and the wicked rich.

Yet clearly the Old Testament has a lot more to say on the subject than we can glean from the prophetic monochrome of Amos. It does not assert that all wealth must have been gained through wickedness. To paraphrase Shakespeare, some are born rich, some achieve riches and others have riches thrust upon them; to which the Old Testament would doubtless add, some are blessed by God with riches within the framework of covenant obedience.

My plan in what follows is first of all to make a canonical survey—observing some texts relevant to the title in each of the major genres of Old Testament literature; and then secondly, and more briefly, to make a thematic summary—drawing the threads together in a way which, it is hoped, can be fruitfully applied in different contexts by different readers.

I Canonical Survey¹

1. The narratives

a) Abraham

The foundational story of Abraham combines wealth with righteousness and puts both under the sign of God's blessing. 'Abram had become very wealthy in livestock and in silver and

gold' (Gen. 13:2); 'Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness' (Gen. 15:6). Both of these texts come after the original word of God to Abram (Gen. 12:1-3), in which God promised not only to bless Abram, but also that he would be a blessing. Indeed, the verb in the last line of Genesis 12:2 is actually imperative, matching the imperatives of v. 1. The thrust of the whole word is thus: 'Go... Be a blessing....and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.'² Abraham is thus the one who receives blessing and is the means of blessing others.

This is the context in which his wealth is to be set. It is, in fact, the very first context in which wealth is mentioned at all in the Bible, and its strong connection with the blessing of God is apparent. The connection is even more explicit in the case of Isaac. Following hard on the reminder of God's promise to bless the world through Abraham because of his obedience (Gen. 26:4-5), comes the record of Isaac's enrichment under God's blessing (26:12-13), which even a foreigner acknowledges (26:29).

The patriarchal narratives thus portray the righteous rich as those who receive their wealth from God as a token of his blessing, respond in risky faith and costly obedience (cf. Gen. 22), and participate in God's mission of blessing others. Since, as we have said, this is the first substantial appearance of

¹ I have chosen to follow the loose order of the English Bible rather than the stricter order of the Hebrew canon—Law, Prophets and Writings.

² God's command to Abraham has as much claim to the phrase 'The Great Commission' as the end of Matthew's Gospel. It launches the history of the mission of God (to bless the nations), through the mission of God's people (to be blessed and to be the means of blessing).

wealth in the Bible, it is important to note that it is set in a very wholesome light—in companionship with covenant, blessing, obedience and mission.

b) Boaz

Boaz is not actually described as wealthy, but as ‘a man of standing’—a person of substance in the local community (Ruth 2:1). However, the axis of the story of the book of Ruth is that he is certainly wealthy *in comparison with* Ruth and Naomi in their need. He possesses land, servants, good harvests, and the spare cash to redeem Elimelech’s land. Nor is Boaz described specifically as righteous, but the character that emerges from the story shows all the marks associated with righteousness in the Old Testament. He acts with kindness to one who was an alien and a widow (one of the commonest exhortations in Israel’s law); he respects her decision to move to the land of Israel and take refuge under the wings of the God of Israel (thus aligning himself with the Abrahamic stance of being a blessing to the nations); he acts with committed and sacrificial faithfulness (*hesed*) towards his deceased relative Elimelech, by redeeming the land of Naomi and taking his widowed daughter-in-law Ruth with a view to raising a son to inherit Elimelech’s line rather than his own.

He thus fulfils the role of kinsman-redeemer (*go’el*), and is warmly commended by the local community, and blessed by God in the birth of a son who became the ancestor of David, and eventually of the Messiah, Jesus. Boaz, in using his wealth with risky generosity, stands in contrast to the nearer but nameless kinsman who declines to do

his duty for the family for fear of spoiling his own inheritance (4:6; i.e. by having to spend money on raising a potential son that would not inherit in his own line).

c) David

The most significant context in which the wealth of king David is discussed is his provision for the building of the temple by his son Solomon in 1 Chronicles 28-29. One might have to set to one side at this point questions regarding the *sources* of David’s personal wealth, some of which at least certainly came from tribute imposed upon nations he defeated in his many wars (ironically, the very reason why he was not allowed to build the temple himself; 28:3). The stance of the narrator seems to be that this particular use of David’s wealth, however it was accumulated, was worthy and exemplary. Certainly, his example of putting his personal wealth into the temple project (29:2-5) motivated the rest of the leaders to do the same (29:6-8), which seems to have motivated the rest of the people in turn (29:9). The whole act of national giving is then followed by an exemplary prayer in which David acknowledges the true source of all wealth (God himself), and the comparative unworthiness of all human giving, which is merely giving back to God what already belongs to him.

Insofar as this could be characterized as an example of ‘righteous riches’ (or at least riches put to the service of righteousness), it is marked by willingness, wholeheartedness and joy (29:9); along with God-honouring worship, humility, integrity and honest intent (29:10-17).

d) Solomon

There is much greater ambivalence about the riches of Solomon, which were legendary even in his own day. In one sense, he just stepped into them as the heir of his father David (though the succession was marked with excesses of conspiracy and violence), and by continuing his policy of exacting tribute from the many nations under his rule (1 Kgs. 4:21). To this he added a trading genius that was highly lucrative but of very questionable legitimacy (1 Kgs. 10:26-29; contrast Deut. 17:16-17). So the riches of Solomon are set under a moral question mark, and yet the narrator affirms that he received them also as an unasked for gift from God, because Solomon had asked for wisdom to rule his people justly (1 Kgs. 3:9-14).

So again, insofar as the wealth of Solomon had any tinge of righteousness, it lay in its early connection with his desire to do justice, and his express prioritizing of wisdom over wealth in itself. Sadly, the later Solomon was tinged with everything but righteousness and his wealth came to constitute a symbol of oppression, and an enduring snare to his successors.

e) Nehemiah

Nehemiah 5 records an incident of public protest against a range of unjust and oppressive economic practices in the post-exilic community, of which Nehemiah was governor, and the actions which Nehemiah took in righteous anger to rectify them. In the public arena, Nehemiah's action turned around a situation that was 'not right' (Neh. 5:9). But Nehemiah goes on to record his own personal example in

handling his finances. Whether his self-commendation is quite to our taste or not, we would concede that his refusal to exploit his political office for private gain, or to allow his entourage to live in burdensome luxury and excess, is a token of righteousness in his handling of the wealth to which his position gave him access (Neh. 5:14-19).

2. The Law

Since so much of Israel's law in the Pentateuch is orientated towards life in the land, economic relationships, principles, and practices are prominent. This is not the place for a survey of the wide range of such material.³ We may consider just a few texts which specifically refer to the righteous (or otherwise) use of personal wealth.

The OT regards it as a fundamental duty of those who have wealth to be willing to lend to the poor. Lending is not in itself associated with exploitation, but is a mark of righteousness. However, the key distinction between righteous and unrighteous lending is the matter of interest. Among the marks of the one who is 'blameless' and 'righteous', is that he lends his money, but does so without demanding interest (Psalm 15:2, 5). To lend is to prioritize the need of the poor person by making one's wealth available to him. To demand interest is to prioritize one's personal profit by exploiting the poor person's need.

³ I have however tried to cover it fairly thoroughly in Christopher J. H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (Leicester and Downers Grove: IVP and Intervarsity, 2004). Cf also, Wright, *God's People in God's Land* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1990).

a) Leviticus 25:35-38

Set within a whole raft of legislation designed to address the threat of impoverishment, this paragraph puts a responsibility on the better-off kinsman to provide practical support to the kinsman who is sinking into poverty. Interest-free loans are the recommended method at this stage. As throughout the chapter, this action is motivated by a sense of vertical obligation to the God who delivered them from Egypt. Righteousness in the OT includes a right response to the saving action of God; part of that right response is generous care for the poor.

b) Deuteronomy 24:6, 10-13

Lending was a duty in OT Israel, but it was also to be carried out humanely in a way that would respect the dignity and privacy of the debtor. So these laws address the creditor and call for certain restraints and limits to be observed in the financial transaction, and its social implications. 'The bottom line' is not the only thing that counts in God's sight.

c) Deuteronomy 8

This is a chapter that puts all personal wealth in the context of the 'preventive' grace of God's gift of the land. Israel must remember how they were led out of need and poverty into the abundance of the land. The emphasis up to verse 10 is that sufficiency of material goods should generate praise to God. The emphasis shifts somewhat from verse 11-14, with the warning that surplus of goods can quickly generate pride in oneself. That pride is expressed with sharp perception in the boasting of verse 17. 'You may say to

yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." But the bubble of self-congratulation is immediately pricked in verse 18, 'But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth.' The righteous rich remember where their wealth has come from. To forget that is the first step to pride, and all the greed and injustice that flows from it.

d) Deuteronomy 15

Here is the warm heartbeat of the whole book, in my view. It expands some basic laws of Exodus concerning sabbatical fallow on the land and the release of Hebrew slaves, but does so in a way that exudes a spirit of generosity and compassion.

If there is a poor man among your brothers in any of the towns of the land that the LORD your God is giving you, do not be hard-hearted or tight-fisted towards your poor brother. Rather be open-handed and freely lend him whatever he needs.... Give generously to him and so without a grudging eye... there will always be poor people in the land [or in the earth]. Therefore I command you to be open-handed towards your brothers and towards your poor and your needy in your land. (Deut. 15:7-11, my translation).

This text combines a strong use of 'body language' (heart, hand/fist, eye), with a strongly relational dimension ('your' is repeated emphatically in a way that some English translations obscure). The righteous rich recognize that the poor are brothers whose need is not only to be helped, but to belong;

not to be marginalized into a social category (*the* poor), but to be held within the bonds of community participation (*your* poor). Righteousness is relational, not abstract, impersonal or arm's-length.

Releasing a Hebrew slave after six years is to be 'celebrated' (not begrudged), with a parting gift that will not only sustain him through the transition, but even honours and blesses him in a way that reflects God's blessing on the owner.

When you release him, do not send him away empty-handed. 'Garland him' (lit.) from your flock, your threshing-floor and your winepress. Give to him as the LORD your God has blessed you (Deut. 15:15, my translation).

That final sentence could have fallen from the lips of Jesus. The righteous rich are consciously motivated by constant recall of how much they themselves owe to God.⁴

3. Psalms

We have already noticed that lending without interest is one mark of that righteousness that can stand in the presence of God (Ps. 15:5), and Ezekiel confirms this and condemns the opposite as wickedness (Ezek. 18:8, 13, 17).

a) Psalm 37

Psalm 37 is a lengthy reflection, in

Wisdom mode, on the contrasting behaviour, attitudes, and destiny of the righteous and the wicked. Among other things, it warns the righteous not to envy the prosperity of the unrighteous rich, with the proverbial comparison,

Better the little that the righteous have
than the wealth of many wicked
(v. 16).

Like other parts of the Wisdom Literature, the Psalm deals more with general principles than with all the nasty details of life (verse 25 might lead us to reckon that the author needed to get out more). But it certainly has a view of how the righteous should behave in relation to whatever riches they might have.

The wicked borrow and do not repay,
but the righteous give generously
(v. 21).

[The righteous] are always generous and lend freely;
their children will be blessed (v. 26).

b) Psalm 112

Psalm 112 strikes an identical chord, but with the extra harmonics that the generosity of the righteous is a mirroring of the generosity of the LORD himself. Note how Psalm 112:3-5 (and 9), about the righteous wealth, compassion, justice and generosity of 'the person who fears the LORD', echoes quite deliberately the same qualities of the LORD, in the matching acrostic Psalm 111:3-5.

Wealth and riches are in his house,
and his righteousness endures

⁴ For a fuller discussion of the profound social implications of this chapter, cf., Christopher J.H. Wright, *Deuteronomy*, New International Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament (Peabody and Carlisle: Hendrikson and Paternoster, 1996), XXX.

for ever.
 Even in darkness light dawns for
 the upright,
 for the gracious and compassion-
 ate and righteous man.
 Good will come to him who is gen-
 erous and lends freely,
 who conducts his affairs with
 justice
 ...
 He has scattered abroad his gifts to
 the poor,
 his righteousness endures for
 ever.

4. Wisdom

a) Proverbs

The book of Proverbs is a goldmine for the theme of the righteous rich, since so many of its sayings relate to the use (or abuse) of material goods in one way or another.

An early note, consistent with the running thread through the whole book, is that the only acceptable wealth is that which accompanies trust in God, commitment to him, and acknowledgement of him (Prov. 3:5-10). The fear of the LORD is the beginning (or first principle) of wisdom, and also the first requirement for righteous riches. In fact, however, though wealth is a positive good in Proverbs, it is not the only or the greatest good by any means. Far more important is wisdom—the wisdom that comes from God.

Choose my instruction instead of sil-
 ver,
 knowledge rather than choice
 gold,
 for wisdom is more precious than
 rubies,

and nothing you desire can com-
 pare with her (Prov. 8:10-11,
 cf. 16:16).

As we saw, Solomon knew this in his humbler youth (1 Kgs. 3), but sadly forgot it rather quickly.

The upright also recognize that wealth is in any case no protection against death (Prov. 11:4)—a relativizing perception that is amplified in even more melancholy tones in Ecclesiastes 5:13-6:6.

The dominant note in relation to righteous riches in Proverbs, however, is one that is completely consistent with the law and the prophets, namely the requirement to treat the poor with kindness, and without contempt, mockery, or callousness. Interestingly, however, whereas the law and prophets ground such teaching in the history of Israel's redemption (specifically God's saving generosity in the exodus), the Wisdom tradition tends to appeal to the broader foundation of creation. Disparities of human wealth are ultimately irrelevant to our standing before God. Rich and poor have a created equality as human beings before God. Consequently, whatever attitude or action the rich adopt towards the poor, they actually adopt towards God (with all that entails). The righteous rich is therefore one who sees his God when he looks at the poor man made in God's image.

He who oppresses the poor shows
 contempt for their Maker,
 but whoever is kind to the needy
 honours God (Prov. 14:31)

This is a note that can be heard echoing through the following texts: Proverbs 17:5; 19:17; 22:2, 22; 29:7,13.

As we saw in Psalm 37, the Wisdom writers cared more about justice than about prosperity, a perspective which they summarized in the opinion that it was far preferable to be poor but righteous, than to have ill-gotten wealth through injustice and oppression (Prov. 16:8; 28:6).

One final perspective worth mentioning, is the value of contentment with sufficiency. Neither excessive poverty nor excessive wealth is desirable, for both are a temptation to behave in ways that disown or dishonour God. The implication seems to be that the righteous rich know when to say, 'Enough is enough'.

Give me neither poverty nor riches,
but give me only my daily bread.

Otherwise, I may have too much and
disown you

and say, 'Who is the LORD?'

Or I may become poor and steal,
and so dishonour the name of my
God (Prov. 30:8-9).

b) Job

For any lingering doubts that righteousness and riches could ever inhabit the same universe, Job is the classic proof. For the three opening verses of the book affirm both truths about him: Job was a model of righteousness ('blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil'), and he was simultaneously very wealthy—a legend in his own time. The former is the verdict endorsed even by God himself (1:8, 2:3). The latter is cynically offered by the satan as an alleged mercenary motive. Job would not be so righteous, he sneers, if he were not being so richly blessed by God. So the test to which Job is unwittingly exposed is to see if his

righteousness (which he more often describes as his integrity) will survive the loss of all his substance, even his health. And it does.

But in the course of his self-defence Job describes the kind of life he had led before the calamity that befell him, and in doing so he sheds considerable ethical light on how those who are blessed by God with wealth beyond what is common can at the same time behave in ways that God himself will own as righteous beyond comparison. Chapters 29 and 31 are particularly rich in righteousness.

Job 29 describes his life 'when God's intimate friendship blessed my house'—i.e. in the days of his wealth and social standing. As one of those who exercised justice in the local courts, Job claims that he had rescued the poor, defended the orphan and widow, that he had been eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, father to the needy, champion of the stranger, and scourge of the wicked (29:12-17). The mark of righteous riches is when those who possess them use the social power they confer for the benefit of the powerless and to confound those who victimize them.

Job 31, Job's final and prolonged moral apologia, contains several specific references to his use of, or attitude to, his wealth. In summary: he had used it generously (31:16-20); he had not placed ultimate security in it (31:24-25); he had put it hospitably at the service of others (31:31-32); and he not gained it through merciless exploitation of his own workers (31:38-40). There is much here for ethical reflection, and certainly for those who are blessed with riches and are seeking to act righteously in handling them.

5. The Prophets

Condemnation by the prophets of those who had gained their wealth by injustice and used their wealth to perpetuate further injustice is pervasive. Only rarely do we get glimpses of prophetic approval of those who are righteous in their attitude and actions in relation to wealth.

There was no love lost between Jeremiah and King Jehoiakim. In condemning his unscrupulous and self-enrichment at the expense of unpaid workers, his competitive greed and conspicuous opulence, Jeremiah contrasts the unworthy new king with his godly father, King Josiah. As king, Josiah doubtless also enjoyed his share of royal wealth, but Jeremiah seems to refer to a more modest life-style, when he says,

‘Did not your father have food and drink?

He did what was right and just,
so all went well with him.

He defended the cause of the poor
and needy,
and so all went well.

Is that not what it means to know
me?’ declares the LORD (Jer.
2:15-16).

Again, we note that the central key to righteousness in the handling of riches is the doing of justice for the poor. That alone is the path to well-being. These verses also give a sharp insight into what Jeremiah meant by ‘knowing God’—all the more important since he will later include the knowledge of God as one of the major blessings of the new covenant (Jer. 31:34). Knowing God is not just a matter of personal piety, but the exercise of practical justice.

The link with knowing God is further developed by Jeremiah in a beautifully crafted small poem in which he sets three of God’s best gifts on one side of the scales (wisdom, strength and riches), and declares that none of them (God-given though they may be), are to be boasted of. For they pale in comparison with the privilege of knowing Yahweh as God—and knowing that his primary delight lies in the three things that Jeremiah puts in the other side of the scales, the doing of kindness, justice and righteousness on earth (Jer. 9:23-24). So the righteous rich do not boast of their riches, rather they relativize them in comparison with knowing God and loving what he loves.

Finally, Ezekiel echoes Psalm 15 when he includes among the characteristics of the model righteous person, that all his economic dealings are generous, rather than oppressive, caring rather than self-interested (Ezek. 18:7-8).

II Thematic Summary

As we saw at the very beginning, God may choose (but is not obliged) to make a righteous person rich. But what, in the light of our survey, makes a rich person righteous? At least the following summary points would seem to emerge from the Old Testament’s reflections on this matter, with all its different moods and voices. The righteous rich are those who:

- remember the source of their riches—namely the grace and gift of God himself, and are therefore not boastingly inclined to take the credit for achieving

them through their own skill, strength or effort (even if these things have been legitimately deployed) (Deut. 8:17-18, 1 Chron. 29:11-12, Jer. 9:23-24)

- do not idolize their wealth, by putting inordinate trust in it, nor get anxious about losing it. For ultimately it is one's relationship with God that matters more and can survive (and even be deepened by) the absence or loss of wealth (Job 31:24-25).
- recognize that wealth is thus secondary to many things, including wisdom, but especially personal integrity, humility, and righteousness (1 Chron. 29:17, Prov. 8:10-11, 1 Kgs. 3, Prov. 16:8, 28:6).
- set their wealth in the context of God's blessing, recognizing that being blessed is not a privilege but a responsibility—the Abrahamic responsibility of being a blessing to others (Gen. 12:1-3). Wealth in righteous hands is thus a servant of that mission that flows from God's commitment to bless the nations through the seed of Abraham.
- use their wealth with justice; this includes refusing to extract personal benefit by using wealth for corrupt ends (e.g. through bribery), and ensuring that all one's financial dealings are non-exploitative of the needs of others (e.g. through interest). (Ps. 15:5, Ezek. 18:7-8).
- make their wealth available to the wider community through

responsible lending that is both practical (Lev. 25), and respectful for the dignity of the debtor (Deut. 24:6, 10-13).

- see wealth as an opportunity for generosity—even when it is risky, and even when it hurts, thereby both blessing the poor and needy, and at the same time reflecting the character of God (Deut. 15, Ps. 112:3, Prov. 14:31, 19:17, Ruth).
- use wealth in the service of God, whether by contributing to the practical needs that are involved in corporate worship of God (1 Chron. 28-9), or by providing for God's servants who particularly need material support (2 Chron. 31, Ruth).
- set an example by limiting personal consumption and declining to maximise private gain from public office that affords access to wealth and resources (Neh. 5:14-19).

The person who is characterized in these ways can indeed qualify for the otherwise oxymoronic epithet, 'righteous rich'. Above all, it is because such a person is marked by the very first principle of wisdom, namely the fear of the LORD, that the blessings he enjoys are not tainted with wickedness and the whiff of oppression. 'Blessed is the man who fears the LORD', for if riches also come his way by God's grace, then the double truth can be affirmed of him, without contradiction:

Wealth and *riches* are in his house,
and his *righteousness* endures for
ever (Psalm 112:3).

Out of Context—the Gospel According to Jesus

James P. Danaher

KEYWORDS: *Discipleship, goodness, faith, love, obedience, repentance, violence*

MODERN BIBLE SCHOLARSHIP tells us that when we read the Scripture we should read it in context. That is, we should understand the things being said in the context of their historical and cultural settings. That might be good advice in places but it is not always good advice when it comes to attempting to understand the Gospels. That is because there is no context for us to understand Jesus. What possible context could there be for the God who created the universe having become a human being?

One day at a faculty meeting at my college I heard a professor say, 'How are Ph.D.s supposed to believe that a man was in the belly of a fish?' Another faculty member responded, 'We believe that an infinite God became a finite man, after that everything is a piece of cake.' The idea that 'a stable

once had something inside it that was bigger than our whole world'¹ is much more difficult to understand than a man being inside a fish. For those who believe in the incarnation, what possibly could serve as a context from which to understand another human being who, although being human, was also the eternal God who spoke the universe into existence? For such a person there is no context. Such a person is out of context.

Indeed, Jesus defies all contexts, and if we try to set him in the context of any human culture or history it only distorts the things he said and did. The only way to really take in the Jesus revelation is to allow the things that Jesus said and did to do violence to our understanding and destroy many of the concepts we use to sort, analyze, and judge the circumstances of our human condition. If we fail to do this and we leave our understanding intact, the

¹ Lewis, C. S. *The Last Battle* (New York: Collier/Macmillan, 1970), 141.

things that Jesus said and did do not appear to be good news.

It is only with the destruction of our understanding that we really get at the good news that is hidden in what otherwise appears to be the bad news of the gospel. For example, Jesus tells us that in his Kingdom the last are first and the first are last.² This is not good news since most of us seek to be first and not last. We think that it is good to be first and bad to be last. Equally, we think it is good to be good and bad to be bad, but, throughout the Gospels, Jesus continually turns the tables on us.

In Luke's Gospel, Jesus tells the story of the Prodigal Son. In that story, the older brother really is good, but that turns out not to be good. The younger brother, on the other hand, really is bad but that turns out to be good. The story ends with the older brother refusing to enter into the party that the father has prepared for the younger brother who was not good.³ He doesn't enter in because he doesn't like the way being bad is treated as if it were good, and being good is not rewarded as it should be. The older brother thinks that the father should only have parties for good sons, and we, for the most part, think the same.

The gospel is especially violent to the understanding of those who consider themselves good people. Good people may like the sound of the name Jesus, but they cannot be happy with the things he says and does. In his own day, Jesus constantly had hard things

to say to those people whom the gospel presents as the prototypical 'good people.'

The Pharisees of Jesus' day probably kept the Jewish law better than any Jews who had ever lived, yet Jesus condemns what they think is their goodness. Of course, the reason for this is because Jesus sets forth the real standard for goodness, and, as we will see, it is a standard that is way out of our reach. This is bad news for people who aspire to be good. Consider the story of the Good Samaritan.

I The Good Samaritan

Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. 'Teacher', he said, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?' He said to him, 'What is written in the law? What do you read there?' He answered, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all of your soul, and with all of your strength, and with all of your mind; and your neighbour as yourself.' And he said to him, 'You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.'

But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, 'And who is my neighbour?' Jesus replied, 'A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him for dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while travelling

2 Mt. 19:30. (All quotations from New Revised Standard Version)

3 Luke 15:11-32.

came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity.⁴

Jesus goes on to tell how the Samaritan bandaged the man's wounds, took him to an inn and paid for his keep until he was well. Jesus then asks, 'Which of these three... was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?'⁵ The man answers correctly and Jesus tells him to 'go and do likewise'.⁶

In typical fashion, Jesus does not answer the man's questions. In fact, throughout the Gospels although Jesus is asked 183 questions, he answers only a handful of those questions.⁷ When asked a question, Jesus' normal response is: either to ask a question in return, answer a question other than the one asked, or simply remain silent.

In the above story of the Good Samaritan he starts by asking a question in return. When the lawyer asks what he must do to gain eternal life, Jesus responds by asking, 'What is written in the law?' When the man answers correctly that we are to love God and our neighbour as ourselves, the man then asks, 'Who is my neighbour?'

The man is obviously asking a ques-

tion of geography. He knows he has to love the one who lives next door, but what about the person down the road, or the person on the other side of the river. Are they his neighbours as well? This is what he wants to know, but instead of answering that question Jesus tells him the story of the Good Samaritan.

That story does not tell the man who is his neighbour and who is not his neighbour. We are not told which side of the river the man who fell into the hands of robbers was from. What we are told is what it means to love our neighbour.

This is not good news since, if this is what it means to love our neighbour, very few of us are doing what we must in order to inherit eternal life. None of us is the Good Samaritan on any kind of regular basis. We all regularly see people in need along the road and do nothing. Of course, if we saw someone seriously hurt, we would call the police, but if we were asked to pay for their hospital stay very few of us would respond the way the Good Samaritan did.

This bad news of the gospel gets even worse when we consider and take seriously other things Jesus said and did. In other places, Jesus tells us that we are to love our enemies.⁸ Loving our enemies goes way beyond loving neighbours or loving strangers, as is the case with the Good Samaritan. If we are to love enemies then there are no boundaries concerning who we are to love and who we are not to love. That was what the man in the story of the

4 Luke 10:30-33.

5 Luke 10:36.

6 Luke 10:37.

7 Lord, teach us to pray. (Luke 11:1); What is the greatest commandment? (Mt. 22:37); How many times are we to forgive? (Mt. 18:21-22); There may also be an answer to a question with the rich young ruler (Matt. 19:16-22); The other two are questionable as to whether they are actually answers. Jesus is asked: 'Are you the son of God?' And he answers, 'You say that I am' (Luke 22:69-70); Or, 'are you the king of the Jews?' To which Jesus again says, 'You say so' (Mt. 27:11 & Mark 15:2).

8 Mt. 5:43-45, & Luke 6:35-36.

Good Samaritan wanted to know with his question about who is my neighbour. What he wanted to know, and what we want to know, is who do we have to love, and who can we kill and be praised for it?

In Luke's Gospel, Jesus tells us that we are to love our enemies, and be 'kind to the ungrateful and the wicked'⁹ in order that we might be like our heavenly Father. Again, more bad news since none of us is consistently kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Neither do we believe that God would want us to be kind to the ungrateful and the wicked, but Jesus tells us that he does.

II The Sermon On The Mount

It gets even worse with the Sermon on the Mount. There Jesus tells us that not only are we to love our enemies but that we are also to turn the other cheek to those who do us harm. He says when someone 'strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also'.¹⁰ Of course, that is exactly what Jesus did. He turned the other cheek and refused to be possessed by anger or a sense of justice that so easily possesses and directs so many of us. Jesus was led by God alone and he calls us to be led in the same way. His warnings throughout the Sermon on the Mount focus on those things that so easily lead us away from God's lordship in our lives. This is our real sin. It is that we are easily led away from God's presence and purpose for our lives.

God's ultimate desire is for us to live

as Jesus lived. The way that Jesus lived was in a constant state of awareness of God's presence. For Jesus, the omnipresence of God was not a theory or mere belief as it is with most of us but an experience—a way of life. He tells us that it can be our way of life as well, but we must repent and turn away from those things that distract us from an awareness of God's presence in our lives.

Jesus tells us that God's desire is not that we refrain from murder or adultery, but that we refrain from anger and lust.¹¹ The reason Jesus speaks against anger and lust is because those are the kinds of things that capture and possess our attention in a way that only God should. We wander from an awareness of God's presence and purpose for our lives, not when we commit murder or adultery, but when we become possessed by anger or lust.

Anger and lust, along with the other things that Jesus mentions in the Sermon on the Mount like worry or earthly treasure,¹² are the things that turn our attention away from God, and away from the things that God has for us. Jesus' attention and focus was never distracted by such things, and he calls us to live as he lived.

This is a great offence to our understanding of goodness. We want to think that it is good that we refrain from murder or adultery, but Jesus tells us that our real sin is that our anger and lust cause us to constantly wander from God's presence and purpose for our lives. What grieves the heart of

⁹ Luke 6:35.

¹⁰ Mt. 5:39.

¹¹ Mt. 5:21-28.

¹² Mt. 6:19-21; & Mt. 6:25-34.

God, and what constitutes our real sin is that we fix our attention on things other than God and try to find life and meaning in them. God's heart is grieved as we choose so much less for our lives than what he has for us.

We are constantly distracted by all of the petty little things that so easily possess us. Even our enemies can serve as distractions that capture and occupy our consciousness in a way that only God should. Our desire for vendetta, or what we call justice, can easily become the thing we look to for meaning and purpose in our lives. The Jesus wisdom of turning the other cheek, and suffering the offence with forgiveness, is meant to keep us from having our attention possessed by a spirit of revenge.

Of course, like almost everything else Jesus says, we reject what he says about turning the other cheek. In spite of the fact that we claim that Jesus is God incarnate, and the Bible is God's infallible word, we do not take seriously the things that Jesus says. We convince ourselves that we must retaliate and meet violence with violence. That, however, is what we have been doing for thousands of years and it has gotten us nowhere. By contrast, when Jesus, Gandhi, or King suffer the offence and respond with forgiveness rather than retaliation, the world takes notice and we get a little glimpse of the divine.¹³

The problems in Palestine, and everywhere else where hatred breeds

violence, will come to an end only when someone decides to employ the Jesus solution and suffer the offence in order to bring the violence to an end. In contrast to what Jesus preached, and so beautifully demonstrated from the cross by responding to the violence being done to him by asking that his torturers be forgiven, we forever insist that if we can just inflict enough harm upon our enemies, they will yield, and we will have brought the evil to an end. Of course, that never does bring the evil to an end. It just resurfaces somewhere else.

Evil is brought to an end only when someone suffers the offence in an act of forgiveness. As Mohatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King demonstrated, the Jesus way works in a way that thousands of years of exchanging violence for violence does not work. Sadly, however, loving our enemies is simply too radical and too contrary to our nature to be taken seriously. So we look away from the things that Jesus says and build our Christianity around other portions of Scripture that give us a more human, and less divine, picture of who God calls us to be.

III Hating Father and Mother

If the things that Jesus says about loving our enemies are not enough to convince us of how radical the gospel is, consider the fact that Jesus tells us that 'Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciples.'¹⁴ Are we really to take Jesus seri-

13 Of course, the thing that Jesus, Gandhi, and King also all have in common is they were all killed. Perhaps it is for that reason that we don't like that solution.

14 Luke 14:26.

ously when he tells us that we are to hate *our own* fathers, mothers, wives, children, brothers, sisters, and even *our own* selves? That is just the opposite of what we think is good.

We think it is good to love *our own* family, *our own* country, and *our own* selves, but Jesus knows that the love of such things can easily possess us in a way that we should only be possessed by God. Once the love of our own, rather than the love of God, becomes the thing for which we live all manner of evil follows. Wars are fought because we love our own and we do not love those who are not our own.

The reason we love one and hate the other is because the one is mine and the other is not mine. Of course, this is the great lie. They are all God's and none are mine. From God's perspective it is evil when we love what we wrongly consider our own part of his creation and do not love other parts of his creation. The evil is rooted in our turning our attention away from God and toward what we erroneously consider our own.

The nineteenth-century author George MacDonald tells a story about an evil man who had little in the way of redeeming qualities. At one point in describing him, MacDonald says that he did love his children but only because they were *his*, not because they were children. As natural as it may be, there is certainly something wrong about believing that something is mine rather than God's.

A colleague of mine recently told me of his experience of being raised without a father. He had a friend who had a father who did a lot of things with his son, and the man would include my colleague in many of those activities. That

sounds like such a good thing, and by human standards the man was certainly good to do so. My colleague, however, said that, as nice as the man was, he always knew that the man preferred his own son to him. My colleague went on to say that he always thought that there was something evil about that. In fact, the only way it would not be evil is if there were a father who loved all children the same. Of course, that is exactly who God is.

IV Follow Me

As difficult as these sayings of Jesus are, however, the most difficult thing Jesus ever said was, 'follow me'. What makes it especially difficult is that he says it repeatedly. In contrast to Jesus saying, 'no one can see the kingdom of heaven without being born from above',¹⁵ which he says once, late at night, to a single individual, Jesus says 'follow me' seventeen times throughout the Gospels.¹⁶ Of course, 'follow me' is a metaphor for do what I do. Many of us are eager to do that when we think that doing what Jesus did amounts to working miracles. That made people think that Jesus was special in his day, and it will make people think we are special as well.

Unfortunately, we mistake the spectacular for the miraculous. What is truly miraculous is the supernatural and not the spectacular. Restoring sight or bringing people back to life is certainly spectacular, but it is not nec-

¹⁵ John 3:3.

¹⁶ Mt. 4:19, 8:22, 9:9, 16:24, 19:21, Mark 2:14, 8:34, 10:21, Luke 5:27, 9:23, 9:59, 18:22, John 1:43, 10:27, 12:26, 13:36, 21:19.

essarily supernatural. Modern medicine is able to perform such feats and they do it within the realm of what is natural.

The truly supernatural things that Jesus did were not the spectacular things. In fact, many of the truly supernatural things that Jesus did were mundane rather than spectacular. For example, the last thing that Jesus did with his disciples was not to perform some spectacular miracle but to wash their feet. He washed Judas' feet. Voluntarily washing your enemy's feet is certainly not spectacular but it is supernatural. It is outside and above the realm of human nature.

Or consider the fact that from the cross, Jesus prayed for his torturers to be forgiven in order that they might spend eternity with him. That had to be the most supernatural thing that Jesus ever did. If we believe that miracles are for today, and that God wants to work miracles through us, we should not be satisfied with healings that even doctors can do. That may be spectacular but it is not supernatural. We should seek the supernatural rather than the spectacular and look to practise the miraculous forgiveness that was at the core of Jesus' ministry. Who among us, however, does that?

When we base our idea of the gospel upon the things that Jesus actually said and did, it certainly does not appear to be good news. The gospel according to Jesus convicts us of our sin and points to our failure to live by God's standard for our lives. Indeed, the gospel is much more convicting than was the law of the Old Testament because it sets forth God's ultimate standard for our lives.

That ultimate standard is Jesus. He

is the Good Samaritan and the lover of his enemies. God desires that we should all live as Jesus lived. The way that Jesus lived was in a constant awareness of God's presence, and a never wavering desire to fulfill God's purpose for his life. That is God's desire for our lives as well, although none of us lives such a life. We all very easily wander from an awareness of God's presence and purpose, but hidden in the bad news concerning our failure to live the way that God calls us to live is the good news that God's forgiveness is greater than our sin. This is the nature of the gospel.

That is, that what appears to be bad news turns out to be good news. What appears to be the bad news of the crucifixion turns out to be the good news of the resurrection, and what appears to be the bad news about our sin, which Jesus shows us is much greater than we imagine, turns out to be the good news that God's forgiveness is greater than our sin.

Of course, in order to realize that good news, and experience the greatness of God's forgiveness, we must agree with Jesus concerning the greatness of our sin. Sadly, this is the one thing that religious people do not want to do. They do not want to see themselves as sinners, but that is exactly what the teachings of Jesus are intended to do.

The Jesus revelation is intended to convict us and convince us of our great need of forgiveness and mercy. Many of us have difficulty taking in that revelation since our inclination is to want to be good. We want God to love us because we are good, but God loves us because he is good and not because we are good. He loves us because of his

forgiveness and mercy, and he wants us to love others as he loves them, not because of their goodness but because we have become forgiving by having received much forgiveness.

This is the good news that is hidden in what otherwise appears to be the bad news that none of us measures up to the standard that Jesus sets forth. Like the good news of the resurrection which is hidden in the bad news of the crucifixion, we need to see the good news that is hidden in what appears to be the bad news of the fact that the standard that Jesus sets forth is way beyond us.

In the story of the rich, young man who came to Jesus and asked what he must do to have eternal life, Jesus ultimately tells him to sell his possessions, give the money to the poor, and come and follow him.¹⁷ The Gospel says the man 'became sad; for he was very rich'.¹⁸ Jesus responds by saying, 'It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.'¹⁹

At this point the disciples seem to realize just how radical Jesus' teachings are and respond by asking, 'Then who can be saved?'²⁰ To which Jesus says, 'For mortals it is impossible, but for God all things are possible.'²¹ It is possible for God because of the greatness of his mercy. But that is not the end of the story.

The reason God sets before us an impossible standard that only Jesus

could achieve is because it is our failure to achieve that standard that produces the transformation that God intends for our lives. The purpose of the gospel is to convict us of our sin and convince us that our need for forgiveness is much greater than we imagine.

The good news that comes out of this is not simply that God's forgiveness is greater than our sin. The gospel is not ultimately about being forgiven. Ultimately it is about us becoming forgiving as he is forgiving. In the passages right after those passages which have become known as the Lord's Prayer, Jesus says,

For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive others, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses.²²

The Christian life is all about becoming like Jesus in regard to forgiveness and love. The process by which that happens is a matter of being forgiven much in order that eventually we would become forgiving people ourselves. Jesus says, 'He who is forgiven little, loves little.' In order to love much, we must be forgiven much. This is one of the reasons why the last will be first and the first last.²³ It is also why the righteous do not find favour with God. They believe that they have no need of forgiveness and therefore they never become the forgiving and loving people God intends them to be.

The idea of being forgiven much in

17 Mt. 19:21.

18 Luke 18:23.

19 Mt. 19:24.

20 Mt. 19:25.

21 Mt. 19:26.

22 Mt. 5:14-15.

23 Mt. 19:30.

order that we might love much does not mean that we need to be forgiven for some great sin. We easily forget being forgiven for big sins just as easily as we forget being forgiven for little sins.

Recall the parable Jesus tells of the man who was forgiven the great debt and then turned around and demanded payment from someone who owed him only a little.²⁴ It is not the size of the sin that is forgiven that makes us into forgiving people, but the number of times we have been forgiven. We are dull creatures and slow to learn. In order to become forgiving, we need to repeatedly experience God's forgiveness. The way we do that is to live in an almost constant state of repentance.

Of course, this does not mean that we should sin in order that forgiveness may abound.²⁵ That is not necessary. If we take Jesus words seriously, we already are sinning. None of us is living the way Jesus lived and calls us to follow. None of us is being the Good Samaritan to all who are in need. None of us is practising forgiveness the way Jesus practised forgiveness. None of us is living in a constant awareness of God's presence the way Jesus did.

The good news, however, is that every time we find ourselves distracted from an awareness of his presence—every time we find ourselves not following Jesus into the kind of love and forgiveness that he modelled—all we need to do is to turn back to God in repentance.

Since our hearts are so prone to wander, this turning back to God should be the almost constant state in

which we find ourselves. By doing so, we put ourselves in a place of receiving an almost constant flow of forgiveness, and it is that constant experience of God's forgiveness that eventually makes us into the forgiving people that God desires us to be.

V Repentance

Although this is ultimately good news, a gospel of repentance is not something that most people find appealing. The idea of living in an almost constant state of repentance seems morose rather than joyful. That, however, is only because our understanding of repentance is based upon our experience with human beings. With human beings repentance does indeed involve remorse. If someone offends us and then seeks forgiveness, we require some degree of remorse on their part or we think that their repentance does not deserve our forgiveness. If we feel that they are not sorry for hurting us, and that they are not deeply committed to never hurting us again, we think it foolish to extend forgiveness. This is not at all how it is with God.

Repentance, from God's perspective, has almost nothing to do with remorse, but rather is simply a matter of turning back to him. In the story of the Prodigal Son there is no remorse on the part of the prodigal. He returns to his father because he is hungry. Furthermore, the father in the story does not look to see if the son is sorry for what he had done. The father cares about nothing but the fact that the son has returned.²⁶

24 Mt. 18:23-35.

25 Rom. 6:1.

26 Luke 15:11-32.

Likewise, when the man on the cross turns and asks Jesus to remember him when he comes into his kingdom,²⁷ there is no indication that the man is sorry for having offended God with his sin. Indeed, he most likely is not even aware of having offended God. He does know that he has committed a crime against the state, and is paying for it, but there is no indication that he is aware of having offended God. That is the case with most of us. It is easy for us to see that we have offended another person by stealing their money or lying to them, but it is not so easy to see how we have offended God.

Of course, we could imagine that our disobedience to God's commandments offends God's honour. This is the notion of sin that is behind the medieval theory of atonement that claimed our disobedience dishonoured God, and therefore Jesus suffered God's wrath in our place. Or, we could imagine that our stealing or lying brings harm to people whom God loves, and therein is the offence. There may be some truth to this, but it does not get at the heart of the matter concerning sin.

The truth is that our sin or offence against God occurs long before anything shows up in our behaviour. Long before our behaviour could dishonour him or harm people who he loves, God's heart is grieved because we do not live as Jesus lived. God wants us to experience the fullness of life just as Jesus did. That fullness of life begins and ends with a constant awareness of God's presence. Whenever we are distracted from an awareness of God's

presence by some idol that captures our attention, God's heart is grieved because he knows the evil and destruction that will follow when we try to find life and meaning apart from him. We, however, are almost always oblivious of God's great love for us, and how he is grieved by the destruction we bring upon ourselves when we wander from his presence.

If God required that our repentance be based upon genuine remorse for our offence rather than simply turning back to him, there would be no hope for any of us, since we are all woefully ignorant of the extent of our sin and how grieved God is over our wanderings. Indeed, we will never understand our sin, and how we have offended God, until we see how much God intended to bless us, and how we rejected those blessings in order to pursue trivial existences largely spent apart from God. Since we cannot experience much of that in our earthly existence, repentance is, for the most part, remorseless and simply a matter of turning back to him.

This is not to say that we do not often experience remorse when we repent, but that is something that we bring to the experience because of our all too human understanding. It is natural to sense that God requires such remorse since that is what we have experienced so universally with human beings, but that sense comes from what we bring to the experience rather than what God brings.

VI Understanding Our God Experiences

Our God experiences are always a com-

27 Luke 23:39-43.

posite of our becoming aware of God's presence and our all too human interpretation of that experience. Furthermore, our understanding of any God experience is always different from the experience itself. This should not be surprising since our understanding of even the most mundane experiences is different from our later understanding of those experiences.

That is because we do not record experiences objectively but rather what is presented to us in experience is filtered through our concepts, values, desires, moods, and philosophical perspectives. These filters, of which so many of us are oblivious, create our interpretation of the experience. That interpretation is always different from what was given in the experience. Many people have God experiences but their filters do not allow them to interpret anything of God in those experiences. Likewise, others have God experiences, but, because they are unaware of their all too human filters, they think that it is all God and they cannot recognize anything of themselves in the experience.

The truth is somewhere in the middle, and what we record as our God experiences are the product of both God and ourselves. It is, however, very difficult to separate out from these convoluted experiences what is our part and what is from God. The best way to sort out what is from God and what is our own stuff that we bring to our God experiences is to hold our interpretation up to the light of the gospel. The gospel has a way of exposing the dross

and all the religious junk that plays such a big part in creating an interpretation of our God experiences.

What the light of the gospel reveals is that we are all sinners. We have all grieved the heart of God. None of us lives the way Jesus calls us to live, and we are all in need of forgiveness and mercy. This needs to be the major element through which we filter and come to understand our God experiences. When we understand our God experiences through such a perspective, we spend our lives seeking God's forgiveness and mercy, and in time becoming like him in regard to forgiveness and mercy.

Without Jesus' gospel to filter our God experiences, we almost certainly become like the Pharisees of Jesus' day or the religious people of our day. That is, we become a people who strive to become holy by doing what we believe God commands and thus avoid the need for forgiveness and mercy.

The gospel, however, tells us that we become holy not by doing it right and avoiding the need of forgiveness but by realizing that we do it wrong and are in great need of forgiveness and mercy. Like the law of the Old Testament, everything that Jesus taught was meant to convict us and show us our great need for forgiveness and mercy in order that in time we would become forgiving and merciful. This is the holiness to which the gospel calls us—not that we would become sinless but that we would become forgiving as he is forgiving.

Confirming the Christian Scholar and Theological Educator's Identity through New Testament Metaphor

John M. Hitchen

KEYWORDS: *Servant leadership, church, apostle, Pharisee, scribe, Hupēretes, custodian, manager*

WHO AM I AS A CHRISTIAN scholar or theological educator? The way we understand ourselves, and are understood by those we influence, can be a vital factor in determining the nature and extent of that influence. As the apostle Paul addressed the issues facing the Corinthian church he gave particular attention to perceptions of their theological leaders and teachers. Paul had diagnosed two problems: the Corinthians were stunted in their spiritual growth—still fundamentally immature; and sadly divided by petty jealousy and inter-party quarrelling (1 Cor. 3:1-4). Paul warned they were still ‘fleshly’ or worldly, mimicking the values of their surrounding culture; like mere humans, ‘behaving in a secular

fashion’, as Andrew Clarke puts it.¹ This paper focuses on one feature of the way the apostle responded to these Corinthian issues.²

1 Corinthians 3-4 suggests that to overcome worldly immaturity and disunity amongst Christians requires clear thinking about those who teach and lead the church. For the apostle, inappropriate perceptions of Christian scholars, teachers and leaders, contribute to division and keep believers as mere babes in spiritual experience. In these chapters Paul drew attention repeatedly to the Corinthians’ thinking about their teachers: ‘What then is Apollos, What is Paul?’ (1 Cor.3:5);

¹ Andrew D. Clarke, *Secular and Christian Leadership in Corinth: A Socio-Historical and Exegetical Study of 1 Corinthians 1-6* (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 110.

² See Clarke, *Secular & Christian Leadership*, 109-118 for a careful study of the problems.

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'Let no one boast about human leaders' (3:21); 'This, then, is how you ought to regard us...', (4:1); 'I have applied all this to Apollos and myself for your benefit...', (4:6).³ As Gordon Fee says succinctly, 'At issue is their radically misguided perception of the nature of the church and its leadership, in this case especially the role of the teachers.'⁴

We want to take up this apostolic clue as it applies to the role of Christian scholars and theological educators as leaders, opinion formers and teachers within the Christian community. The apostle's argument in 1 Corinthians 3-4 suggests our self-understanding as Christian scholars, and the perceptions attributed to us by those we influence as educators, can promote vital growth to maturity and unity, or they can hinder such proper development in our spheres of influence. We pursue our exploration in three steps, first surveying the dominical background in Jesus' attitude to theological scholars, then tracing Luke's development of one particular metaphor for the scholarly task, before reaching the apostle Paul's mature application of that same metaphor to address the identified problems at Corinth.

I The Dominical Background:

Jesus Challenges Theological Scholars of His Day

In Jesus' day, a well recognised group

of Jewish theological scholars was responsible for interpreting and preserving the theological and religious writings of their people. They taught the principles and requirements of those writings. They served as legal specialists in applying the writings to daily life, and some, at least, studied the writings for a better understanding of their theological content. They are spoken of often in the Gospels. Older English Bible versions call them, the 'scribes'; or in more recent versions, 'lawyers', or 'teachers of the law'—the '*grammateus*' word-group in Greek.⁵

a) The 'Bad Press' of the Scribes in the Gospels.

While the level of critique varies between the Gospel writers, as Twelftree shows,⁶ the overall impression is that the scribes consistently opposed Jesus: by questioning his grasp of the Law and his credentials as a teacher; criticizing his social connections and failure to maintain ritual purity; plotting to destroy him after he cleansed the Temple; and even scoffing as he died on the cross (e.g., Mk.2:6, 16; 3:22; 11:18.27; 15:1, 31). This kind of theological scholar, common in Jesus' day, whatever their status in Judaism, from the perspective of the Gospels, was not very highly esteemed because of their traditionalism and basic refusal to accept the way of Jesus.

³ Biblical quotations throughout this paper are from the TNIV

⁴ Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* [NICNT] (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 128.

⁵ G. H. Twelftree, 'Scribes', in Joel B. Green & Scot McKnight (Eds.), *Dictionary of Jesus & the Gospels* (Downers Grove, Ill: Intervarsity, 1992), 732-35.

⁶ Twelftree, 'Scribes', 734-35.

b) Jesus' critique and response to the Scribes.

Jesus criticises the scribes in his teaching—challenging their use of the Law, desire for status, and manipulation of their followers (e.g., Mk.12:35-40). His most stringent critique links the scribes with the Pharisees in Matthew 23. While respecting the dignity of their role as Moses' interpreters, Jesus upbraids them for hypocrisy, self-serving abuse of their influence, selfish ambition and distortion of the intention of the word of God. It would be easy to assume Jesus opposed scholarship and the profession dedicated to the theological version of it, if that was as far as it went. But there is another aspect to Jesus' view of such scholarly work. As his critique of these scribes reaches its climax, Matthew 13:33-34 reads: 'You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell? Therefore I am sending you prophets, and sages and scribes. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town...'

Jesus' final response to scribes who have gone so seriously wrong was to send another kind of spokesperson, wise persons and learned scribes whose message and meekness will be so radically different that the usual scribes will react in violent persecution. Jesus opposed the wrong kind of theological scholarship, not theological scholarship as such. His counter strategy specifically included a new kind of scribe amongst those he commissions to continue his work, even though their learning and lifestyle will provoke costly opposition and persecution. This new genre of scribes and

wise people will have a special role in his ongoing mission. The kingly rule of Christ depends on the contribution of gifted theological scholars responsive to the commissioning and deployment purposes of their new King.

c) Distinctives of the new Christ-ruled scribe.

Jesus had developed this idea of a new kind of scribe in his concluding 'parable of the kingdom,' in Matthew 13:52.⁷ The parable focuses on scribes who have been discipled for, by, or in the Kingdom of Heaven. This discipling involves 'recognition of the revelation [Jesus] is and brings, and submission to the reign he inaugurates and promises'.⁸ Once transformed in this way, this new kind of scholar is, 'like a household head—an *oikodespotes*—bringing treasure out of his store—both old and new' (Matt.13:52).

The metaphor of this parable likens the task of theological scholarship to filling a household storeroom with a rich supply of insight, experience and lessons, for maintaining and enhancing the daily lives of the whole household. Christian scholar/educators, like the wise household head, through the kingdom-oriented discipleship process, 'bring out of [their] storeroom new treasures as well as old'.

⁷ While recognising the strength of other views, we accept this verse as one of Jesus' parables, not a concluding addition of Matthew's, as set out by D.A. Carson, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 8, Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), 303-4.

⁸ Carson, *Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 8*, 333.

They are now equipped with a sense of history. With Christ as King all their previous experience, cultural heritage and learning become potential resources to supply the household needs. They are now alert with a sense of the timeliness and appropriateness of different teachings, recognising how to draw on their varied 'stores' of experience, study and learning to suit each new situation. They now sense the value and relevance of both the old wisdom and the ever growing stores of new experiences and insights from their study and life-reflection now guided by the Spirit of God. No longer able merely to offer old, traditional material, they now discern the cutting edge priority of both old and new truths and lessons for their present contexts.

So Jesus' ministry has confronted the old patterns of theological scholarship and presented a challenge to renew and reclaim that scholarly task for its real purpose, fulfilling the missional intention of the King of Kings. But Jesus is under no illusion and warns about the cost involved in such commissioned and obedient scholarship.

II The Lukan Development:

Christian Scholars as Custodian-Servants—the *Hupēretēs* Metaphor

Luke develops the household context in a different direction, taking up the Greek term *hupēretēs* and associating it with the scholarly task. The meaning of this *hupēretēs* term needs clarifying, as does how it relates to other words with which it is associated in the New Testament.

Rengstorf, in his definitive article explains, 'The noun *hupēretēs* is always used in a general sense similar to that of classical and Hellenistic Greek [to mean]: "assistant to another as the instrument of his will".'⁹ Thus the term belongs with other words for servants: like a household servant, *diakonos*; farm labourer, *sunergos*; and a household steward, *oikonomos* all of which, like *hupēretēs*, appear in the 1 Corinthians 3-4 passage to which we shall return.

a) But what is distinctive about a *hupēretēs*?

Many nineteenth and twentieth Century scholars analysed the term etymologically and suggested its component root and prefix mean the *hupēretēs* was an 'under-rower' as, for instance, in the crew of the trireme—the third, lowest row of rowers propelling ancient warships.¹⁰ But this explanation is seriously flawed. As Don Carson has shown conclusively, the word never has this 'assistant rower' connotation in any clear ancient reference, and there is no evidence of the word being used in that way in New Testament times.¹¹

9 Karl Heinrich Rengstorf, 'Hupēretēs, hupēreteō', in Freidrich Gerhard (Ed), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol VIII (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972), 539.

10 See, e.g., William Barclay, *New Testament Words* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975); Leon Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians* [TNTC] (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1958), 74.

11 Donald A Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1984), 26-28. I acknowledge the advice of my colleague, David Kirkby, in finding this Carson material.

12 Rengstorf, *TDNT* Vol VIII, 539.

So, even if this means, as it did for me, discarding favourite sermon illustrations, this should no longer be taken as the basic meaning of *hupêretês*. Rather, Rengstorf advises: '...the specific function of a *hupêretês* is to be gleaned from the context in which it appears. This is true at any rate in most of the NT instances'.¹²

The term *hupêretês* is sometimes used in a common, everyday sense. Luke and John both use the word nine times, and Mark and Matthew twice each. In most of these the *hupêretês* is sent by an authority figure—a judge (Mt. 5:25f), the 'Chief Priest' (Mt. 26:58), or 'Chief Priests and Pharisees' (Jn 7:32,45f; Ac.5:22, 26), etc.,—to follow out their commands. So this everyday usage normally refers to 'the [armed] servant of someone in authority'.¹³

But it is noteworthy that each of these references also carries the idea of a 'guard', 'warder', or 'security or custody officer' of some official. Before Pilate, Jesus uses the term in the plural when he says: 'My kingdom is not of this world, if it were, my *hupêretai* would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place.' In this passage, we could translate *hupêretai* by 'bodyguards' or 'minders' to bring out the emphasis Jesus intends. This 'custodian' or 'caretaker' function appears

important in the Gospel uses of *hupêretês*.

In Luke 4:20 the attendant in the Nazareth Synagogue, to whom Jesus returns the Isaiah Scroll after reading from it, is designated a *hupêretês*. Describing procedures in the Jewish Synagogues of New Testament times, Yamauchi explains:

The *hazzan* [Heb.] or "attendant" was the one who took care of the Scripture scrolls. Jesus gave back the Isaiah scroll to such an attendant (Gk, *hupêretês*)... in later practice the *hazzan* was paid and lodged at the synagogue as a caretaker.¹⁴

Here the *hupêretês* is identified as a resource custodian. Like any good librarian, the *hupêretês* knows where to locate, access, make available, then store, care for, and keep secure, the precious scrolls. The warder becomes a warden. The custody officer becomes a custodian. This inherent custodian function on behalf of the one who gives the care-taking responsibility is what appears distinctive about the *hupêretês*.

In Luke 1:2 and Acts 26:16 *hupêretês* is twinned with 'eyewitness' or 'witness' as a double description of a particular group of people, or a particular person.¹⁵ Howard Marshall explains,

14 Edward Yamauchi, 'Synagogue' in Green & McKnight (Eds.), *Dictionary Of Jesus and the Gospels*, 782.

15 Both Marshall and Witherington make the point that grammatically in Lk 1:2 the 'eyewitnesses' must also be the 'servants of the word': I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* [NIGTC] (Exeter: Paternoster, 1978), 42; Ben Witherington, III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 744.

13 K.Hess, s.v., Serve: 'Diakonêō' in Colin Brown (Gen. Ed.), *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol. 3 Pri-Z (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1975), 546-7; Revised as, Verlyn Verbrugge, (Ed.), *The NIV Theological Dictionary of New Testament Words* [Abridgement of NIDNTT] (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 315.

“(S)ervants [*hupēretai*] of the word”, [is] a striking phrase conveying the thought of the centrality of the gospel message and of the way in which [people] are its servants.”¹⁶

Both these Lukan uses of *hupēretēs* suggest that eyewitnesses have a custodian responsibility. It is not enough to be a witness and simply share the experience of having lived, walked and talked with Jesus. Witnesses must also take responsibility to preserve, protect and hand on faithfully what they have come to know and enjoy. Linking the two terms in this way also implies that the *hupēretēs* as a custodian of the sacred records was not a merely objective guardian—a personal testimonial function was involved, witnessing to the veracity of their manuscripts.

In the opening paragraph of his Gospel, Luke presumably included Mark in this group of those who had both seen the Lord personally and then recorded and handed on their testimony for posterity. Likewise, in Acts 26:16, describing how Paul before King Agrippa conflated what Jesus had said to him directly on the Damascus Road, through Ananias, and through further vision in the Temple,¹⁷ Luke sums up Paul's role as commissioned to bear witness and to serve the risen Lord by preserving that witness for the sake of others. Luke sees Mark and Paul, the New Testament scholars he depended on as major sources for his own Gospel scholarship, as *hupēretai*—the servant term particularly applicable to those

entrusted with the tasks of conserving theological biography and letters.

As John Mark accompanies his uncle Barnabas and Paul on their first missionary journey, Luke describes his function in Acts 13:5 as that of a *hupēretēs*. Some scholars suggest John Mark served as a catechist, responsible to teach new converts about the life and ministry of Jesus.¹⁸ F.F. Bruce explains, ‘...some scholars have taken [*hupēretēs*] to mean that he put at their disposal his special knowledge of certain important phases of the story of Jesus, in particular the passion narrative’.¹⁹

We have already warned about the way scholarly flights of fancy have distorted our understanding of this term. But, even allowing for due interpretive caution, we can summarise Luke's use of the term in the Gospel and Acts by suggesting Luke saw *hupēretēs* as particularly applicable to the work of those who researched, wrote, transmitted and cared for the Scriptures. A consistent understanding of the mean-

16 Marshall, *Luke*, 42.

17 F.F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary* (London: Tyndale, 1951), 444.

18 E.g., William Barclay, ‘A Comparison of Paul's Missionary Preaching and the Preaching of the Church’, in Ward Gasque and Ralph P. Martin, (Eds), *Apostolic History & the Gospel* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1970), 169-70.

19 F.F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of Acts: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 3rd Ed. 1962), 263. Bruce (*Acts: Greek Text*, 255) had earlier explained, ‘Even at this early stage [John Mark] may have begun to take notes of the Kerugma, especially as proclaimed by Peter, who was a welcome guest in his home; this would make him a useful companion to the missionaries. He may also have had first-hand knowledge of some of the momentous events of Passion Week.’

ing of the term as he employed it in Luke 1:2, 4:20, Acts 13:5 and 26:16 would be, 'trusted resource custodian'.

III Apostolic Application:

Paul's Use of the *hupēretēs* Metaphor in 1 Corinthians 3-4.

From the series of metaphors Paul used in 1 Corinthians 3-4 to explain the right way to regard Christian teachers and leaders, we focus only on the way he develops the *hupēretēs* term.²⁰ At a crucial point in his prescription for correcting the identified problems of immaturity and division in the Corinthian church (at 4:1), Paul advises, 'Think of us in this way, as servants of Christ and stewards of God's mysteries...'

Paul's word for 'servant', used here in the plural, is the Greek word *hupēretai*. The verse is pivotal in its immediate context—closely linked to the previous paragraph as well as to what follows. The previous paragraph sets the conceptual context in which the *hupēretēs* term functions in 4:1.

a) The welcoming, inclusive epistemological context

This immediate context differentiates between God's and the world's wisdom. In 1 Corinthians 1:10-3:17, Paul had already challenged the Corinthians

to grasp the difference between the wisdom of this age and the apparent 'folly' of God: a foolishness evidenced by the way God works through a crucified Messiah, uses insignificant people of no social status, and relies on preaching about the cross to communicate the strange wisdom of his purposes through the Spirit. Such strategies leave the Corinthians no grounds whatsoever to boast in different human leaders, least of all their Christian educators.

In 1:18-2:16 Paul had particularly shown that God's wisdom appeared foolish from the perspective of human wisdom. Now in 3:18-23 he says human wisdom is foolish from God's viewpoint.²¹ The supposed wisdom of this world is narrow and selective. Indeed, it fostered jealousy and divisiveness as the Corinthians demonstrated all too well with their claims, 'I am of Paul', 'I am of Apollos'. God's radically different wisdom is broad, embracing and generous toward others with different teaching emphases.

God's wisdom readily utilises a wide range of resources. In the tightly packed reasoning of the paragraph, Paul notes key features of his understanding of acceptable epistemological resources for building up the church to maturity.

b) A theologically welcoming epistemological context.

Instead of fostering factions between rival theological instructors, God's

²⁰ The metaphors are: household servant, *diakonos* in Greek, 3:5; farm labourer, *sunergos*, 3:9; construction worker, *oikodemos*, 3:10; resource custodian, *hupēretēs*, 4:1; responsible steward, *oikonomos*, 4:1; fool for Christ, *moros*, 4:10; and parent in the faith, *pater*, 4:15.

²¹ Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, [NICNT] (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 152.

wisdom requires 'no more boasting about human leaders' (3:21).²² Rather than feel bound to loyally follow and obey just one of their teachers, as if they owned you, or you are 'of', and belong to one of them, the call was to embrace them all (3:21-22). In the apostle's understanding of God's wisdom, the different perspectives, insights and emphases represented by Peter, Apollos and himself are complementary. Each is necessary for full-orbed growth and health in the body. Christian teachers and leaders were not to be seen as owning and controlling their students or followers. Rather, the teachers belonged to their students to learn from as servants who brought them to maturity.

c) A welcoming, multi-disciplinary epistemological context.

Moreover, not only the full range of Christian teachers, but also all the resources of the cosmos were to be accepted as potential learning and instruction material. Whether the secular world itself, or the wide ranging lessons of life, or the darker experiences of death—these were God's resources, all given to the children of God for them to learn from, explore, and study. The Corinthians were to gather the contributions from across the time spans, past, present or future, never becoming stuck in a single generational time warp. 'All are yours!' (3:22).

d) A welcoming multi-cultural epistemological context.

Again, the triad 'Paul, Apollos and Cephas' challenged the Corinthians to transcend cultural and international ethnic boundaries as they drew on needed resources for a mature and united church. In European Corinth, Peter, especially when attributed his Aramaic name, Cephas, represented the first generation eyewitness knowledge of Christ from a rustic, Galilean-fisherman's perspective, with a strong Galilean accent to his testimony and teaching.

Paul would have been very different: a Hellenistic Jew born in Tarsus, schooled in their diaspora synagogue, and tertiary-trained under Gamaliel as a strict Pharisee in Jerusalem, before his transforming and intellectually reshaping encounter on the Damascus road and its aftermath in Arabia and Cilicia. Paul's blend of Hebraic scriptural loyalty with Greek overtones from the Roman provinces, gave him a quite distinct cultural perspective from Peter.

The scripturally well-versed, eloquent, Alexandria-born African, Apollos was different again. Racially of Jewish stock, but a diasporan migrant whose personal tertiary formation owed much to the homely, trans-gender theological tutoring he received in the provincial Asian capital of Ephesus, he would appeal to the oratorically sophisticated amongst his Corinthian hearers. The cultural and social backgrounds and theological training pathways of the three could hardly be more diverse. But over them all, the apostle wrote, 'All are yours'.

This inclusive call presented a dis-

22 C. K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* [Black's New Testament Commentary] (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1968), 94-95.

tinctly new way of responding to the fact that human wisdom is folly in God's sight. The believer was not to withdraw from the world into a theologically or culturally isolated Christian ghetto, nor to huddle around the one favoured leader/teacher who endorsed all the preferred doctrinal options without deviation. Far from it. Here was a God-given charter for Christian scholars and theological educators to embrace the full diversity of viewpoints in the family of God. They and their hearers were not to retreat into what we might call a denominationally, ethnically, theologically, ideologically or stylistically bounded isolation, accepting instruction only from those whom they naturally preferred.²³ The wisdom of God, in 1 Corinthians 3:22b, banished even the dualism which separated sacred and secular and accepted only the former as valid instructional material. Every area of study and investigation was here sanctified as resource material for the growth and unity of the people of God.

So if we may make the hermeneutical leap to a twenty-first century vantage-point, we could say: whether it is study of this 'world/age' through physical, social, and medical sciences; or study of human experience of the 'life-death' continuum through philosophy, anthropology, psychology or counselling; or the 'past-future' continuum through history, economics, or theology, they are all God-given resources to interact with constructively for Christian life, witness and maturity growth.

e) The evangelical heart of the epistemological context

There was, however, one proviso. '...They are all yours, but you are Christ's' (3:22-23). The Corinthian believers did belong to one person—not Paul or Apollos or Cephas, as they boasted—but to their Lord, and to him both teachers and taught must be loyal at all times, especially in their scholarship and learning. The full breadth of study and exploration was to be brought consciously under the Lordship of Christ Jesus. He, in turn, ensures it will glorify God the Father (v.23). Such a missional freedom and generous expansiveness of viewpoint provides scholarship with an academic freedom securely rooted in the theological realities of the Lordship of Christ and the unity of the Godhead.

Such freedom required clear perceptions of who the scholar/teacher is and what he or she is doing as they traverse these now welcoming scholarly fields. Let us note, then, with appropriate present-day application, how our *hupêretês* term re-appears within this Corinthian epistemological context.

f) Christian Scholars are to be resource custodians

At the centre of this 1 Corinthians 3-4 section on how to perceive Christian leaders and teachers, Paul now says definitively, 'This, then, is how you ought to regard us: as *hupêretai*—resource custodians!' (4:1). Christian leaders need to know their sources in all their depth and breadth theologically, ecclesiastically, culturally and across the disciplines, as the apostle has just shown. They are the ones who locate the appropriate and relevant

²³ See Fee's pointed application, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 155-56.

teachings for each particular occasion, and ensure those resources will be kept safe and accessible for the next time they are needed. These are, of course, the basic tasks of research, scholarship and librarianship.

Christian leaders need such scholarly skills. Christian scholars are to be Christ's librarians, discoverers and curators of the wealth of material from the range of sources for effective work in their field of study. This is the way Christians are to conceive their leaders—as the resource persons able to equip and 'service' them for their obedience to Christ wherever he has placed them vocationally as his representatives (cf., Eph. 4:12).

g) Responsible Managers of God's Mysteries.

To the *hupēretēs* term Paul links as a necessary twin the word for a household steward or responsible manager, in Greek *oikonomos*: the servant to whom the household head delegates the managerial responsibilities of the household. The *oikonomos* was classically exemplified in Joseph's role in Potiphar's household, Genesis 39:1-6. As Towner elaborates:

The dominance of the household concept in Paul's thought... influenced his perception of the ministry and the minister. Paul's ministry thus comes under the category of 'stewardship' (*oikonomia*, 1 Cor. 9:17; Col. 1:25), that is a task entrusted by the master to a member of the household. The one who receives this trust, the minister, is called a 'steward' (1 Cor. 4:1; Titus 1:7). Such a description emphasises the need for faithful execution of

duties and accountability to the master.²⁴

This link between *hupēretēs* and *oikonomos* in 4:1 is elaborated in two main responsibilities in the following paragraph. The custodian manager is responsible for the 'mysteries of God' (4:1). The gospel was, for Paul, a previously hidden, but now openly manifest message. Its mystery value relates to that earlier hidden-ness.²⁵ Christian leaders and scholars are responsible to manage and take custodian care of the wealth, resources and dynamic potential inhering in this glorious message centred on the Lord Jesus Christ. This honour carries matching obligation.

Responsible custodian managers are to be faithful and accountable. In a transparently biographical passage (1Cor. 4:1-5), Paul develops the Christian scholar/teacher's sense of accountability by referring to three possible courts which may distort this accountability and with which, therefore, he had come to terms.

Sometimes those being served have unrealistic expectations, or misjudge

24 Philip H. Towner, 'Households and Household Codes', in Gerald F Hawthorne & Ralph P. Martin (Eds.), *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters* (Downers Grove, Ill: Intervarsity, 1993), 418.

25 Cf., Colossians 1:25-29, where Paul again describes his missional service as a 'management responsibility', *oikonomia*, and outlines its threefold nature. He has a message to make fully known, Col. 1:25; riches of the previously hidden but now open secret to bring to people of every culture, namely, that Christ among them guarantees the hope of glory, Col. 1:26-7; and Paul has people to bring to maturity in Christ by his preaching and warning, Col. 1:28-29.

the steward's performance. Paul had learned to say, 'I care very little if I am judged by you [Corinthians whom I serve]...' (4:3). Then there are the many 'human courts' which so easily go beyond their rightful claims on a theological teacher's accountability. Paul 'cared very little' about their judgements, too (4:3). One wonders whom he had in mind? Were they examiners, moderators, journal editors, peer reviewers, Performance Based Research Funding Panels, Faculty Research Committees, or College Councils? Perhaps present-day Christian scholars, perfectionists as we often tend to be, find it hardest to join Paul in his next claim: 'Indeed, I do not even judge myself' (4:3).

Our own self-criticism can be the most severe of all our judges. Paul was not claiming some vaunted 'academic freedom' for himself. He has learned a vital secret of Christian leadership and effective scholarship. Ultimately, true freedom does not emanate from a freedom of conscience before any of these three kinds of assessment body. In themselves, important as each may be, they are unable to ensure the commitment to integrity, honesty and depth of commitment essential for academic freedom.

That freedom belongs to those who keep short accounts before their heavenly Judge. Christ the Lord alone includes the Christian scholar's deepest motivation as he judges performance, progress and output. And that ultimate evaluation awaits a very special appointment planned for each teacher, in person. At that assessment the Examiner has a predisposition towards praise, not blame (4:4-5).

Free, indeed, are the theological

educators who responsibly manage their custodial roles in such a way that they can accept with equanimity the interim judgements of those they serve, or of the various courts to which they must give earthly accounts, and at the same time are not slaves to the driven-ness, fear, or 'workaholism' that spring from a personal sense of inadequacy about their work. Relaxed expectation and joyous anticipation of judgement from a much higher court than any of these were, for Paul, the way to such freedom, and to more productive study, scholarship and teaching!

h) So, no boasting, only grateful service.

Paul concludes this call to custodian care and faithful management of resources as Christian leaders and theological educators with a reminder that to grasp the point of these verses totally excludes any ground for the boasting and status seeking common in the church at Corinth (4:6-7). So too, for us, healthy self-perceptions on the scholar's part, and a clarified understanding of what Christian leadership and scholarship mean in God's sight, will bring the winsome humility and academic openness that release from the politicking and selfish ambition common in academic circles.

Conclusion

We are all too conscious of the immaturity and petty jealousies and divisions that hinder us as Christ's people in our post-modern world. Our contention has been that one aspect of a resolution to this state of affairs

depends on the self understandings we bring to our task as theological educators and Christian scholars, and the ascriptions of our role and status we accept from others. We suggest that in Christ's and the apostles' metaphors of kingdom-disciplined scribes, and the custodian resource manager—the *hupêretēs*—of the gospel mysteries, we have powerful re-orienting, motivating and corrective guidance for renewed commitment to our scholarly task.

These metaphors offer a charter for theological educators of today to break out of ethnocentric enclaves and embrace all of the European Christian heritage, all of the Majority world's non-western breadth of new theological insights, and the distinctive challenges from migrant diaspora church leaders in our day, and responsibly access and dispense them for the growth of the people of God under our care and instruction.

By indwelling these metaphors as

essential to our purpose and positioning, the routine, humdrum aspects of data collection, researching, writing and re-writing, cataloguing, filing and retrieving can become aspects of Christ-glorifying daily worship and service. With this as our identity-marker, studying the primary text of Scripture and the ever changing text of culture, drawing out the lessons and translating their message well for the various contexts that comprise our lives and vocations as scholar/teachers can take on new depths of satisfaction and meaning.

Here is a way to make our theology more genuinely faith-producing and devotional and our devotions more theological and obedient. The time is ripe for both the church and academy to catch a glimpse of what kingdom-disciplined scribes and responsible resource custodians of the mysteries of the Good News can be and do for Christ's glory.

Text and Task

Scripture and Mission

Michael Parsons (editor)

Practical, scriptural and contemporary, *Text and Task* is a series of essays on Scripture and mission. A team of biblical scholars suggest ways forward in areas such as the implicit missional narrative of David and Goliath, the story of Solomon and his Temple-building, the genre of lament, the explicit gracious message of the prophet Isaiah, Paul's understanding of divine call and gospel, and the place of mission as a hermeneutic for reading the Bible. Theological chapters engage the issues of the Trinity and the unevangelized, the missional dimensions of Barth's view of election, the gospel's loss of plausibility in the modern West, the place of preaching in mission, and the idea of belonging to a church community before one believes the gospel.

Michael Parsons lectures at the Baptist Theological College, Perth.

978-1-84227-411-8 / 229 x 152 mm / 232pp / £19.99

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Book Review

**The Oxford Handbook of
Evangelical Theology**
Edited by Gerald R. McDermott
Oxford: University Press, 2010
ISBN 978-0-19-536944-1
Hb, pp 524, index.

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

This recent addition to the valuable Oxford Handbook series (also with on-line access) offers some fresh approaches to a traditional genre. The authors (all with bios) of the 23 chapters are a mix of familiar names, such as Alister McGrath, the late Donald Bloesch and Henri Blocher, and many new ones. The editor teaches at Ronoake College and is a Distinguished Senior Fellow at the Baylor Institute for Studies of Religion.

The volume is truly a handbook, rather than a dictionary or encyclopaedia, so it covers the range of theological topics, grouped into six categories with survey articles which provide an insight into contemporary evangelical thinking, complete with select bibliographies. Even the topics are refreshing, covering, for example, worship (John D Witvliet) and spiritual gifts (Howard Snyder) under 'Theology of Church' and the arts (Roger Lundin), gender (Cherith Fee Nordling) and 'the vul-

nerable' (C Ben Mitchell) under 'Theological approaches to contemporary life'. Topics such as discipleship (Dallas Willard) and spiritual practices (Simon Chan) find their way into the 'Theology of Salvation' section.

The selection and treatment of topics is best understood by a careful reading of the editor's introduction which stresses the way evangelical theology has 'come of age' (thus being distinguished from earlier and similar theologies) and explains the 'definitions, assumptions and differences' which inform the content. A further section discusses 'new approaches in evangelical theology' which are filled out in the main chapters and offers some thoughts on 'the future of evangelical theology'. This introduction is supplemented in particular by the first chapter, Mark Noll's 'What is "Evangelical"?' There is welcome emphasis on biblical and theological method, including Kevin J. Vanhoozer's chapter on 'Scripture and Hermeneutics'.

As a whole the Handbook concisely yet comprehensively showcases the range, quality, focus and style of contemporary evangelicalism, albeit of the western variety, in a manageable format, and as such, makes a welcome addition to our libraries.

ABSTRACTS/INDEXING

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

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

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