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Evangelical Review of Theology

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



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Editorial

No matter how far around this world the Christian gospel extends, it must start in the heart! In this first issue for a new year, we begin there—in the renewed human heart—and end up not only in far distant lands but even beyond!

Ben Pugh (UK) returns to our pages with his theme-setting article showing that the vision of John Wesley for ‘Christian Perfection’, while sometimes controversial, touches on a vital truth of the gospel which has empowered Christians in their discipleship and mission.

We begin our global journey first in the Czech Republic where Pavel Hošek examines the recent history of the Evangelical movement in the post-Communist era, especially in relation to the way other Christians and secular media have perceived Evangelicals. Although there have been good reasons for at least some of the poor public image, there is hope that the situation is now improving.

We now travel further east to learn how one of the most influential 20th century American evangelical theologians impacts on the burgeoning church in China. G. Wright Doyle (USA) shows how the key features of Carl Henry’s theology, life and personal example relate to the Chinese church as it seeks out sound foundations and wise direction. Taken overall, Doyle believes that Henry is ‘perhaps one of the few Western Christians worthy to receive the admiration of our Chinese brothers and sisters’.

Our next location is Latin America

where Samuel Cueva (UK/Peru) provides an overview of the development of evangelical theology as seen in the series of congresses on evangelism (CLADE). His analysis of the most recent of these congresses, which strongly recognized the heritage of evangelical theology and some of its key founders (‘old lions’—many of whom are familiar to readers of this journal), suggests that it was a ‘crucial moment’ for the region, although there are still many challenges to face if the movement is to be as effective in the future as it was in the past.

West Africa is our next stop, where Wilson E. Ehianu looks at the rapid growth of Pentecostalism in Nigeria and draws some lessons—both negative and positive—that can be learned from their successes. He argues that other Christian traditions would do well to put an end to ‘antagonism’ and instead, benefit from this movement.

For our final article, we venture beyond the geographical to Middle-earth! Raymond Laird (Australia) looks at Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings* through biblical eyes. He focuses on the principle of weakness as the providential vehicle of the triumph of good over evil, thereby pointing to Tolkien as a theologically well informed and insightful writer.

This is the obverse of where we started this issue—and we can see that both holiness and the victory of the good point to the hope of the gospel for our needy world.

Thomas Schirrmacher, General Editor
David Parker, Executive Editor

The Wesleyan Way Entire Sanctification and its Spin-offs – a Recurring Theme in Evangelical Devotion

Ben Pugh

Keywords: Wesley, Entire Sanctification, Holiness Movement, Phoebe Palmer, Keswick, Freedom in Christ

Introduction

The story of the development and defence of John Wesley's doctrine of Christian Perfection is one of persistent misunderstanding and strenuous efforts at clarification. Yet, because of the variety of terms used: 'entire sanctification', 'perfect love', the 'second blessing', these efforts seemed only to muddy the waters still further. Then, in the 1760s, a revival at Otley, during which hundreds of people reported having had this experience, emboldened Wesley to write his classic work, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*. This text bequeathed to subsequent generations the conviction that something more was attainable than mere forgiveness. 'Forgiveness did not satisfy me, I wanted the dominion of sin

destroyed', said William Boardman, the inspiration behind the Keswick Conventions. The holiness movement in its many guises, Tuesday Meetings for the Promotion of Holiness, the Keswick Convention, the Salvation Army, the Pentecostal League of Prayer, and Pentecostalism itself were all the fruit of this insight that a consistently victorious Christian life was possible.

Down to the present day we have Neil Anderson and Steve Goss' *Freedom in Christ* course which urges participants – who now number in the hundreds of thousands – to believe the truth about who they are in Christ so that the truth can set them free from never-ending 'sin-confess-cycles'. If nothing else, the popularity of this course indicates that many evangelicals are still on this quest for a consistent victory over personal sin. The apostle Paul himself wrote that, 'sin shall not have dominion over you' (Rom. 6:14), and seemed to hold out precisely this possibility. However flawed Wes-

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ley's doctrine of Christian Perfection may have been, his teaching signposts us to a hope that many others also seem to have glimpsed. My point in writing this article is simply this: they can't all be wrong, and if they are even partially right, we have a message too good to keep to ourselves.

I The Wesleyan Way of Salvation

As early as 1746, John Wesley defined the way of salvation as repentance, faith and holiness: 'The first of these we account the porch of religion; the next the door; the third, religion itself.'¹ The Wesleyan way of salvation could also sometimes be summarised using Wesley's favourite text of Scripture for his sermons throughout the first year of the revival, 1739, which was 1 Corinthians 1:30:² Christ is our wisdom (by which we turn to God), righteousness (justification), sanctification (the start of the process) and redemption (the decisive completion of sanctification).

Sanctification, in Wesley's teaching, was an act of God, begun during regeneration, the completion of which involved complete deliverance from 'inbred', 'Adamic', or 'racial' sin. This was 'full' or 'entire' sanctification and completes what was begun at regeneration. The Reformed view, by contrast, emphasised the gradualness of sancti-

fication. It was: '...the work of God's free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness'.³

Here are some examples of the Wesleyan view, emphasising sanctification as centring around a single crisis moment.

Entire sanctification is essentially defined as an instantaneous cleansing from Adamic sin, and an empowerment, which Christian believers may receive, by faith, through the baptism with the Holy Spirit.⁴

By perfection I mean the humble, gentle, patient love of God and our neighbour, ruling our tempers, words, and actions.⁵

'(1) That Christian perfection is that love of God and neighbour, which implies deliverance from all sin. (2) That this is received merely by faith. (3) That it is given instantaneously in one moment. (4) That we are to expect it, not at death, but every moment.'⁶

Point 3, the instantaneous nature of sanctification, did not emerge until relatively late. It makes its first appearance in Wesley's sermon, *The Scripture Way of Salvation* of 1765 and is an idea that seems to have been bolstered by the testimonies that were circulating during the Otley perfectionist revival

1 John Wesley, 'The Principles of a Methodist Farther Explained', *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley M.A.* 14 Vols, T Jackson (ed) (3rd edn. London:1872), Vol.8, 472.

2 See Ted Campbell, *Wesleyan Beliefs: Formal and Popular Expressions of the Core Beliefs of Wesleyan Communities* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2010), 78-79.

3 K. Prior, *The Way of Holiness* (Chicago: Inter-Varsity, 1967), 8.

4 Kenneth Grider, *Entire Sanctification: The Distinctive Doctrine of Wesleyanism* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1980), 11.

5 John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (1767), 68.

6 Wesley, *Plain Account*, 65.

of the 1760s.⁷ He interviewed some 652 people who could all testify to an instantaneous transformation. For Campbell, the most compelling argument of all is Wesley's simple assertion: '1. God intends that we should love God completely. 2. God can accomplish what God intends.'⁸

This distinctive doctrine was described by Wesley as the 'grand depositum'⁹ of Methodism, and is also described in Charles Wesley's hymn, *Love Divine*. In the mind of John Wesley, 'salvation and holiness are synonymous terms'.¹⁰

II The Origins and Development of Entire Sanctification in John Wesley

1 The Moravian influence on the Wesleys

There is much competition over who or what should take pride of place as the most influential factor in the formation of John Wesley's theology. Hempton has pointed out the tendency of scholars of Wesley to '...compete for the pre-eminent influence over Wesley',¹¹ depending on what particular church tradition they represent. He concludes that rather than any one influence be-

ing pre-eminent in Wesley's theology, it is 'Wesley's eclecticism' itself that is 'pre-eminent'.¹²

Cracknell and White list Wesley's mother, Thomas á Kempis and Jeremy Taylor as his most important early influences during the period when he was preoccupied with the concept of 'purity of intention'.¹³ His journals would appear to reflect a strong Moravian influence, there being almost no references to the blood of Christ, a distinctive aspect of his doctrine of sanctification, in Wesley's journals until after he had made the acquaintance of Peter Böhler in February 1738, a little over three months before his Aldersgate experience (May 24). This experience sealed for him the truth of Böhler's theology. Hence, although Wesley's soteriology went on to become very different from that of the Moravians, its point of origin is almost certainly Moravian. Other much earlier influences need not be excluded, however.

Besides his imbibing of Kempis' mysticism, Wesley was brought up within the Puritan tradition. The Puritan belief in the inner witness of the Holy Spirit is very much preserved in the Wesleyan tradition.¹⁴ However, with the arrival of Moravian Peter Böhler in London, on February 7, 1738, the 'more definite influence' of the Moravian Church on English Christianity began.¹⁵ It is recorded that, 'On the very day of his landing Böhler made

⁷ So Herbert McGonigle, *Sufficient Saving Grace: John Wesley's Evangelical Arminianism* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2001), 257-8.

⁸ Sermon, 'The Scripture Way of Salvation', III:14-15. Campbell, *Wesleyan Beliefs*, 232.

⁹ Letter to Robert Brackenbury, 15 Sep 1790.

¹⁰ McGonigle, *Sufficient Saving Grace*, 242.

¹¹ Hempton, D., *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 56-57.

¹² Hempton, *Empire of the Spirit*, 56-57.

¹³ K. Cracknell, & S. J., White, *An Introduction to World Methodism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 7-9.

¹⁴ Campbell, *Wesleyan Beliefs*, 70.

¹⁵ Arthur Skevington Wood, *The Inextinguishable Blaze* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1960), 85.

the acquaintance of John Wesley'.¹⁶ John Wesley was later to become enamoured with the spirituality of Böhler, who displayed, '...dominion over sin and a constant peace from a sense of forgiveness', which Wesley saw as, '...a new gospel'.¹⁷

Wesley soon became a close companion of Zinzendorf himself. The split between the two leaders came in 1741 when Wesley and Zinzendorf could not agree on the issue of sanctification. The Fetter Lane Society had already split over the issue of quietism, the setting up of a new society at the Foundry on 23 July 1740 marking the beginning of the first Methodist Society. Zinzendorf's view of salvation was strictly forensic and firmly Lutheran.¹⁸ By August 1742, John Wesley's connections with the Moravians had become weak enough for him to overtly castigate them for their beliefs about the blood and wounds of Jesus, in a sermon described as 'very furious'.¹⁹

His estimation of Luther, likewise, cooled quite considerably. He had initially seen his doctrine of perfection as a completion of Luther's doctrine of justification – both operating purely by

faith.²⁰ By 1785, Wesley would speak much less flatteringly of Luther and his 'total ignorance of sanctification'.²¹ Much of his distaste for Moravian beliefs appears originally to have been about their love of Luther.

Wesley linked Luther with the dreaded spectre of antinomianism, which he saw too often in his converts. Wesley's passion for holiness of life made him suspicious of Luther and therefore of Moravian theology. There is some evidence, however, that John Wesley's soteriology, in the latter half of his years in ministry, became more Lutheran again and does make use of the concept of the imputed righteousness of Christ.²²

2 John Wesley's 'Christian Perfection'

Wesley held that a process of sanctification was begun in the heart at regeneration but that a second experience was needed to bring 'full salvation', or, 'entire sanctification'. This second blessing involved the cleansing away of all sin followed by an influx of love towards God and man taking its place in the believing heart. Hence entire sanctification was referred to as 'perfect love'. The blood of Christ, understood as effecting a complete and once-only

¹⁶ J. Hamilton, *A History of the Church Known as the Moravian Church During the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Bethlehem: The Moravian Church in America, 1900), 85.

¹⁷ John Wesley, *A Letter to the Right Reverend the Bishop of London* (London: W. Strahan, 1747).

¹⁸ The full conversation is available in English in Freeman, A., *An Ecumenical Theology of the Heart: The Theology of Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf* (Bethlehem: The Moravian Church in America, 1998), 188.

¹⁹ C. Podmore, *The Moravian Church in England 1728-1760* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 76.

²⁰ In 1738, Wesley referred to Luther as, 'that glorious champion of the Lord of Hosts'. Sermon: 'Salvation by Faith'. Outler, *Sermons* 1:129.

²¹ John Wesley, Sermon: 'On God's Vineyard', Outler, *Sermons* 3:505-6.

²² Piper discusses this, citing strong evidence from the primary literature as well as two recent studies of Wesley: John Piper, *Counted Righteous in Christ* (Leicester: IVP, 2002), 38.

cleansing, eradicated the negative, creating space for the inundation of the positive: the continual inclination to do the will of God. All failings from this point onwards were considered by Wesley to be unintentional.

He preferred to call all subsequent sins, 'infirmities', which the finished work of Christ continually covered. In this way, it was necessary for even the fully sanctified believer to continually lean upon the merits of Christ, just as a branch must draw sustenance from the tree, even though the believer is now, technically, perfect. The ambiguity of all this did not go unnoticed by Wesley's critics.

In the *Plain Account*, Wesley reminisces about the crucial insight given him by the Moravians concerning justifying faith as the essential preliminary to sanctification, describing it as, '...a firm confidence in God, and persuasion of His favour; the highest tranquillity, serenity, and peace of mind; with a deliverance from every fleshly desire, and a cessation of all, even inward sins'.²³ The Moravian insight that justification was by faith alone had changed his early doctrine of perfection into something that could happen to anyone if they were expectant.

His early doctrine of Christian Perfection had been decidedly semi-Pelagian, as expressed in his 1733 sermon, *The Circumcision of the Heart*, focusing as it did on the human means of attaining it.²⁴ His later doctrine of Perfection skirts around the issue of human good works as a means to sanctification and

focuses instead on the end achieved by it, much of his writing being taken up with defining precisely what Christian Perfection was in the face of those who misunderstood. His protagonists in the holiness movement would more than make up for Wesley's lack of definition concerning how precisely it was received.

III The Development of the Concept by the Holiness Movement

1 Methodism finds a home in America

The first Methodist sermon ever to be preached in America came from the mouth of Capt Thomas Webb in New York City in 1766.²⁵ During 1773-76, Methodism took firm hold in Virginia by means of a significant revival.²⁶ The founding of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1784²⁷ was followed, in 1787, by the founding of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, which, of all the Methodist groups in North America, would prove to be the most consistently loyal to Wesleyan perfectionism.²⁸

By 1800, Methodism, with its atten-

²³ Wesley, J., *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (London: Epworth Press, 1952), 9-10.

²⁴ McGonigle, *Sufficient Saving Grace*, 243-244.

²⁵ Synan, *Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 7.

²⁶ Synan, *Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 9.

²⁷ Cracknell & White, *World Methodism*, 32. Baker cites this early denominationalisation of the movement in America as the main reason for its strength relative to British Methodism that was slow to make the break with Anglicanism complete and final: F. Baker, *From Wesley to Asbury: Studies in Early American Methodism* (Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press, 1976), 18.

²⁸ Synan, *Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 28.

dant doctrine of Christian Perfection, was a major denominational block and began tipping the theological scales of popular religion away from the Calvinism of the puritan settlers. In 1801, the hysterical Cane Ridge camp meeting revival in Bourbon County, Kentucky, was a significant event attracting tens of thousands of people²⁹ of partly Baptist and partly Methodist complexion. By 1812, the Methodists were holding at least 400 camp meetings annually throughout the United States.³⁰ By mid-century, Methodism was the dominant religion of North America.

2 Shifts in the American context

Dayton³¹ has observed that the early preaching of the Methodists in America was inevitably salvation orientated, the vast majority of people attending the camp meetings being un-churched. The new emphasis on Christian Perfection that took hold during the 1830s coincided with a change in the make-up of Methodist churches from first to second generation Christians. People no longer needed to know how to be saved but how to become better Christians, and this in the face of the advances of German liberalism, Deism, Unitarianism and many other challenges to Evangelical faith.

The events at Cane Ridge, Kentucky, popularly termed the Second Great Awakening, embodied much that

was becoming distinctive in the life of the infant nation. In the political realm, with the election of Thomas Jefferson to power in 1801, the full democratisation of American life began. American Christianity went through an exactly parallel democratisation process that would soon be given formal expression in Charles Finney's Arminianising 'New Measures'. In Continental Europe, Enlightenment ideas were destroying religion in public life, producing freedom from belief. In America these same libertarian ideas were granting the freedom to believe, and to believe with passion, with wild enthusiasm. French libertarian ideals could produce revolution in France, revivals in America.

The mood of the nation was so optimistic and aspirational that Old World thinking was quickly transfigured into New World thinking. This was a way of thinking that was idealistic enough to envisage a perfection that would not only see Christ fully formed in the heart but the millennial kingdom established in the earth.

3 The Role of Phoebe Palmer

Dayton³² agrees with Dieter³³ that by around 1830 American Methodism had begun to neglect its own cardinal doctrine, that of Christian Perfection, but that throughout this decade, movements were afoot to revive the doctrine. Phoebe Palmer, and her sister,

²⁹ Iain Murray, *Revival and Revivalism: The Making and Marring of American Evangelicalism 1750-1858* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1994), 152-3.

³⁰ Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, 183.

³¹ Donald Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (London: Scarecrow, 1987), 65.

³² Donald Dayton, 'From 'Christian Perfection' to the 'Baptism in the Holy Ghost', in Synan, V., (ed) *Aspects of Pentecostal-Charismatic Origins* (Plainfield: Logos, 1975), 42.

³³ M. Dieter, *The Holiness Revival of the Nineteenth Century* 2nd Ed. (Lanham: Scarecrow, 1996), 22.

Sarah Lankford, represented the first major thrust in the direction of reviving Perfectionism within American Methodism. The result of this was that by the end of the decade, the movement was two-pronged.

There was the spread of interest in the doctrine amongst the Presbyterians and Congregationalists instigated by Finney and Mahan at Oberlin College, and there was the 'Tuesday Meeting for the Promotion of Holiness' held at the Palmers' home, soon to be augmented by the magazine, *Guide to Holiness*, which reached a readership of up to 30,000.³⁴ These meetings plus the magazine revived Perfectionism within the Methodist fold. The 1840s would see 'a veritable flood of perfectionistic teaching in the Methodist Church'.³⁵

Once Palmer's experience of sanctification was complete, she appears to have drawn two principal lessons from it that would go on to dominate her preaching on the subject. Firstly, she came to understand the importance of testimony. She felt that her side of her 'covenant' with the Lord would be that she would agree to tell others of her experience 'perhaps before hundreds'.³⁶ Failure to do this would lead to the dreaded loss of sanctification such as that experienced famously by Wesley's successor John Fletcher, who lost the blessing five times due to a reluctance to testify.³⁷ From here onwards she would always preach 'the binding na-

ture of the obligation to profess the blessing'.³⁸ Secondly, Palmer's experience appears to have taught her to live in a continual experience of cleansing:

Realizing that God had enabled her to present herself as a living, or *continual*, sacrifice, she deduced that Jesus cleansed the offering thus continuously presented from all unrighteousness.³⁹

From this realisation, as well as from the theology of a certain Adam Clarke and his exposition of Romans 12:1-2; Hebrews 13:10 and Exodus 29:37, comes her 'altar theology':

This, I was given to see, was in verity placing all upon the altar that sanctifieth the gift, and I felt that, so long as my heart assured me that I did thus offer all, that it was a solemn duty as well as a high and holy privilege, to believe that the blood of Jesus cleanseth at the present and each succeeding moment so long as the offering is continued.⁴⁰

Her altar theology was an adaptation of Wesley's system that made the experience of the second blessing more readily accessible via a threefold process of consecration, faith and testimony.⁴¹ If her listeners followed these steps, they could assure themselves that they possessed this blessing, regardless of any evidence to the contrary. The whole process was thus becoming fairly mechanised. The agony

34 Synan, *Pentecostal-Holiness Tradition*, 18.

35 Synan, *Pentecostal-Holiness Tradition*, 17.

36 C.E. White, *The Beauty of Holiness: Phoebe Palmer as Theologian, Revivalist, Feminist, and Humanitarian* (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press, 1986), 20-21.

37 White, *Beauty of Holiness*, 139.

38 Phoebe Palmer, *Faith and its Effects: Or Fragments from my Portfolio* (New York: Joseph Long King, 1852), 89.

39 White, *Beauty of Holiness*, 23.

40 Phoebe Palmer, *Guide to Holiness* 1 (1839-40), 210.

41 White, *Beauty of Holiness*, 136.

and soul-searching was removed and holiness was now a blessing that was simply there for the taking:

When the Savior said, 'It is finished!' then this full salvation was wrought out for you. All that remains is for you to come complying with the conditions and claim it...it is already yours.⁴²

Palmer clearly held to the same eradicationist view of sanctification as Wesley, so that even if the cleansing is not final, as Wesley understood it to be, it is so overwhelmingly effective that it declares, the 'polluted nature dies', and enables the believer to live 'above the world and sin'.⁴³ It is, nonetheless, only a small step from this to the counteractionist position of Keswick, which also espoused a continuous cleansing.

Later, Palmer demonstrated once again her ability to incorporate the ideas of others to great effect in her ministry. Dayton points out that the publication of William Arthur's *The Tongue of Fire* in 1856⁴⁴ significantly influenced Palmer, to the extent that during the revivals of 1857-60, her speech became dominated by the concept of baptism in the Holy Spirit.⁴⁵ The language of Pentecost thus adopted was the shape of things to come for the holiness movement and beyond.

The recovery of the Wesleyan message of Christian Perfection in American Methodism went hand-in-hand with the full recovery of the voluntarist element in Christian devotion. This de-

mocratisation process was indebted to American culture and the widespread appropriation of republican values that had been imported from France during the War of Independence. Yet this voluntarist thread in American Christianity also had its own heritage.

The need for a personal, heart-felt commitment to Christ was, of course, a process that had begun in earnest with German Pietism. This was then further developed in the Methodist societies in Britain, and finally, with the planting of Methodism in American soil, Christian voluntarism reached its apogee in American nineteenth century revivalism. This thought of a powerful, personal cleansing, available to anyone willing to follow the necessary steps, captured the imaginations of a generation of revivalists. It served to feed the idealism of a generation that thought they would see the world utterly cleansed of evil and the millennial dawn appear.

The holiness tradition of the nineteenth century was not uniform, however. This was especially true of the post-American Civil War holiness crusade, dating from 1867-94, which splintered into a bewildering array of sects. During that time, the holiness movement also became a transatlantic phenomenon, taking on mostly non-Wesleyan forms on the Anglo-European side of the Atlantic. The key difference between British and American Evangelicalism in the nineteenth century was the extent to which revivalism as a concept was embraced. In America, a crisis-orientated revivalistic approach, both inside and outside Methodism, became widely accepted, while in Britain, under the watchful eye of an established church, revival-

42 Phoebe Palmer, *Faith and its Effects*, 52ff.

43 Lines from her hymn, *The Cleansing Wave*.

44 William Arthur, *The Tongue of Fire* (New York: Harper, 1856).

45 Dayton, 'From "Christian Perfection"', 44.

ism never became mainstream.⁴⁶ It was the revivalistic atmosphere that allowed Methodism and the holiness message to thrive. Despite this, two UK-based movements did take root in the late nineteenth century.

IV The Influence of Wesleyan Soteriology Beyond Methodism

1 The Salvation Army

The theology of William and Catherine Booth was profoundly influenced by Phoebe Palmer's altar theology.⁴⁷ The Booths went on to extend their eradicationist theology of Christian Perfection into the social sphere, engaging in a widening campaign against all the social evils of working-class Britain. As opposition mounted against the Booths and their followers, this holiness crusade was seen increasingly as a spiritual warfare.

An article in the *Sunday Telegraph* written in commemoration of the Salvation Army's centenary puts it aptly: 'To the Booths, and especially to Catherine Booth, the Devil was a personal opponent and as real as one's next door neighbour.'⁴⁸ In the face of this enemy, the Booths were utterly defiant and completely confident of the power of Christ to defeat sin and Satan. Through Blood and Fire all the forces of 'Darkest

England' would be overcome. William Booth's theology has been described as the theology of Wesley, Whitefield and George Fox.⁴⁹ Of these, Wesley⁵⁰ would have to be singled out as the greatest influence upon his theology.⁵¹

Clearly the genius of the Salvation Army was in applying the hope of victory over sin to the social sphere, in which there were great expectations that the drunkards among the urban poor, could be radically saved and sanctified. Such an expectation was not disappointed. It succeeded in becoming a truly working-class holiness movement and helped to secure the persistence of the Wesleyan holiness message amongst the chapel-goers of the late nineteenth century. Their formative influence is traceable in the lives of Evan Roberts, Smith Wigglesworth and countless others.

2 The Keswick Convention

The Keswick Convention came into being as a result of the visits of Robert and Hannah Pearsall Smith from America in September 1874 to a conference at Oxford. This conference was entitled 'The Oxford Convention for the Promotion of Scriptural Holiness'. Similar meetings had already been held in London in May 1873, at Chamonix in the French Alps later in the summer of that year, at Hampton-

⁴⁶ Carwardine, *Transatlantic Revivalism*, xiv.

⁴⁷ Catherine Booth said of Palmer's books that they, '...have done me more good than anything else I have ever met with', Walker, *Pulling the Devil's Kingdom Down*, 23, citing a letter to her mother dated January 21, 1861.

⁴⁸ 'History of the Salvation Army', *Sunday Telegraph* (30 May 1965), cutting, Nottingham City Archives.

⁴⁹ H. Begbie, *Life of William Booth, the Founder of the Salvation Army*, Vol.1 (London: MacMillan, 1920), 79.

⁵⁰ Amongst his words of advice to his future wife was to, 'Read one or two of John Wesley's sermons now and then'. Letter to Catherine, dated 17 November 1852. Begbie, *Booth* Vol.1, 159.

⁵¹ Begbie, *Booth* Vol.1, 86-87.

on-Thames on New Year's day 1874, at Mildmay later in January 1874, and in June and July of that year. These had been for such pursuits as, 'the promotion of the spiritual life',⁵² for 'practical victory over all known sin, and of maintained communion with their Lord',⁵³ and a 'maintained communion with the Lord and victory over all known sin'.⁵⁴ It was said that, 'A new range of the possibilities of faith opened up...with the confidence that they should henceforth not merely admire "the way of holiness", but by faith "walk therein"'.⁵⁵

Canon Harford-Battersby, the vicar of St John's, Keswick, and the organiser of the first Keswick conventions, came into an experience of the 'all-sufficiency of Christ'⁵⁶ at the Oxford Convention. In the May and June of 1875, the Brighton Convention was held, which drew delegates from all over the world amounting to an estimated 7,000 people.⁵⁷ Again, Pearsall-Smith presided. Speakers included H.W. Webb-Peploe and Evan Hopkins, while D.L. Moody finished his evangelistic tour at the London Opera House by offering prayer for the event.

On the 29 June of that year the first Keswick Convention for the Promotion of Practical Holiness began. The

Pearsall Smiths were not present. A number of other speakers also had to cancel. The numbers for the first Keswick Conventions were modest. The total seating capacity of the tent used for the first two years was only 600.⁵⁸ Most of those attending the first Conventions were 'middle-aged or elderly'⁵⁹ and these attended with the feeling that they were losing their reputations in doing so.⁶⁰ The first conventions attracted widespread allegations of Christian Perfection. A deeply held suspicion of 'enthusiasm' was still a powerful inhibiting factor in the Church of England.

The influence of even this first Keswick Convention, however, was considerable. As early as August 1875, a convention modelled on Keswick was held in Melbourne, Australia. Many others followed throughout the English-speaking world, perhaps most notably at Wellington, South Africa from 1889 under Andrew Murray and at Llandrindod Wells from 1903 under Jessie Penn-Lewis. By 1879, the seating capacity was about a thousand.

By 1885, the Keswick Convention was attracting crowds of 1,500. By 1907, there were 6,000 in attendance. During the 1920s, numbers averaged at around the 5,000 mark, a very large proportion of whom were now under 30 years of age.⁶¹ Young people had begun

⁵² Sloan, W., *These Sixty Years: The Story of the Keswick Convention* (London: Pickering & Inglis, 1935), 9-10.

⁵³ Sloan, *These Sixty Years*, 10.

⁵⁴ S. Barabas, *So Great Salvation: The History and Message of the Keswick Convention* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1952), 20.

⁵⁵ Sloan, *These Sixty Years*, 12-13.

⁵⁶ Sloan, *These Sixty Years*, 17.

⁵⁷ Sloan, *These Sixty Years*, 18. Webb-Peploe puts the figure at 8,000: Webb-Peploe, 'Early Keswick', 41.

⁵⁸ Sloan, *These Sixty Years*, 22. Pollock prefers a seating capacity of 'nearly a thousand', Pollock, *Keswick Story*, 11.

⁵⁹ Pollock, *Keswick Story*, 45.

⁶⁰ Pollock, *Keswick Story*, 49.

⁶¹ Ian Randall, *Evangelical Experiences: A Study in the Spirituality of English Evangelicalism 1918-1939* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1999), 14, 16.

flocking to Keswick from the 1880s onwards, leading eventually to the formation of the Inter-Varsity Fellowship by Norman Grubb in 1919.

Norman Grubb, in fact, is highly illustrative of the long shadow that Keswick cast across the early twentieth century. He and his wife Pauline (nee Studd) came into contact with Jessie Penn-Lewis' 'cross teaching' while serving in the Congo in the early 1920s. Her teaching centred around the believer's identification with Christ in his death and resurrection. Galatians 2:20 soon became a key verse for Norman and Pauline Grubb. He had to learn not to look for a change within himself but instead to remind himself of who it was that now lived in him and through him: 'He in me is the all, the joy, power, wisdom, victory – all. I transfer my attention, my recognition, my affirmation from the human vessel to Him whom it contains.'⁶²

To his name could be added Reader Harris of the Pentecostal League Prayer who also carried the holiness message into the twentieth century, in Harris' case, the fully Wesleyan version. Oswald Chambers, whose *My Utmost for His Highest*, published posthumously, would go on to be translated into 29 languages and never go out of print, was influenced by a combination of Reader Harris and the American holiness movement.

Bebbington holds that the Keswick doctrine of sanctification held normative power amongst conservative Evangelicals until the 1950s and 60s.⁶³ The

expectation of a crisis experience in Keswick thought, however, faded quite rapidly. By no means least among the chorus of voices pressuring Keswick to drop this element in its teaching by the turn of the twentieth century was the Bishop of Liverpool, J.C. Ryle:

That there is a vast difference between one degree of grace and another...all this I fully concede. But the theory of a sudden, mysterious transition of a believer into a state of blessedness and *entire consecration*, at one mighty bound, I cannot receive.⁶⁴

Even by the time of the first Keswick Conventions many aspects of the Wesleyan message, especially its doctrine of Perfection, had fallen on bad times in Britain, although it remained strong among the working classes.⁶⁵ Christian Perfection had not acquired the same critical mass of adherents in Britain as it had in America. Further, the middle classes who attended the Keswick Conventions were particularly keen to distance themselves from fanatical Perfectionist teaching.⁶⁶

Yet it is clear that American Methodist Perfectionism re-interpreted by the Pearsall Smiths and by William Boardman, played their part in the formation of early Keswick expectations

and Present (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2003), 309.

⁶⁴ Ryle, J.C., *Holiness: Its Nature, Hindrances, Difficulties, and Roots* (London: Cas.J.Thynne, 1900), xxiv.

⁶⁵ Bebbington, *Holiness in Nineteenth-Century England* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2000), 71.

⁶⁶ See especially J. Elder Cumming, J., 'What We Teach,' in H. Stevenson, (ed), *Keswick's Triumphant Voice* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1963), 19-20.

⁶² Norman Grubb, *Once Caught, No Scape* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1969), 86.

⁶³ Bebbington, D., 'Holiness in the Evangelical Tradition' in Barton, S. (ed), *Holiness Past*

of a second blessing. Their slogan was 'Holiness by faith in Jesus, Not by effort of my own'.⁶⁷ It was a holiness performed by the risen Christ himself within the human heart in response to the believer's full surrender and identification with Christ in death and resurrection. It was deeply Christo-centric.

William Boardman was typical of the early aspirations of Keswick: 'Forgiveness did not satisfy me, I wanted the dominion of sin destroyed. Purification, not less than pardon, I saw to be required.'⁶⁸ The conviction that mere salvation, mere justification, mere forgiveness were not enough and that there had to be more to the Christian life than persistent defeat was pivotal throughout the holiness movements. The dissatisfaction was widespread, as the wording of the invitation to the Oxford Convention indicates: 'In every part of the country, the God of all grace has given many of His children a feeling of deep dissatisfaction with their spiritual state.'⁶⁹

This underlying dissatisfaction continued in different forms into the onset of Pentecostalism. Protestant Christianity was seen to be deficient. It could be argued that part of that deficiency was precisely the gulf opened up from the Lutheran Reformation onwards between a justification that must not sanctify and a sanctification that must not be complete or final. Following the Reformation, sanctification then fell increasingly under the spell of the

gradualism that was part and parcel of Enlightenment thought, thus helping to fuel the impatience of holiness advocates as they sought a real and lasting victory over sin, not a protracted struggle.

The holiness movement left justification where it was, utterly distinct from sanctification, but brought sanctification forward into the matrix of Christian initiation so that it could, like justification and regeneration, be understood as complete and final. Boardman, for instance, had an attractive pragmatism about his belief in a 'present Saviour' who 'does actually deliver the trusting soul from the cruel bondage of its chains under sin, now in this present time'.⁷⁰

3 Pentecostalism

Born in 1870 in Louisiana, William Seymour was the son of freed slaves. The forms of Christianity that developed among the slaves were heavily tinged with West African spirituality. Robeck speaks illuminatingly of, 'Seymour's formative years in the context where the supernatural was taken for granted, where spirits, both "good" and "evil" were commonly discussed, and where dreams and visions were understood to contain messages that sometimes foretold the future...'⁷¹ Indeed, similarities have been noted between the Pentecostal concept of baptism in the Holy Spirit and the West African

⁶⁷ W.H., Aldis, *The Message of Keswick and its Meaning* (London:Marshall, Morgan & Scott), 39.

⁶⁸ William Boardman, *The Higher Christian Life* (Boston: Henry Hoyt, 1859), 140.

⁶⁹ Cited in Pollock, *Keswick Story*, 22.

⁷⁰ Boardman, *Higher Christian Life*, 266.

⁷¹ Cecil Robeck, *The Azusa Street Revival and Mission: The Birth of the Global Pentecostal Movement* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2006), 21.

concept of spirit possession.⁷²

Seymour was converted at an African Methodist Episcopal church in Indianapolis but soon joined the Evening Light Saints, a radical Wesleyan holiness group with strong interracial ideals.⁷³ He was invited in 1905 by Lucy Farrow to pastor a holiness mission near Houston. There, in Houston, he was introduced for the first time to Charles Parham and his Bible school. Early in 1906, Seymour was permitted, thanks to Lucy Farrow's mediation, to attend Parham's all-white Bible school by sitting outside the window of the classroom.

Seymour soon fell under the spell of Parham's teaching on tongues as the initial evidence of baptism in the Holy Spirit, although neither he nor Parham had experienced the gift at this stage. Lucy Farrow had this gift, however, and was able to help convince Seymour of its reality. Parham soon arranged for Seymour to do some preaching in Houston, being particularly keen that Seymour should be used to reach the African-Americans with the Apostolic Faith message.

Seymour's competent preaching in Houston was witnessed by a member of a small black majority holiness group that was based in Los Angeles. This group was under the provisional leadership of Julia Hutchins. Wishing to appoint a male leader, Hutchins promptly

invited Seymour to leave Houston to become the pastor of the group. Joseph Smale, a zealous Baptist preacher, determined to bring the Welsh Revival to Los Angeles, and Frank Bartleman, the earliest chronicler of the Azusa Street revival, had both previously preached to this small gathering of nine families.

When Seymour came, however, he brought a traditional Wesleyan holiness message combined with Parham's tongues emphasis, stating overtly that unless one spoke in tongues one could not claim to be baptised in the Spirit. A number in Hutchins's congregation were quite willing to accept this message. Hutchins herself, however, considered herself to be already baptized in the Spirit because she had experienced entire sanctification. She had no need of a confirming sign. Still less did she want to be told that, without this sign, she was not in fact baptized in the Spirit at all. She was so offended by Seymour's teaching that she famously padlocked the door to him in time for his return for the evening service.⁷⁴

Seymour then began his own work with a handful of sympathetic followers, beginning with a nightly prayer meeting at 214 North Bonnie Brae Street. On April 6 1906 a ten day fast was inaugurated. On April 9, Edward Lee was healed and spoke in tongues. On the same day, Jennie Evans Moore (later to become Seymour's wife), spoke in tongues and miraculously played the piano.⁷⁵ Soon, the meetings at North Bonnie Brae Street were at-

⁷² L. Lovett, 'Black Origins of the Pentecostal Movement', in V. Synan, (ed) *Aspects of Pentecostal-Charismatic Origins* (Plainfield: Logos, 1975).

⁷³ Cheryl J. Sanders, *Saints in Exile: The Holiness-Pentecostal Experience in African American Religion and Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 26-28.

⁷⁴ His text had been Acts 2:4: H. Cox, *Fire From Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the reshaping of Religion in the Twentieth Century* (London: Cassell, 1996), 45.

⁷⁵ She went on to become the worship leader.

tracting the attention of the whole neighbourhood:

They shouted three days and nights. It was Easter season. The people came from everywhere. By the next morning there was no way of getting near the house. As people came in they would fall under God's power; and the whole city was stirred. They shouted until the foundation of the house gave way, but no one was hurt.⁷⁶

On April 12 Seymour himself spoke in tongues. By April 14, owing to all the publicity, the group had grown so large, it had to move to an abandoned building, 312 Azusa Street. The first of many less than flattering newspaper reports appeared on 18 April 1906, the day of the portentous San Francisco earthquake. In a matter of months, this old fly-ridden building became a world centre for Pentecostal activity, and was open for prayer and preaching around the clock for three years until 1909. The publication of *The Apostolic Faith* helped spread the Pentecostal message throughout the USA and the world. Beginning with a distribution list of 10,000 addressees,⁷⁷ *The Apostolic Faith* reached a readership of 50,000 within three years.⁷⁸

William Seymour retained the Wesleyan two-stage initiation but then added a third: the baptism in the Spirit with the sign of tongues. From here

on, it was this third event that would be termed 'baptism in the Holy Spirit', rather than the second. From around 1910, this threefold version of conversion-initiation among American Pentecostals would have a rival: the 'finished work' version. This type of Pentecostalism removed sanctification out of the middle, insisting that this was all part of the 'finished work' and provided in principle right at the start. British Pentecostalism held to this two-fold initiation from the very beginning. Today, three-blessing Pentecostals are known as Holiness-Pentecostals and are mostly African-American.

So we see how the holiness movement of the nineteenth century wanted an answer to the problem of a Christianity that seemed to consist of nothing more than conversion followed by a lifetime of defeat. They looked to what soon became known as 'Baptism in the Holy Spirit' (an idea stemming from John Fletcher) to meet this need. After a while, it was seen that, according to Luke-Acts, this experience of the Spirit not only led to a greater victory over sin but also a new power for service. The Pentecostals then took over the idea of Baptism in the Spirit to describe their own experiences of tongues, prophecy and other gifts.

After about ten years, most Pentecostals tended to see the Baptism in the Spirit as almost solely an endowment of power for service. There was a move away from thinking in terms of various inward cleansings, mortifications and holiness codes as conditions that had to be met before Baptism in the Spirit could be enjoyed. They again saw sanctification in the old Reformed way as a gradual elimination of sin, but now greatly helped by their powerful experiences of the Holy Spirit.

⁷⁶ *Pentecostal Evangel* 6:4 (1946), 6.

⁷⁷ *Apostolic Faith* 1:4 (Dec.1906), 15.

⁷⁸ T. Cauchi, 'William J. Seymour and the History of the Azusa Street Mission' in *The Apostolic Faith: The Original Azusa Street Editions 1-13 Plus Editions 19 & 20 From Portland, Oregon* (CD-ROM, Bishops Waltham: Tony Cauchi, 2004), 15.

In the 1960s, the Charismatic Renewal began contemporaneously with the Inner Healing Movement, and was part and parcel of it. Baptism in the Spirit had, by this point, become even less associated with any kind of sanctifying experience and was more or less synonymous with the experience of speaking in tongues for the first time, as exemplified by the rather matter-of-fact testimony of the movement's early leader, Dennis Bennett.⁷⁹

So, something else was needed to fill the gap left by the evacuation of sanctification and this came with the widespread circulation of Agnes Sanford's *The Healing Light*,⁸⁰ and other titles that soon followed. Charismatic expressions of Christianity went on to produce a succession of variations on this theme. In particular, the entrepreneurial 1980s saw the founding of Sozo Ministries,⁸¹ as well as the opening of Ellet Grange, the first of many centres for Ellet Ministries.⁸² Such ministries have continued to thrive, often in the face of much criticism.

V Recent Developments

Today, the hopeful quest for a victorious Christian life goes on. The forms are very different from Wesley's, but the motivations and convictions are the same.

1 Neil Anderson and freedom in Christ

Converted through Campus Crusade for Christ, Neil Anderson has written numerous books about finding spiritual freedom. The dominant metaphor in his writings⁸³ tends to be different from Wesleyan holiness. He does not speak the language of cleansing so much as bondage-breaking and stronghold-busting. He speaks little about anything like the 'perfect love' that is to fill the heart once these evils are removed. Simply to be free of compulsive, self-destructive behaviours is enough. He tends not to tackle substance and alcohol addiction but focuses more on sexual and emotional problems, seeing the answer to almost everything as being to simply believe the truth about yourself rather than believing what either people or the devil have told you.

From the very beginning of the course, participants are avidly encouraged to describe themselves as saints rather than sinners. This sets the tone for the whole approach, which is that we behave in accordance with what we believe to be the truth about ourselves. Behaviour follows belief, rather than the other way round. Yet there is some circularity in this idea: in order to believe the truth, participants are asked to simply speak the truth *until* they believe it, which, arguably, is an example

⁷⁹ The experience is related in his highly influential, *Nine O'Clock in the Morning* (Plainfield: Bridge, 1970).

⁸⁰ Agnes Sanford, *The Healing Light* (New York: Balantine, 1983. Original: 1947).

⁸¹ <<http://www.sozo.org.uk/>> [accessed 23 July 2013].

⁸² <<http://www.ellelministries.org.uk/>> [accessed 23 July 2013].

⁸³ Most notably his, *The Bondage Breaker: Overcoming Negative Thoughts, Irrational Feelings and Habitual Sin* (Guildford: Monarch, 1996. USA: 1990). This book alone has attracted a very lengthy critique from Christian Discernment Ministries: <<http://www.christiandiscernment.com/Christian%20Discernment/CD%20PDF/Book%20pdf/28%20NeilAnderson.pdf>> [accessed 23 July 2013].

of the exact opposite to the main claim since belief, in that case, is in fact following a behaviour, that of verbally affirming the truth.

All turns upon the achievement of a kind of New Testament version of healthy self-esteem and concepts related to that. Echoing Maslow's hierarchy of needs, a lot hangs upon how well we have understood that we are significant, secure and accepted.⁸⁴ The main means of moving into these liberating truths is, as mentioned above, to speak out positive affirmations. In the case of stronghold busting, it is recommended that the daily repetition of affirmations should go on for up to six weeks.⁸⁵ A typical affirmation will involve two elements: renouncing and announcing: 'I renounce the lie that...', and 'I announce the truth that...'

Clearly the methodology dominates the theology – in contrast to Wesley's teaching in which the theology was dominant and a methodology was lacking, which Palmer's altar theology then supplied. Pentecostalism could be named as the bridge leading towards the taking over by methodology of theology, early Pentecostal theology itself consisting of a very simple twofold belief in 'subsequence' (that baptism in the Spirit was subsequent to conversion) and 'initial evidence' (that speaking tongues was the evidence it had taken place).

Anderson's methodology for *Freedom in Christ* has attracted some criticism, largely owing to the fact that, while the underlying theology aims

to base itself on the New Testament letters, the methodology appears to be a hybrid between spiritual warfare teachings about self-deliverance and the techniques of behavioural psychology.⁸⁶

It is not unique in this, organisations such as Ellel Ministries having taken a similar approach. This leads to an inconsistency in the material. The main *Freedom in Christ* booklet that participants work through in conjunction with a DVD, makes it clear that the enemies to our freedom in Christ are 'the world, the flesh and the devil'.⁸⁷ Behavioural psychology dominates this part. Then, after week nine, participants are introduced to another booklet called, *The Steps to Freedom in Christ*.

In this booklet the emphasis shifts to the devil, with many of the renunciations being about or even directed at the devil and demons. This is due to Anderson's view of how a sin-confess-cycle is broken. It is simply this: 'Submit to God, resist the devil and he will flee from you.' The seven *Steps to Freedom* are designed to be the point at which that is actually happening in the life of every participant.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Neil Anderson & Steve Goss, *Freedom in Christ* (Oxford: Monarch, 2009), 14.

⁸⁵ Anderson & Goss, *Freedom in Christ*, 81.

⁸⁶ The most comprehensive critiques have been online articles from Elliot Miller, e.g. 'The Bondage Maker: Examining the Message and Method of Neil T. Anderson, Part One: Sanctification and the Believer's Identity in Christ', *Christian Research Journal* 21:1 (1998). See also < <http://www.equip.org/PDF/DA085.pdf> > [accessed 23 July 2013].

⁸⁷ Anderson & Goss, *Freedom in Christ*, 35–62.

⁸⁸ Neil Anderson, *Steps to Freedom in Christ* (Oxford: Monarch, 2009).

2 John Crowder and the new Mystics

John Crowder is a man with a colourful background, claiming that he was converted as a hippie high on LSD – though he clearly is not old enough to have been part of the original Flower Power movement – he was born in 1976. He now advocates a mystical-charismatic approach to Christianity that carries the branding, ‘The New Mystics’. All of his web material contains kitsch quasi-medieval imagery of saints with haloes.

Reading through John and Lilly Crowder’s statements of faith is revealing:

When we begin to trust that Jesus took away our sinfulness, we can’t help but see a change in our lives!... You were never really separated from Him, but you ‘thought’ you were ... the Bible says we were once ‘alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior’. (Col. 1:21).

He seems to have an eradicationist doctrine of sanctification, combined with a semi-Barthian universalism. He seems to see everyone as already saved in principle.⁸⁹ The emphasis on cognition is similar to *Freedom in Christ* and a great many other approaches, though here it seems that cognition is salvation itself. Simply to correct a misunderstanding is to be reconciled.

As evangelicals we have always lived with agitators of this kind that have, again and again, annoyed us by reaching for what we insist is an over-

realised eschatology, and we have therefore often loudly denounced them. What we forget is that amongst this diverse group of people that have agitated for more power, authenticity and so on, have been some truly great figures, such as John Wesley, without whom evangelicalism as we know it would probably not exist. It is perhaps unfair in this situation to apply the words of Jesus to the religious establishment of his day – that they hypocritically built tombs to honour the prophets whom their forefathers had killed (Luke 11:48). I am not unaware of the fall-out from some of the ministries I have mentioned and the concerns are legitimate. But these seekers do, if nothing else, have a prophetic voice. And it seems we are still not hearing what it speaks: why else would it need repeating so much?

Conclusion

The story of Christian Perfection and its various adaptations at the hands of so many people reveals a longing that many Christians still have. This longing is expressed in the increasing popularity of such courses as Neil Anderson and Steve Goss’s *Freedom in Christ* course. This course is filled with positive affirmations and encouragements to believe the truth so that the truth will set one free from never-ending sin-confess-cycles; as such, *Freedom in Christ* echoes exactly the longings expressed at the beginnings of the Keswick movement: the conviction that a prevailing victory over sin must be possible. ‘Forgiveness did not satisfy me, I wanted the dominion of sin destroyed’, says Boardman.

Further, the sheer number of peo-

⁸⁹ <http://www.thenewmystics.com/Groups/1000036024/Home_Page_of.aspx> [accessed 23 July 2013].

ple that, since John Wesley's *Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, have, at one time or another, been part of movements reaching out for just such a breakthrough as this, encourages us to believe that perhaps they were onto something. Paul himself writes with complete assurance: 'Walk in the Spirit and you shall not gratify the desires of the flesh.' Paul was completely confi-

dent that believers can 'reckon' themselves to be 'dead indeed to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus', and that 'sin shall not have dominion over you'.

However flawed his doctrine of Christian Perfection may have been, Wesley's way of salvation signposts us to a hope that countless others have also glimpsed. The hope is this: victory is possible.

Perceptions of the Evangelical Movement in the Post-Communist Czech Republic

Pavel Hošek

KEY WORDS: *Fundamentalism, religious freedom, emotionalism, defamation, evangelism, ecumenism, hermeneutics, Reformation*

I The Shape of the Czech Evangelical Movement

When in 1989 the 'Velvet Revolution' brought about the end of the Communist regime in the Czech Republic, there were only about twenty thousand evangelicals in the country.¹ Since that time, the evangelical movement has grown and today there are some thirty five to forty thousand, gathered in several denominations.

Since the early 1990s, three umbrella organisations for Czech evangelicals have been established, the Czech Evangelical Alliance,² the Evangelical Theo-

logical Seminary,³ and the Association of Evangelical Theologians.⁴ Besides these three organisations, which affirm their adherence to the evangelical movement explicitly (including the word 'evangelical' in their title), there are a number of other institutions active as part of the evangelical movement, such as denominational publishing houses and church periodicals.

The evangelical movement in the Czech Republic is relatively dynamic and vigorous.⁵ Czech evangelicals have

provides a link with the European and worldwide evangelical movement (it is a member of the World Evangelical Alliance and the European Evangelical Alliance), cf. www.ea.cz.

³ This seminary was founded in 1990. It prepares students coming mainly from evangelical churches for ministry. Cf. www.etspraha.cz.

⁴ This association holds several specialist colloquia every year and the Evangelical Theological Conference (held once every year, since 1990). Cf. www.evangelikalni-teologie.cz.

⁵ David Novák, 'Czech Evangelicals and Evangelism', *East-West Church & Ministry Report* 13 (Winter 2005), 8-10.

¹ Cf. the publication of the Czech Evangelical Alliance 2002. *Základní informace o evangelikálních církvích a sborech v České republice v letech 1990-2000*, Albrechtice: Krěst'anský život. The entire population of the Czech Republic was 10 million people.

² This organisation was founded in 1990. It

numerous contacts with the evangelical movement on the European and world levels, especially in the English-speaking countries. These contacts bring with them financial support for missionary, educational, building, and other projects, the opportunity for education of Czech church leaders in countries with longstanding evangelical traditions, the presence of missionaries from abroad in Czech evangelical congregations, and so on.⁶

Most adherents of the evangelical movement are actively involved in church life. Because of the relatively high degree of involvement by individual lay members (there are virtually no 'nominal' evangelicals), the importance of the evangelical movement to the Czech ecumenical scene is greater than its small membership base would suggest. In view of the age range of its members and an increase in numbers, this proportional influence will probably grow in the next decades.

II Evangelical and Non-Evangelical Views of Witness

In Communist times, all Czech Christians were persecuted and suffered discrimination by the state because of its atheist ideology.⁷ After the fall of the Communist regime full religious

freedom was reintroduced and all the restrictions and limitations of religious expression were removed.⁸ Christian denominations were allowed to publicly proclaim the gospel (which was forbidden during the Communist regime) and to communicate freely and openly with secular society.

This re-establishment of religious freedom brought about many previously unimaginable opportunities for Christian public ministry and outreach. At the same time, it also caused some serious tensions among Christian denominations. One of the reasons for these tensions was the fact that different denominations had very different views concerning the appropriate methods of public ministry and concerning the broader cultural and social role of the church.

In most cases, the representatives of the three largest denominations in the Czech Republic⁹ understood the task of the church to consist primarily of diligent and patient work in the area of education, academia, culture, media, health care, social care etc. They emphasized the fact that since Czech society is extremely secular,¹⁰ the church,

⁶ See for example Daniel Fajfr, 'Expatriate Christian Workers and Czech Evangelicals', *East-West Church & Ministry Report* 14 (Summer 2006), 11ff.

⁷ See Petr Jäger 2009. Svoboda vyznání a právní poměry církví a náboženských společností let 1948-1989, in *Komunistické právo v Československu—kapitoly z dějin bezpráví*, Brno: Masarykova Univerzita, 769-810.

⁸ The constitutional basis for religious freedom in the Czech Republic is to be found in the charter of basic rights and freedoms, articles 15 and 16, as elaborated in law number 3/2003 about 'freedom of religion and status of churches and religious societies', paragraph 2. Cf. Antonín Ignác Hrdina 2004, *Náboženská svoboda v právu České republiky*. Praha: Eurolex Bohemia, and also Petr Jäger 2006, *Církev a náboženské společnosti v České republice a jejich právní postavení*, Brno: CDK.

⁹ The Roman Catholic Church, the Czech Brethren Protestant Church, the Czechoslovak Hussite Church.

¹⁰ In fact one of the most secular societies

since it is a tiny minority, has to be very careful and culturally sensitive in presenting its message to Czech people. In other words, the way Christians express and share their faith has to be very carefully considered, cultivated and often 'indirect' or implicit.

For this reason, after the fall of the Communist regime and re-establishment of religious freedom, the representatives of mainstream churches strived to build the image of Christianity as a rich resource of cultural and spiritual values and inspiration and as a respectable tradition with an impressive historical heritage.

Evangelical Christians, on the other hand, held a very different view of the appropriate methods of evangelistic outreach. Their approach to sharing the gospel was rather direct. The ways evangelicals chose to proclaim the gospel were sometimes quite simple (or even simplistic) and sometimes betrayed a serious lack of experience. There were also numerous cases of not very successful evangelistic crusades organized by missionaries from other countries with very little understanding of the complexities of Czech post-Communist culture.¹¹

in the world, cf. Olga Nešporová, Zdeněk Nešpor, 'Religion: An Unsolved Problem for the Modern Czech Nation', *Czech Sociological Review* 45/2009, 1215ff., see also Dana Hamplová, Zdeněk Nešpor, 'Invisible Religion in a Non-believing Country. The Case of the Czech Republic', *Social Compass* 56/2009, 581ff., and also Jim and Laurie Barnes, 'The Czech Spiritual Landscape in the Post-Communist Era', *East-West Church & Ministry Report* 6 (Spring 1998), 6ff. and Petr Činčala, 'Reaching Irreligious Czechs', *East-West Church & Ministry Report* 14 (Summer 2006), 15f.

11 Dan Drápal, 'Will We Survive Western

III Public Perception of Evangelicals

As a result of this situation the relationship between Czech evangelicals and other Christians grew worse. Some representatives of mainstream churches became very concerned and unhappy, because they gradually came to the conclusion that evangelicals were seriously damaging the image of Christianity in Czech society, i.e. that they were in fact destroying exactly what mainstream churches had been patiently trying to build. Some of the representatives of mainstream churches came to the conclusion that they had to publicly distance themselves from evangelical forms of Christianity, that they had to explain to the secular public that evangelical Christianity is deviant, primitive, sectarian and wrong and that what the respectable mainstream churches wanted to offer had nothing to do with evangelicalism.

For example, one of the most respected Czech Islamic scholars, a Roman Catholic professor, L. Kropáček says in his book, *Islám a Západ* (Islam and the West), that evangelicals are by and large enemies of inter-faith dialogue.¹² Another example is the statement of an influential Czech Protestant minister, M. Vymětal, who said in a very widely-read interview that evangelicals approach the Israeli Palestinian conflict with the same fanaticism as Hamas, Islamic Jihad or Hizballah.¹³

Missionaries?' *East-West Church & Ministry Report*, 5 (Fall 1997), 7f. and *East-West Church & Ministry Report* 6 (Spring 1998), 8ff.

12 Luboš Kropáček 2002, *Islám a Západ* (Praha: Vyšehrad), 166.

13 Mikuláš Vymětal, *Zpravodaj Společnosti křesťanů a Židů* 44/2001, 10.

In another text, M. Vymětal presents the evangelical movement as a serious threat for the church, whose alleged goal is to impose its rigid views upon all others. In the same article he suggests that the evangelistic activities of fundamentalist evangelicals in relation to Jews are actually aiming at exterminating the Jewish nation and 'cleansing the society of Jewish influence' just as Hitler did in Nazi Germany.¹⁴

The most significant example is the attitude of the most influential Christian intellectual in the Czech Republic, the Roman Catholic priest and university professor Tomáš Halík. In most of his books he expresses his negative feelings towards evangelicals. For example, in his autobiography he speaks about intrusive American methods of evangelism and about the annoying proselytism of evangelical groups and their aggressive evangelists.¹⁵ In other books he speaks about childish and adolescent hyper-emotional religiosity of evangelicals with a simplistic view of reality and also about cheap and 'theatrical' self-righteous attitudes of the evangelicals.

He also points to a typically evangelical hyper-emotional presentation of the Passion narrative, which he finds expressed in 'a horrible sermon of Billy Graham'.¹⁶ In other publications he speaks about cheap and manipulative proselytism of evangelical groups,¹⁷

about 'mega-shows' of evangelical preaching 'entertainers'¹⁸ and about bombastic evangelical public happenings with a manipulated emotional atmosphere,¹⁹ about 'healing theatres' of evangelical preachers²⁰ or about American evangelicals and their 'sectarian' forms of Christianity.²¹

It is quite obvious that evangelicals have been a very important theme for Halík. He has been honestly concerned about the damage evangelicals cause to the church (in his understanding). He in fact often refers to evangelicals in order to 'make a point', i.e. to assure his readers that what he has to offer has nothing to do with evangelical forms of Christianity. The most significant and interesting aspect of this situation is the fact that Tomáš Halík is beyond any doubt a sincere and well-meaning Christian, a convert coming from a secular family background, a person of integrity with a genuine concern for reaching the secular Czechs with the gospel. In other words, he is absolutely honest in what he says.

The consequences which evangelicals had to face have been quite disastrous. Tomáš Halík and some other mainstream Christians became highly respected public intellectuals, often invited to appear in the national media to comment on religion, culture and related issues. Their views became one of the decisive factors in shaping the pub-

14 Mikuláš Vymětal, *Židé a evangelici. Zpravodaj Společnosti křesťanů a Židů*, 44/2001, 12.

15 Tomáš Halík 1997, *Ptal jsem se cest* (Praha: Portál), 124 and 186f.

16 Halík, 2005, *Noc zpovědníka* (Praha: Lidové noviny), 143 and 154 and 180.

17 Halík, 1995, *Víra a kultura* (Praha: Zvon), 138.

18 Halík, 2007, *Vzdáleným nablízku* (Praha: Lidové noviny), 30.

19 Halík, 2011, *Smířená různost* (Praha: Portál), 133.

20 Halík, 2003, *Oslovit Zachea* (Praha: Lidové noviny), 383.

21 Halík, 2004, *Vzýván i nevzýván* (Praha: Lidové noviny), 70.

lic opinion concerning Christianity, the appropriate and deviant expressions of faith etc., and therefore, also the public opinion concerning evangelicals. In fact, many secular Czechs, typically rather ignorant in religious questions (because of the atheist propaganda of the Communist regime), came to know what the word 'evangelical' meant only after hearing it defined by these public intellectuals from mainstream churches such as Halík, who typically had a very negative opinion.²²

So, even though politically and legally the evangelical denominations have (since 1989) enjoyed full religious freedom and were considered equal with traditional churches, they had to face some considerable prejudices and sometimes even discrimination, because both secular media and some very influential representatives of mainstream denominations often publicly presented evangelicals in a negative light. The general public opinion concerning evangelicals, created by these negative portrayals, consisted of several dismissive stereotypes, which defined the movement as, by and large, fundamentalist, primitive and aggressive. These negative judgments were in fact very close to 'public defamation', i.e. acting against the valid Czech law protecting religious freedom in the country.²³ The word 'evangelical' was

identified with an almost exclusively negative meaning, to the extent that it has become a sort of disparaging 'label'.

It is well known that evangelicals had to face all sorts of defamation many times in history, but the situation of evangelicals in the Czech Republic is quite unique, even among the Post-Communist countries. In most Post-Communist countries, there is one large majority church, often enjoying a privileged political and social status and sometimes using its position to suppress evangelicals or to encourage state authorities to use 'anti-cult legislation' against them.²⁴ This would not work in the Czech Republic. There is no majority church in that country. The membership of the largest one (Roman Catholic) is only ten per cent of the population, and less than half of that number may be considered practising believers.²⁵ So the majority group in the Czech Republic is the secular society, which is the 'audience' watching what the churches and denominations

²² Cf. David Novák, 'Evangelikálové podle Halíka', *Život víry* 7-8/2011. Cf. also Pavel Hošek 2008, 'Kóan jménem Tomáš Halík', in *Máš před sebou všechny mé cesty* (Praha: Lidové noviny), 137.

²³ Cf. Law 140/1961, Codex of penal law, par. 198/1, b), Defamation of race, national-ity and conviction (Hanobení rasy, národa a přesvědčení).

²⁴ Cf. for example Juraj Kušnierik, 'Post-Modern Culture in Post-Communist Countries', *East-West Church & Ministry Report* 2 (Winter 1994), 1f. Stuart McAllister, 'New Nations, Old Problems', *East-West Church & Ministry Report*, 2 (Fall 1994), 4f. Adam Michnik, 'Postcommunist Poland: Religious Liberty For All?' *East-West Church & Ministry Report*, 3 (Summer 1995), 7f. and also Henry Huttenbach, 'Religious Freedom After Communism: Will the Suppressed Become the Suppressor?' *East-West Church & Ministry Report* 7 (Winter 1999), 16.

²⁵ According to repeated specialized research the number of practising Christians in the Czech Republic is between 400 and 500 thousand, which is 4-5 per cent of the entire population, cf. www.demografie.info.

have to offer. Since the mainstream churches want to offer what they consider to be a trustworthy, respectable, moderate and cultivated form of Christianity, they use the reference to evangelicals 'to make a point', i.e. to identify *what they are not* and what they themselves consider as primitive, intrusive and fundamentalist.

For this reason, there is an obvious disproportion between the actual size of the Czech evangelical movement and the amount of criticism against its 'pathologies'. Whereas in countries such as the United States, evangelicals form a very influential religious, cultural, social and even political movement, in the Czech Republic they are a small marginal group, less than half per cent of the entire population.

In United States, a certain aversion towards evangelicals among non-Christian or non-evangelical Americans is perhaps understandable due to their influence. In the Czech Republic, where the number of evangelicals is tiny, nobody can seriously criticize evangelicals for their political influence. Yet some of the rhetoric of American anti-evangelicals has been adopted by Czech journalists. As a matter of fact, evangelicals have been treated—by journalists, but also by some influential Christian intellectuals and some state officials—as if the Czech laws protecting religious freedom including the law forbidding defamation of a person for his or her religious convictions does not apply to them.²⁶

26 Cf., for example, a case of discrimination by the Czech ministry of education: Tomáš Dittrich, Brno: ministerstvo diskriminuje evangelikály, *Život víry*, October 2006.

IV 'What is so Wrong with Czech Evangelicals?'

Of course, Czech evangelicals may display, and indeed occasionally do, some of the 'pathologies' that others accuse them of—their evangelizing activities may sometimes be intrusive, their views about cultural trends and events may sometimes be simplistic, their doctrinal teaching may occasionally tend towards ideological oversimplification, their forms of outreach, ministry and church leadership may at times betray 'sectarian' features. In particular, some radical Pentecostal and charismatic groups, which have often been very explicit about their evangelical identity, have caused some serious problems and divisions even within the evangelical movement²⁷ and unfortunately some of these occurrences were commented on (and caricatured) even in the secular media.

The situation is to some extent complicated by the fact that the worldwide growth in the evangelical movement²⁸ arouses a sort of concern among mainstream Christians and sometimes a sort of fear of the supposed cultural

27 Cf., for example, Zdeněk Vojtíšek, 'Rozdělení dokonáno', *Dingir* 3/2000.

28 See, for example, Grace Davie 2002, *Europe: an Exceptional Case* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd), David Martin, 1990, *Tongues of Fire. The Explosion of Protestantism in Latin America* (Oxford: Blackwell), David Martin, 2001, *Global Pentecostalism* (Oxford: Blackwell), Jose Casanova, 1994, *Public Religions in Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), Peter Berger (ed.) 1999, *Desecularisation of World. Resurgent Religion and World Politics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans). See also Pavel Černý, 'Evangelikální hnutí: kořeny, vývoj a současná reflexe', *Universum* 2/2009, 26ff.

and political aspirations of 'evangelical fundamentalism'. Of course, in some countries in the former Soviet bloc (such as Ukraine or Romania) a genuine 'evangelical boom' has taken place in the last few decades—the evangelical movement is now a significant religious and social factor in these countries, with hundreds of thousands of adherents.

However, no comparable boom took place in the Czech Republic. On the one hand it is true that, unlike the mainstream churches, evangelical congregations and denominations have not registered a drop in members; on the contrary, there has generally been a slight increase or in some cases, a significant increase.²⁹

On the other hand (in contrast to Ukraine and Romania), the much desired 'awakening' and evangelical boom has not happened in the Czech Republic since the fall of Communism.³⁰ The fear of 'evangelical fundamentalism' thus seems without foundation in the Czech Republic—or to be more precise, the evangelical movement here does not really represent a significant political and cultural force.

It has to be said that some of the negative attitudes of mainstream churches towards evangelicals have a number of different reasons, not only

those already mentioned. One of the obvious reasons for those attitudes is the historical fact that some of the evangelical denominations were established at the end of the nineteenth century and during the first half of the twentieth century by former members of mainstream churches. These people left their churches because they felt they did not satisfy their spiritual needs or because they were frustrated with their denomination's spiritual condition.³¹ The fact that some evangelical denominations rose as movements of protest against the general spiritual condition in established churches caused much harm and pain and not all the hurts have healed yet.

Another reason for some of the negative attitudes of mainstream Christians to evangelicals is probably the above mentioned fact that whereas the evangelical denominations are growing in size (even though relatively slowly), the mainstream churches in the Czech Republic are shrinking rapidly.³² All three mainstream churches, namely the Roman Catholic Church, the Czech Brethren Protestant Church and the Hussite Church have lost 75 per cent of their adherents over the last twenty years.³³ In other words, the number

29 Cf. the publication of the Czech Evangelical Alliance 2002 *Základní informace o evangelikálních církvích a sborech v České republice v letech 1990-2000*, Albrechtice: Křesťanský život, for details see also the results of the census in 1991, 2001 and 2011, available (in English) at the official website of Czech statistical office www.czso.cz.

30 Cf. Dan Drápal, 'Neslavná léta. Sociologicko-kulturní bilance posledních dvaceti let', *Život víry* 11/2009.

31 See as a typical example of this dynamics the early history of the now largest Evangelical denomination 'Církev bratrská, Alois Adlof 1905', *Nástin dějin svobodných církví reformovaných* (Praha: KSM), 51ff.

32 Cf. Petr Činčala, 'Czech Church Life: Mainline Decline and Neo-Apostolic Growth', *East-West Church & Ministry Report* 15 (Winter 2007), 12f.

33 See the website of the Czech statistical office (www.czso.cz) and also Zdeněk Nešpor, 'Der Wandel der tschechischen (Nicht-)Religiosität im 20. Jahrhundert im Lichte soziologis-

of people who identified themselves with these three churches in the census of 1991 (4 million Catholics, over 200 thousand Czech Brethren, almost 200 thousand Hussites) decreased to roughly 25 per cent in 2011 (1 million Catholics, 52 thousand Czech Brethren, 39 thousand Hussites).³⁴ And fewer than one half of these may be considered practising Christians.

Another reason why Czech evangelicals are viewed with some suspicions is the significant influence of several important monographs written by world-famous academicians which have been translated and published in the Czech Republic. For example, the famous book by G. Kepel, *Revenge of God*, ridicules and caricatures the evangelical movement in the United States.³⁵ Kepel's sarcastic and caricaturing portrayal of American evangelicals³⁶ has become a very influential image of the 'essence' of evangelical movement in the Czech Republic.

Another example is a book on sects and cults written by the Austrian writer and journalist B. Buechner, which dedicates one whole chapter to the dangers and pathologies of evangelicalism. This chapter presents evangelicals as

elitist sectarians and fanatics³⁷ who use manipulative methods of evangelism and build authoritarian leadership structures. Another important example is the influential standard introduction to biblical hermeneutics written by the German Protestant theologian M. Oeming. This book presents evangelicals as obscurantist, dishonest and primitive in their approach to the Bible.³⁸

The above mentioned stereotypes and caricatures, based on a surprising degree of ignorance and often reflecting a very different cultural situation (such as the American society in the time of G. W. Bush, or the role of Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority or New Christian Right in America), have been taken over by Czech mainstream Christian intellectuals, perpetuated and understood as adequate descriptions of all evangelicals.³⁹ Because these caricatures became part of the widely accepted meaning of the word 'evangelical' in the Czech public space, many Czech evangelicals in fact stopped using the word evangelical as their self-designation, simply because they want to avoid discrimination and defamation.

cher Forschungen', *Historisches Jahrbuch* 129 (2009), 501ff.

³⁴ For the exact numbers and results of the census in 1991, 2001 and 2011 see www.czso.cz.

³⁵ Gilles Kepel, 1996, *Boží pomsta* (Brno: Atlantis), 89ff.

³⁶ Emphasizing TV-evangelism, movements such as Moral Majority, Scopes trial debate, Bible Belt fundamentalism, inerrantist debate etc., and containing a surprisingly high number of stereotypes, oversimplifications and unjustified generalizations.

³⁷ Barbara Buechner 1999, *Co máme vědět o sektách* (Praha: Amulet), 30ff.

³⁸ Manfred Oeming 2001, *Úvod do biblické hermeneutiky* (Praha: Vyšehrad), 174f.

³⁹ In some denominations (such as the Baptist Union or the Czech Brethren Protestant Church) the debate about whether members of a particular denomination should or should not see themselves as part of the Evangelical movement and whether the influence of American Evangelicals is desirable or the opposite has actually even supported and strengthened some of the anti-Evangelical stereotypes, cf. for example Jáchym Gondáš, 'Evangelikální fundamentalismus po americku', *Protestant* 3/2006.

V Yet, Times are Changing

However, in the last several years the situation appears to be changing gradually. Some of those who used to publicly ridicule evangelicals seem to have considerably changed their mind. In their publications from the last several years, a much more moderate and balanced attitude towards evangelicals appears. A very significant example is the following statement by Tomáš Halík, by all standards the most influential Christian intellectual in the Czech Republic, who used to be one of the most outspoken enemies of evangelical forms of Christianity:

I had to revise in many respects my former attitude to evangelical Christianity. Whereas in my previous books I repeatedly made sarcastic comments especially upon vulgar crusades of fundamentalist TV-evangelists and stadium divine healers ... now I am taking seriously the fact, brought to my attention by my Protestant friends, that in the world-wide (and especially American) evangelical movement a radical change is taking place: many evangelical theologians of younger generation clearly distance themselves from fundamentalism and charismatic excesses and develop a theology which is surprisingly close to my own attitudes and way of thinking and understanding faith.⁴⁰

Another very important example can be found in a recent book by another influential Christian intellectual,

the Roman Catholic academician M. C. Putna, who has been known for his harsh criticism of conservative forms of faith.⁴¹ His book focuses on different forms of religion in the United States. The chapters on evangelicals on the one hand repeat some of the stereotypes Czech intellectuals use when speaking about evangelicals: he says that evangelical Christians do not see any value in cultural tradition, that they reduce reality to 'Bible, Jesus and the individual', that they are elitist, anti-intellectual, and hostile towards homosexuals.

Yet in the concluding chapter of his book, Putna comments on the contemporary trends within the evangelical movement and speaks about an emerging 'non-fundamentalist evangelicalism', which on the one hand sounds to him like a contradiction in terms,⁴² but which, as he says, seems to be a very promising emerging form of American Christianity, towards which he shows a sympathetic and actually quite appreciative attitude.

In the Czech Ecumenical Council of Churches, evangelical denominations have been received well.⁴³ Over the

⁴¹ Martin C. Putna 2010, *Obrazy z kulturních dějin americké religiozity* (Praha: Vyšehrad), 89ff, 271ff.

⁴² Putna, *Obrazy z kulturních dějin americké religiozity*, 296. The fact that this prominent scholar considers 'non-fundamentalist Evangelicalism' a contradiction of terms deserves attention: it betrays a surprising level of ignorance even among the best Czech academicians (since the debate among Evangelicals differentiating the Evangelical movement from fundamentalism has been going on since the nineteen forties)

⁴³ In fact the superintendent of the largest Evangelical denomination Pavel Černý has

⁴⁰ Tomáš Halík 2009, *Stromu zbývá naděje* (Praha: Lidové noviny), 12. Cf. also the short editorial report 'Halík ocenil posun u evangeliků', *Brána* 2/2010, 21.

last years, their relationships with the Roman Catholic Church and both mainstream Protestant churches have by and large developed in a positive direction of mutual respect.

VI The Way Forward

Changes have been naturally taking place on both sides. As I indicated above, some of the criticisms of evangelical forms of outreach and church ministry were probably justified. So one of the important reasons for the positive development in relations between evangelicals and other Christians in the last several years have been resolutions of some of the above mentioned problematic features of ministry, outreach and attitudes to general culture on the side of evangelical denominations.

At the same time, a major factor in this positive development has been growing awareness among mainstream church leaders of the complex history, scope, nature and inner diversity of the evangelical movement. Since the country is one of the most secular countries in the world, after some of the above described tensions have been dealt with and some misunderstandings explained, Czech Christians of all backgrounds, evangelical and other, gradually tend to see each other primarily as allies rather than enemies or rivals.

It seems obvious from what has

been said that in the next decades Czech evangelicals must patiently strive to fill the word 'evangelical' with a positive content, i.e. to remove residual misunderstandings, ignorance and prejudices and work towards cultivating friendly and cooperative relations with other Christian churches; they need also to develop a thorough and biblically based theological understanding of the particularities of Czech culture with an appropriate culturally sensitive missiology designed for the extremely secular context of the contemporary Czech Republic.⁴⁴

In fact, reflecting upon some of the justified criticisms of the most immature and problematic features of the Czech evangelicalism has led to some very positive and promising trends within the movement and among its leaders. One of these promising trends is a growing interest in the legacy of Czech reformation among evangelical leaders, i.e. in the writings and concerns of John Hus and his disciples, up to the history of *Unitas Fratrum* culminating in the works of J. A. Comenius. This emerging 'return to the fathers' (i.e. rediscovering of the legacy of Czech reformation) goes hand in hand with a growing interest in the works of Martin Luther and John Calvin, i.e. in the roots of the Czech Protestantism not only in the Hussite movement, but also in the Magisterial reformation of

served as the vice-chairman (2001-2005) and then as the chairman (2005-2009) of the Czech Ecumenical Council of Churches, which by itself was a major factor in improving the relations between Evangelicals and other Christians.

⁴⁴ In order to achieve this goal, not only are missiology courses taught intensively at the Evangelical theological seminary in Prague and missiological conferences organized, but also the Central European Centre for Mission Studies was established several years ago, see www.missioncentre.eu.

the sixteenth century.⁴⁵ Both trends naturally help evangelical leaders to grow in theological depth and stability and bring evangelicals closer to the two mainstream Protestant denominations in the country.

Another growing trend, which helps Czech evangelicals to overcome some of the above mentioned weaknesses, is a gradual rediscovery of a pre-Reformation heritage of the patristic and medieval church, especially in the area of theological reflection, genuine spirituality and liturgy and holistic theological understanding of culture, as it can be found in the writings of the church fathers and medieval Christian authors. This renewed interest in the riches of pre-Reformation church history naturally brings Czech evangelicals closer to Roman Catholic Christians and (just like the return to Reformation) brings more balance and maturity to evangelical theological self-understanding.

⁴⁵ These trends, just like the two following ones, can be evidenced for example when surveying the topics of the annual Evangelical theological conference over the last fifteen years, and also when looking at the recent colloquia of the Society of Evangelical theologians, at the publications of the main Czech Evangelical publishing house Navrat domu www.navrat.cz in the last decade, at the contemporary curriculum of the Evangelical theological seminary in Prague and its publications etc.

Another promising trend, visible within the Czech evangelical movement and partially inspired by the above described negative feedback from mainstream churches (and also related to the above mentioned deepening reflection on missiology), is the gradual shift from the 'Christ against culture' paradigm towards the more open-minded and dynamic 'Christ transforming culture' paradigm. Due to the influence of several important conferences and books on the topic and because of the impact of several pioneering role models, many Czech evangelicals over the last ten years have started to think theologically about their 'secular' jobs. Moreover, many evangelical leaders have started to see and emphasize broader responsibilities of the church for social, cultural and political conditions of the post-Communist Czech society, and a number of evangelical Christians became established and highly respected academicians in their fields of expertise.

It may be concluded, then, that in a sense, the harsh criticism and occasional unjust defamation described above has served the evangelical movement in the post-Communist Czech Republic as a helpful and transforming feedback. In the long-term perspective, this has inspired and/or catalyzed a number of positive changes within the movement.

Carl Henry and the Chinese Church

G. Wright Doyle

Key words: Revelation, Scripture, apologetics, ethics, church, evangelism, science, charismatic movement, women.

SINCE THE MID-TWENTIETH century, Chinese Christians have translated thousands of books from western languages into Chinese, with the result that Chinese can now study western theology without having to learn the original languages. Among all these, however, perhaps none is more worth reading and applying to the Chinese church situation than Carl Henry. One of the reasons that Carl Henry is not read more today is that books about the history of theology have presented a very inaccurate picture of him; this has produced prejudice against his theology.¹ I have tried to show just how false these evaluations of Carl Henry's

theology are in my book, *Carl Henry: Theologian for All Seasons*.²

Carl Henry (1913-2003) received his BA and MA from Wheaton college, MDiv and ThD from Northwestern Theological Seminary and his PhD from Boston University. Henry helped to launch the National Association of Evangelicals (1942) and was one of the founding faculty of Fuller Theological Seminary (1947). He was instrumental in the formation of the Evangelical Theological Society (1949) and served as its president (1969-1970). He was the founding editor of *Christianity Today* (1956) and served as chairman of the World Congress on Evangelism in Berlin, sponsored by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association in 1966. Carl Henry taught at various seminaries, including Fuller, Eastern Baptist, and Trinity (Deerfield); he travelled all over the world, lecturing at universities, colleges, and seminaries. He penned or edited more than three dozen volumes, and wrote hundreds of articles.

¹ Roger E. Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999), and Stanley J. Grenz & Roger E. Olson, *20th-Century Theology: God & the World in a Transitional Age* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1992), have presented misleading interpretations of Henry's theology.

² G. Wright Doyle, *Carl Henry: Theologian for All Seasons* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2010).

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With the publication of his *magnum opus*, the six-volume *God, Revelation & Authority* (1976-1983),³ Henry was widely hailed as the leading evangelical theologian of the twentieth century. Kenneth Kantzer, former president of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, called him 'the ablest defender of evangelical doctrine in the last half of the twentieth century',⁴ while Stanley J. Grenz and Roger E. Olson recognize Carl Henry as 'the most prominent evangelical theologian of the second half of the twentieth century'.⁵

To be sure, Carl Henry has already made a significant impact on the Chinese church worldwide. Chinese evangelicals are influenced by the evangelical movement in America, and Henry was a prominent leader of that movement. Henry did as much as anyone to encourage evangelical scholarship. China Evangelical Seminary is an attempt in Taiwan in this direction. The current President of CES, Peter K. Chow, has said, 'I myself have been helped by a book he edited—*Revelation and the Bible*. The first article in the Confession of faith of CES has to do with inerrancy of Scriptures in their autographs.'⁶ As for mainland China, there has been a spate of recent publi-

cations indicating a growing interest in his theology.⁷

In this paper, I wish to show why Carl Henry and his theology have great relevance for today's Chinese church all over the world.

I Love for China's Christians

Let us consider, first, his own special love for China and the spread of the gospel among Chinese. A world traveler throughout his career, Henry made a point of visiting Hong Kong and Taiwan several times, and of lecturing in theological seminaries there. Furthermore, he did not neglect Chinese churches and schools in Singapore.

As lecturer-at-large with World Vision, Henry delivered various chapters of his great *God, Revelation, & Authority* (abbreviated as 'GRA' in this article) to Chinese audiences in many places. When the China Evangelical Seminary Press in Taipei offered to publish this massive work, Henry gave up all claims to any royalties in order to relieve the financial burden of such a major project.

Even before CES Press decided not to complete the publication of the last two volumes of *GRA*, Dr Henry kindly gave this writer permission to make an abridgment of the work. Knowing that even this smaller-scale effort would require a lot of money, he also generously funded the work of making an abridgment of all six volumes and of having the set translated and published in

3 Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation & Authority* (GRA) (Waco: Word Books, 1976-1983).

4 Dust cover of Carl F. H. Henry, *Toward a Recovery of Christian Belief* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1990); see also other statements on the dust cover of *GRA* by Kenneth Briggs and Richard Ostling.

5 Stanley J. Grenz & Roger E. Olson, *20th-Century Theology: God & the World in a Transitional Age* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 288.

6 Personal correspondence with the author, March, 2013.

7 The Chinese version of *Worldview History, A Concept*, by David Naugle, mentioned Henry's contribution. One of his essays was included in the Chinese edition of Philip W. Comfort's *The Origin of the Bible*.

both traditional and simplified Chinese characters.⁸

II Theological Contributions to the Chinese Church

1 Doctrine of the church

Dr Henry's first well-known book dealt with the responsibility of Christians towards society.⁹ In many subsequent volumes, as well as in various chapters in *GRA*, he affirmed the vital role which believers must play in the world at large.¹⁰ He criticized American fundamentalists for abdicating their duty to influence the culture around them because they had withdrawn from education, media, entertainment, the arts, and government, and had formed their own little sub-culture separate from the 'world'.

Henry called the followers of Jesus to remember and obey their Master's description of them as salt and light in

the world.¹¹ He believed that the church is God's new society, an in-breaking of the kingdom of God on earth. 'When Christianity discusses the new society, it speaks of... the regenerate church called to live by the standards of the coming King and which in some respects already approximates to the kingdom of God in present history.'¹² Though never without sin, Christians are still those whom God has delivered from bondage to Satan, the world, and the flesh, and who can thus penetrate their environment with light and love. The early Christians eventually transformed much of the decadence of Rome, and the medieval Church relieved much of the brutality and barbarism of that dark period with the doctrines of Christ.

Likewise, if Christians were to take their Master seriously, they would enter all areas of human endeavour with the conviction that God's Word could bring light to any situation and with the power of the Holy Spirit to live out a new kind of life before a watching world. By faithful living and prophetic witness based upon the whole revelation of God in the Scriptures, the church can penetrate society with the light and love of God's truth and grace.

Carl Henry maintained the priority of evangelism and spiritual growth, but he also held forth the possibility, even the responsibility, of Christians to transform society by application of biblical truth to all arenas of human endeavour. He wrote: 'The church's primary is to expound the revealed Gospel and the divine principles of social duty,

⁸ The first four volumes of Carl Henry's *God, Revelation, & Authority* were published in Chinese by China Evangelical Seminary Press. An abridgment of those volumes has been published by Campus Press. The last two are being translated.

⁹ Carl F. H. Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1947).

¹⁰ See, for example, *Christian Personal Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957); *Aspects of Christian Social Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964); *Baker's Dictionary of Christian Ethics; A Plea for Evangelical Demonstration; God, Revelation, & Authority*, Vol. 4, chapters 21-25; *The Christian Mindset in a Secular Society: Promoting Evangelical Renewal & National Righteousness* (Portland, Oregon: Multnomah Press, 1984).

¹¹ Mt. 5:12.

¹² *GRA* 4:522. See also pages 527-528.

and to constrain [i.e. urge] individual Christians to fulfil their evangelistic and social obligations.¹³ Of course, the church has a political task of a special kind: Not only to live out the love and truth of God in its own community, but to 'challenge' the 'present structures', which 'can and ought to be changed to remedy the afflictions of the oppressed'.¹⁴

At the same time, however, Carl Henry refused to become obsessed with politics. He vigorously encouraged Christians to become involved in society at all levels, including political participation, and fully supported his own son when he ran for public office. On the other hand, he did not believe that the Christian message dealt mostly, or even largely, with political organization of society. While explaining in great detail the social implications of biblical teaching, he kept his eyes on the main need of mankind, which is reconciliation with God and reformation of individuals, families, and the church. He considered the body of regenerate believers to be the main arena for the outworking of God's truth and love among human beings, and thought that Christian congregations would serve as shining lights in a dark world.

Henry also faulted both liberal and evangelical churches for their excessive involvement in politics. 'The church must reject trying to politicize an unregenerate world into the kingdom of God.'¹⁵ The liberal view of mankind as basically good, of Jesus

as primarily a teacher of ethics and a good example, and of the kingdom of God as essentially limited to this world (and especially to politics) made them vulnerable to each new trend and fad in society.

Evangelical Christians in America also tend to support governments without critical reflection upon how their policies compare with biblical values and principles. Often, they become deeply involved in political movements, believing that political change will bring lasting social benefit. Always, the church must not rely upon political power to change the world. 'Its task is not to force new structures upon society at large, but to be the new society, to exemplify in its own ranks the way and will of God.'¹⁶

Though his editorials in *Christianity Today* and his works on Christian ethics did not shy away from making pronouncements on political issues, he never thought that political action would usher in the kingdom of God on earth. 'Political action does not lend itself to a hurried implementation of the millennium; in truth, it is not a means to the millennium at all.'¹⁷ For that reason, he opposed Liberation Theology in all its forms and considered Marxism and even the Social Gospel to be seriously flawed because of their belief in the perfectibility of individuals and of society. In particular, he did not support violent revolution, because 'The whole Christian heritage stands on the side of peaceful, legal, and orderly processes of change in society, rather than on the

13 Carl F. H. Henry, *Aspects of Christian social Ethics* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1964), 10.

14 *GRA* 4:531.

15 *GRA* 4:530.

16 *GRA* 4:530.

17 Carl F. H. Henry, *Christian Countermoves in a Decadent Culture* (Portland, Oregon: Multnomah, 1986), 136.

side of violence and revolution.’¹⁸

How pertinent all this is to the Chinese church! On the one hand, we note that most house churches in China, as well as most independent churches in Taiwan and overseas, reflect the pietistic religion preached to them by missionaries. They concentrate upon winning souls and building up the church’s spiritual life. We do not fault them for this focus on the essentials, and we stand in awe at their zeal and courage. Nevertheless, this privatized religion does not equip believers to understand, critique, or work to improve the conditions of a society that is rapidly unravelling.

The state-sponsored Three Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) presents a more complex scene. Their pulpits also address mostly religious and personal matters. At the same time, the TSPM seminaries and official organs must promote the policies and pre-eminence of the Chinese Communist Party. To be ‘patriotic’ is to accept and obey what the party says without question. There is no room for dissent. Socialism cannot be critiqued from a biblical standpoint, nor can the claims of the government to be able to establish what amounts to heaven on earth be challenged. The same focus on politics and support for socialism have often been seen in liberal churches and seminaries in Hong Kong and Taiwan.

Where, then, shall the new wave of Chinese intellectuals seeking truth in Christianity go? They do not feel

at home or understood in the house churches or many conservative churches in Taiwan and Hong Kong, but they cannot blindly accept the dogmas of any political party as they are sometimes expressed by some of the leaders of the TSPM, either. Likewise, educated Chinese outside of Mainland China have few churches to go to and have their questions about Christian social responsibility answered in a biblical way.

Carl Henry, as we have seen, speaks to this dilemma, and calls the church back to its primary responsibilities of living according to God’s truth and proclaiming God’s truth, without the expectation that human action will bring in the kingdom of God on earth.

2 Priority of evangelism

On the last page of his autobiography, he states that ‘Heaven will be an unending feast for the soul that basks in his presence. And it will be brighter because some will be there whom I brought to Jesus.’¹⁹

In the depths of his heart, Carl Henry was an evangelist, not a theorist. He desperately yearned for millions more to be saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. But he believed that true faith must rest upon solid convictions that the gospel is *true*. To be true, it had to command the allegiance of the whole person, including the mind. Like Paul and other biblical writers, he held that the mind was made in God’s image; that it had fallen into a degenerate, darkened state; and that it had to

¹⁸ Carl F. H. Henry, ‘Concerns and Considerations’, *Christianity Today*, quoted in *Carl Henry at His Best*, edited by Steve Halliday and Al Janssen (Portland, Oregon: Multnomah, 1989), 120.

¹⁹ Carl F. H. Henry, *Confession of a Theologian: An Autobiography* (Waco: Word Books, 1986), 407.

be renewed by the light of God's Word as contained in the Scripture.²⁰

Thus, *God, Revelation, and Authority* qualifies both as a work of systematic theology and of apologetics. He wanted both to strengthen the faith of Christians and to challenge the mistaken ideas of non-believers, so that they might come to know God in Christ. We shall see how this works out as we discuss Henry's theology.

3 Doctrine of history

Most people ask the questions: What is the meaning of life? What is the meaning of history? Carl Henry thought long and hard about these questions. One of his greatest contributions to theology relates to his full-orbed doctrine of revelation. Because the Bible tells of the origin and end of human history, and contains so many historical narratives and prophetic evaluations of the activities of kings and commoners of many nations and times, we can begin to construct a philosophy of history from the Scriptures.²¹

As a result we can say, contrary to pagan and atheistic notions, that history has meaning, for it is 'the realm in which God decisively acts and works out his purposes'.²² But this significance of human events does not lie either in the progress of science in technology, or the prominence of one nation over others, or the so-called progress of mankind to higher levels of civilization, but in the ongoing development of God's eternal plan to save untold mil-

lions of those who trust in him, as well as to judge those who wilfully reject his revelation in Christ.

Salvation does not stop with individual conversion and membership in the Body of Christ, but extends to the transformation of people into greater and greater conformity to the moral likeness of Christ. Beyond that, these people will form families and congregations of believers who seek to glorify God in all they do. If they choose to obey the 'cultural mandate' of Genesis 1, they will then make a beneficial impact on society. But this Christian influence upon culture will never be complete. The goal of history will be reached only when Christ returns to establish the kingdom of God on earth.

Henry obviously disagrees with liberal and Marxist utopianism, as well as with Christian triumphalism. Instead, he gives a balanced view of the course of human life on this planet, which will come to a climactic end when Christ returns and ushers in a new heaven and a new earth, in which righteousness will dwell. 'The New Testament speaks of a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15) in which God in a new heaven and earth (Rev. 21:1) will complete and perfect our status of new humanity by the new birth (John 3:3, 5; Eph. 4:24).'²³

4 Christianity and science

Perhaps no issue vexes Chinese intellectuals more than the question of the relationship between science and the Bible. Ever since the early part of the twentieth century, when Mr Democracy and Mr Science were supposed to save China, educated Chinese have

20 Rom. 1:18-28; Eph. 4:17-24.

21 See, for example, *God, Revelation, & Authority*, Vol. 2, chapters 17-22.

22 *GRA* 4:312.

23 *GRA* 6:513.

been taught to believe that the scientific method is the only sure way to truth, that science can discover all that we need to know, that progress in science and technology will bring happiness to mankind, and that evolution has shown that God either does not exist or was not active in the origin of the world.

Chinese Christians, like those in the West, have reacted to this idea of science in various ways. Some have tried to combine faith in science with faith in the Bible, mostly by accepting evolution as the *means* by which God made the world. Others have ignored the problem. Some have accepted the outlines of 'old earth' chronology without surrendering to all the claims of evolution. A few have discovered that the claims of science in general and evolutionary theory in particular have been overstated.

Dr Henry once again provides Chinese intellectuals with a way forward. He studied the philosophy of science extensively, and in *GRA* he probes the limits of science and of the scientific method.²⁴ He correctly observes that science can deal with only a small part of reality – that which can be measured in repeatable experiments under controlled conditions – and that vast regions of human life and experience fall outside the realm of scientific inquiry. Most important of all, 'Science – in the modern sense of phenomenal knowledge gained by sensual means, requiring laboratory verification and subject to constant revision – is impos-

tent to decide the issue of the reality or unreality of the supernatural.'²⁵

Henry also shows that the scientific method is based on certain presuppositions which themselves depend upon the truths which the Bible asserts, such as the regularity of processes in the physical world, the existence of causes with predictable effects, the general reliability of sense experience, and the adequacy of human reason to organize and interpret data in a meaningful and useful way. No religion other than Christianity produced the amazing growth of science as we know it, simply because no other faith has the same understanding of this world and of our place in it.

Further, in two masterful chapters, Henry uses the writings of evolutionists themselves to demonstrate that this theory is still far from proven.²⁶ Indeed, he shows its inner contradictions, its lack of evidence, and its failure to explain a variety of phenomena. His achievement is all the more remarkable, in that he wrote this part of *GRA* before the appearance of such devastating critiques of evolutionary theory as those by Berlinski, Gange, Denton, Behe, Johnson, and Dembski.²⁷ All of these scholars prove that evolutionary theory is *unscientific*, because

²⁴ See, for example, *God, Revelation & Authority*, Vol. 1, chapter 10; Vol. 6, chapters 5-9; 'Science and Religion', in *Contemporary Evangelical Thought* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957).

²⁵ Carl F. H. Henry, *The Drift of Western Thought* (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1951), 68.

²⁶ *GRA*, Vol. 6, chapters 7-8.

²⁷ David Berlinski, in two articles in *Commentary*, summer, 1996; Kenneth Gange, *Origins and Destiny*; Michael Denton, *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*; Michael Behe, *Darwin's Black Box*; Phillip Johnson, *Darwin on Trial and Reason in the Balance*; William Dembski, *Intelligent Design*; Scott Huse, *Collapse of Evolution*; Kurt P. Wise, *Faith, Form, and Time*.

it is founded on unproven assumptions and lacking in corroborative evidence.

Thus, a naïve belief in the claims of modern science to have explained all of reality without reference to God really amounts to blind faith in another myth: 'Today the scientific world view stands charged with a grandiose remythologization of reality.'²⁸

Moreover, they all point to the near-certainty of an Intelligent Designer, one who would be very much like the God of the Bible. To make things worse for evolutionary theory and for the usual old-earth dating it has spawned, Scott Huse and Kurt Patrick Wise have argued convincingly that the narratives of Genesis 1-9 are confirmed by so much scientific and logical support that evolutionary theory is virtually disproven and a recent creation seems very likely.

In other words, those simple believers in rural China who take the first few chapters of Genesis literally may turn out to be right after all! The implications for evangelism among highly-educated Chinese are obvious: We need not shrink from telling them that science does not have all the answers; its methods depend on biblical assumptions; and its so-called 'assured results', far from lasting, are constantly needing revision. Even that fundamental construct which seemed to have ruled out the possibility of the existence of a Creator God and the accuracy of the first few chapters of the Bible now turns out to be itself a myth!

5 Refutation of twentieth theological errors

For most of his life, Carl Henry studied and critiqued the writings of leading non-evangelical theologians. He saw his mission as 'on the frontiers' of theological inquiry. We may all thank God for this tireless effort, which involved reading and assessing many hundreds – perhaps thousands – of weighty tomes, mostly by German and English writers. Why all this work? Because these theologians have influenced both the liberal and the evangelical wings of the church.

It happened like this: In order to meet accreditation requirements by non-evangelical academic agencies, or in order to acquire some sort of academic respectability in the eyes of the non-evangelical world, evangelical Chinese seminaries have sought to staff their faculties with teachers holding advanced degrees from 'prestigious' schools in the West. Often a PhD – no matter what its source or the theological convictions of the one who earned it – was enough to gain a position as a seminary professor. Those scholars, having written their dissertations either under, or about, leading non-evangelical theologians, then proceeded to publish articles and books introducing their works to evangelicals. Neo-orthodox, liberal, and other trendy views have thus gained a hearing in places that previously held the Bible to be the Word of God.

Even before that, however, liberal seminaries in Asia had absorbed the teachings of men like Karl Barth – especially Barth, in fact.²⁹ The result?

28 *GRA* 1:157.

29 Henry saw Karl Barth as the most influen-

The Chinese church has been influenced by writings of German theologians who hold that the Bible is filled with errors and that we can have no sure and certain word from God, and thus no clear words about God – except their own words, of course!

Into this confusing situation strides Carl Henry, fully equipped with three Master's degrees and two Doctorates to analyze and expose the weaknesses of non-evangelical theology. If you want to know how men like Barth, Bultmann, Brunner, Tillich, Moltmann, and Pannenberg – to name only a few – have departed both from the Bible and from theological and philosophical consistency, just read Henry's careful, fair, and devastating treatments of them in the pages of *GRA*.³⁰ Many a fad in current Chinese Evangelical academic circles would have been prevented had the authors taken the time to read Carl Henry.

Carl Henry's labours have resulted in a clearer understanding of 'the faith once delivered to the saints' and a deeper appreciation of its reasonableness. He has restored the Bible to its proper place in the church and turned back the tide of non-biblical speculation originating in the rarefied atmosphere of German and English universities, rooting Christianity once again in the rich soil of the Word of God. He has given new life to the ancient creeds

and Evangelical confessions of faith, and grounded evangelism in a source of truth that cannot be shaken – the Bible.

He also sought to protect the evangelical wing of Christianity from errors, such as a loss of belief in the inerrancy of the Bible and what is now termed 'openness theology'.³¹

6 Doctrine of scripture

In *God, Revelation, & Authority*, Henry tackled what he considered to be the central issue of our time, the doctrine of revelation. After all, if we do not have a word from God, how can we say anything of lasting value? Not only has modern western philosophy since Kant led to increasing scepticism, but within the Christian church the idea that we cannot know absolute truth has gained ground.

Twentieth century theology began with a liberalism that rejected miracles, much of the Old Testament, and unique deity of Christ, the saving power of his death, and his resurrection. Though neo-orthodoxy claimed to restore a sure word, it spoke so equivocally about the Bible as the Word of God that Scripture was effectively robbed of its previous authority among theologians. Biblical critics continued the destructive work of nineteenth century German scholars, leaving nothing but a collection of conflicting traditions among which to choose what may have been originally from God himself.

In more recent times, as Henry

tial non-Evangelical theologian of the twentieth century, so he spends a great deal of time dealing with Barth's doctrine of the Word of God. He views Barth as inconsistent, and thus misleading.

³⁰ Aside from his many quotations of Karl Barth and Emil Brunner, see *GRA*, Vol. 2, chapters 20-21.

³¹ See, for example, his discussion of Process Theology's proposed solution to the problem of evil, which has been largely followed by Openness Theology. *GRA* 6:286-290.

showed, this trend affected even evangelical theologians. Fuller Theological Seminary, where Henry had served as a founding member of the faculty, renounced its earlier commitment to the inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible. Soon the contagion spread across the Pacific, with even traditionally Chinese seminaries embracing some form of modern doubt about the truth of the Bible.

Henry shows in the first four volumes of *GRA* that the doctrine of the Word of God is foundational to the entire Christian faith. Volume One sets the stage by examining various ways in which men have claimed to know the truth (experience, intuition, reason, and revelation), and concluding that divine revelation is the most reliable. The next three volumes deal with the inspiration, infallibility, inerrancy, and thus the authority of the Bible in great depth, always in dialogue with those who reject the historic Christian position.

With his vast erudition, including knowledge of the biblical languages, Old and New Testament criticism and theology, and systematic theology, as well as linguistics and philosophy, he makes a very strong case for the absolute trustworthiness and accuracy of the Scriptures in all that they affirm.³² But is this necessary? Indeed, articles have appeared in various Chinese Christian publications claiming that the idea of inerrancy is, as Fuller theologians assert, a new invention and not the doctrine of the church throughout the ages. Moreover, they say, inerrancy is not necessary for Christian ortho-

doxy. We can just believe what the Bible says about the essentials of the faith and not quibble over details.

Henry demolishes these sorts of arguments by definitive proof that orthodox Christians have always held the Bible to be without error ('Inerrancy is the evangelical heritage, the historic commitment of the Christian church')³³ and by sharp reasoning that shows why faith in the errancy of Scripture inevitably leads to erosion of confidence in the Bible in general, resulting in a progressive departure from not only the details of biblical teaching but also in the some of the core doctrines.³⁴

He also tries to clear up misunderstanding about problem passages in the Bible.³⁵ We must admit that there are places in the Scriptures that seem to be in conflict with other passages. Henry deals with these in a special chapter, and shows that most of the apparent discrepancies can be cleared up by careful study. At the same time, he recognizes that not all the difficulties in the Bible can be resolved. There are a few that have so far defied satisfactory explanation. That is why we say that we believe the Bible to be the Word of God; we cannot prove it beyond a doubt. But we must not exaggerate the problem, since most of the criticisms of the Bible can be answered, and the number of apparent contradictions is less than one percent of the Bible, which is well within the range which scientists can accept for a hypothesis can be considered to be true.

He also rescues the idea of preposi-

³³ *GRA* 4:367, and all of chapter 16.

³⁴ *GRA*, Vol. 4, chapter 7.

³⁵ See *GRA*, Vol. 4, chapter 15.

³² See especially *GRA*, Vol. 4, chapters 5-10.

tional revelation from the charge that it reduces a living faith in a living God to a dead orthodoxy consisting of cold doctrines divorced from either a love of God or a true personal relationship with God.³⁶ In his chapters on linguistic analysis, he demonstrates that truth resides only in statements, sentences, judgments, propositions, and not only those like 'God is love', but also commands, questions, and even parables, which can be reformulated as meaningful statements.³⁷ Furthermore, these propositions derive from the self-revelation of God, who even revealed his holy name in a sentence, 'I am that I am'. To be ignorant of fundamental truth about God is to be ignorant of God himself. After all, Jesus himself declared, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me' (John 14:6). If we empty this proposition of its meaning, we cannot approach the Person who spoke it or the Person to whom Jesus said we cannot come except through him.

Henry demonstrates that prepositional revelation is the only true way to know the God who is and who acts, the God who rewards those who seek him. Always concerned with evangelizing the lost, he asks how the evangelist can say anything worth believing if he cannot draw upon the true statements of the Bible?

But does the *Chinese* church need such a doctrine? Yes, because the entire church needs it. We have only to observe what has happened in the

'mainline' denominations of the western church to predict what will befall any church which denies the entire truthfulness of the Bible. This writer attended a 'liberal' seminary for three years and witnessed first-hand the man-centred rationalism and irrationalism that attend a rejection of the Bible as the inerrant Word of God.

It is fashionable nowadays to say that human language cannot adequately communicate reliable truth about God. After all, we are finite; how can our words accurately reflect the nature of an infinite God? Something like this idea is present also in the *Dao De Jing* and in Zen Buddhism. But Carl Henry shows that if there is a God; if he is intelligent; if he created mankind in his own image; if he can communicate in words at all; then he can 'speak' to men in a way that they can understand. Indeed, the Scripture assumes that God is able to express himself truly and accurately even to finite and fallen human beings. The eternal Logos of God is able to enlighten the mind of human beings so that we can comprehend God's messages to us.

The Word of God became a man, Jesus the Christ, so that we could see what God is like. Jesus also spoke words, and he quoted the words of the Old Testament, and he commanded his apostles to preach the gospel to others – all of this assumes that Jesus believed that his words, the words of the Old Testament, and the words of his chosen apostles, would be true in every way. They would be true to the nature and activity of God, true to Jesus' life and teaching, and truly understood by those who read and heard them. In other words, the entire Bible is based on the assumption that God is able to

³⁶ See *GRA*, Vol. 2, chapters 12-16, and especially chapter 12, 'Divine Revelation as Personal'.

³⁷ *GRA*, Vol. 3, chapters 25-27.

use human language to communicate truth about himself and his will even to finite and fallen people. Carl Henry makes this point over and over, with great clarity and force.³⁸

Like those who hold to biblical errancy, Henry affirms that Jesus Christ is the Word of God made flesh, the unique God-man in whom all the Scriptures find their centre and focus. The question is, however, whether we shall accept the view of the Old Testament that Jesus himself held and that his apostles also taught. Further, if the Bible is full of errors, how can we be sure that we know anything reliable about Jesus himself?³⁹

In Asia, especially, this understanding of the Bible is necessary. Otherwise, how are Chinese Christians to answer the claims of Muslims, Taoists, Buddhists, and Confucianists, who can all say that they, too, have sacred writings? Furthermore, the ambiguities of especially Buddhist and Taoist teachings find a formidable contrast in the clear statements of the Bible – but only if it is true!

7 Doctrine of revelation: the Word of God

Henry goes further than a defence and explication of biblical infallibility and inerrancy, however. He believes that God has revealed himself also in nature, history, and the mind of man. Though each of these yields impressions that must be checked and corrected, not to mention interpreted, by the written Word of God, they form a comprehensive revelation of all that

God wants us to know about himself and his purposes for us as individuals and as nations and cultures.⁴⁰

That means that Henry, with his incisive reasoning and broad perspective on God's revelation, can give us tools to evaluate the truthfulness of other religions, philosophies, and literary works. Recently, for example, noted Chinese intellectual Yuan Zhimin has popularized the view that Laozi is a sort of Chinese Isaiah, a kind of prophet of Christ. With the insights concerning the Logos (Word) of the Bible, Henry can equip Chinese Christians scholars to assess Yuan's claims, as well as to gain a proper understanding of the ways in which other ancient and modern Chinese thinkers agree and disagree with the Bible.

Some Chinese theologians today are calling for what they term 'cross-textuality', by which they mean the necessity of reading the Bible along with other works, such as the great classics of Chinese literature, philosophy, and religion. Henry would agree with this, just as he himself constantly read the works of non-Christian philosophers and compared them with the Bible. He would insist, however, that the Bible possesses unique authority. It is not just one great book among many.

In fact, the first four volumes of *God, Revelation, & Authority* try to demonstrate that the Scriptures are the very words of God; that they speak with ultimate authority; and that they alone are to be considered fully reliable in matters of faith and action. Other books, no matter how old or full of human wisdom, must be assessed in the light of

³⁸ *GRA*, Vol. 3, chapters 19-24.

³⁹ See *GRA*, Vol. 3, chapter 3.

⁴⁰ See *GRA*, Vol. 2, chapters 7-10.

the Bible, and evaluated by the standard of truth contained in the Bible.

8 Charismatic movement's weaknesses

At the other end of the theological spectrum, charismatic Christians who do believe in the authority of the Bible have often been charged with actually neglecting the Scriptures by placing so much emphasis on the direct work of the Holy Spirit upon the individual. Carl Henry did not, like some theologians, deny the present activity of the Spirit in the church; he was open to the reality of miracles in this age.

On the other hand, he did warn against both the shallow theology of much charismatic preaching, as well as against an over-emphasis upon subjective guidance rather than a careful searching of the Scriptures to learn God's will.⁴¹ 'The Spirit illumines Scripture, evokes trust in God, and regenerates contrite sinners.'⁴² It must also be noted that

every departure from the express teaching of Scripture, every appeal to a knowledge immediately given by the Spirit rather than through the prophetic-apostolic Word, increases the possibility of generating still another novel cult.⁴³

With much of Chinese Christianity now heavily influenced by the charismatic movement, Henry's balanced approach is needed more than ever.

9 Human responsibility and God's sovereignty

For several centuries, Protestant theologians have debated the problem of the relationship between human responsibility and God's sovereignty. Once again, Carl Henry displays a balance that we could admire. On the one hand, even in his heavily doctrinal works, such as *God, Revelation, & Authority*, he constantly declares that all people stand before the revelation of God and must decide how to respond. We must choose to believe and obey God, or to disbelieve and disobey. He also insisted that Christians must do all they can to spread the gospel, since only those who believe in Jesus Christ can be saved, and God has appointed proclamation of the truth as the ordinary means of their salvation.

Henry's own actions are consistent with his teaching. He worked closely with Billy Graham, who was an Arminian, in his evangelistic work. He himself preached countless evangelistic sermons, and even considered his highest joy to consist in helping someone come to know God through faith in Christ. Personally, I believe that he was basically an evangelist at heart. On the other hand, he believed that the Bible teaches that God rules the entire universe, including individuals. The Bible 'sees all history in terms of the governing purposes of God'.⁴⁴

History is somehow, in a mysterious way, the outworking of God's plan, which includes men and nations.⁴⁵ In two chapters, he explains why he

⁴¹ See *GRA*, Vol. 4, chapter 12.

⁴² *GRA* 4:278.

⁴³ *GRA* 4:284.

⁴⁴ *GRA* 4:313.

⁴⁵ *GRA*, Vol. 2, chapters 17, 22; Vol. 6, chapter 20.

thinks that our individual salvation does not come primarily from our own choice, but from God's choice of us, resulting in his bringing us into contact with the gospel, opening our eyes to see its truth and our hearts to respond with repentance and faith.⁴⁶ Even when he speaks in this way, however, he does not sound like many Calvinists, who so emphasize God's sovereignty that they minimize man's responsibility. In other words, Carl Henry's Reformed views on salvation are presented in a very moderate and balanced way.

10 The problem of evil

Surely, one of the greatest obstacles to the gospel is the problem of evil. By that I mean the belief that many people have that if God is all-powerful, it is hard to understand why he allows evil to exist in the world. Henry acknowledges this problem, and does not shrink from discussing it at length. Here again, I believe, he demonstrates balance.⁴⁷

He does believe in God's sovereignty, but he does not absolve men from responsibility for their wicked acts, nor does he attempt to provide a full answer for the existence of evil in the world. In my opinion, he goes about as far as the Scriptures will allow, and then admits that we cannot penetrate this mystery. 'Let it be said at once – and even the apostle Paul insists that we say it – that we do not presently know all the factors and facets that illuminate an answer to the problem of evil.'⁴⁸

He then goes on, however, to present what we *do* know at this time: God is in control. 'Good and evil are defined by the sovereign Creator's will and command.'⁴⁹ Satan is allowed to do great evil. Christ suffered great injustice but 'by his resurrection victory... anticipated the final triumph of the good and the conquest of evil'. Even in this present world of sin and suffering, 'the regenerate church is nonetheless a healing body...' God's providential purpose and presence in history and experience subordinate all the pain and suffering of regenerate believers to a higher good (Romans 8:28). 'All the created universe awaits eschatological finalities that involve a new heavens and earth wholly free from suffering...'⁵⁰

11 Theology before ethics

We can commit two errors with regard to Christian ethics. One, we can concentrate upon theology and evangelism and ignore the practical, day-to-day implications of the truth, and our obligation to turn head knowledge into actual Christian conduct. On the other hand, many Christians tend to concentrate upon actions and behaviour, to the neglect of the core gospel and a thorough knowledge of fundamental Christian doctrine. Thus, much preaching tends to give us good examples from the Bible, including the life of Jesus, as patterns for us to follow. The problem is that unless we know God and trust in him, we cannot have the motivation or the power to live according to his will.

As Henry points out, unless we be-

46 *GRA*, Vol. 5, chapter 16; Vol. 6, chapter 4.

47 *GRA*, Vol. 6, chapters 11-13, 20.

48 *GRA* 6:302.

49 *GRA* 6:304.

50 *GRA* 6:304.

lieve that the Bible is the very Word of God, and study it carefully, we shall have no firm foundation for a system of Christian ethics. That is why, after writing books on both personal and social ethics, Henry turned his attention to the theological basis for all Christian behaviour.⁵¹ Perhaps Chinese Christians need this reminder more than do some, for their strong Confucian heritage conditions Chinese to pay more attention to ethical action than to correct doctrine, to man's works more than the work of God, to works more than faith.

12 The value of women

Perhaps no issue has captured more attention in the past one hundred years than the worth and proper roles for women. Certainly, in China the issues have involved foot-binding, education, and economic opportunities for women. Other issues have been concubinage, abuse of women by men and the roles of women in the church. Here, as elsewhere, Carl Henry provides us with an example of biblical balance.

On the one hand, he affirmed the biblical teaching that women are, like men, created in the image of God. They possess all the God-like qualities that men do, including intelligence, conscience, moral capacity, and the ability to respond to God's revelation. In Christ, women are equally justified, sanctified, and assured of eternal

glory. His own wife Helga was highly educated, and taught at various colleges where Henry served as professor. Perhaps more importantly, she was fluent in German, so she read theological works in German for her husband, thus enabling him to stay up-to-date with the latest developments in Continental thought. She was an indispensable partner in his work.

On the other hand, Henry questioned the modern exegesis of the Scriptures which seem to imply that there are no differences between men and women, and that women and men can and should perform identical roles in the home and in the church. He questioned the idea that biblical teachings on the role of women were merely the product of ancient culture. Based upon his study of the Bible, he affirmed male headship in the home and leadership in the church.

He recognized that difference in role or function does not imply difference in worth. The Son of God submitted to his heavenly Father, but was fully equal to him in his divine nature. Henry saw modern evangelical feminism as a response to western philosophical developments and a loss of confidence in the abiding authority of the Bible, not the result of careful exegesis. In particular, he challenged the feminist challenge to masculine language about God.⁵²

13 Refutation of twentieth century attacks on Christianity

In the course of expounding the doctrine of revelation and of God in *GRA*

⁵¹ See, for example, *GRA*, 3:280, 'Only a meaningful and rationally persuasive metaphysics can supply the ground of a vital dynamic ethics, and Christianity presents itself as an intelligible faith in the transcendent sovereign God that revealed morality presupposed.'

⁵² *GRA*, Vol. 5, Supplementary Note after chapter 7, 'Feminist challenge to God-Language'.

as well as in many other volumes and articles, Henry defended biblical Christianity from all the main criticisms and rivals of it in modern times. His work thus provides Christians with valuable weapons against those who deride their faith as merely ignorant superstition. He thoroughly understood western philosophy from ancient times to the present, and was fully aware of the variety of objections to the Christian worldview.

He knew that logical positivists claimed that only statements that can be empirically verified have any meaning. In several places he shows the falsity of this view, both because it cannot be proven and also because the main tenet – that only empirically-verified statements have any meaning – is itself incapable of empirical verification! Along the way, he demolishes the notion that ‘God talk’ is meaningless, as the logical positivists asserted.⁵³

Likewise, in *GRA* Henry examines and refutes other types of world views, such as relativism. He also shows the inadequacies of speculative philosophy in general as he responds to particular objections philosophers have raised against the teachings of the Bible. Marxism was still widely believed while he composed *GRA*, so he deals with that mistaken school of thought. The bases of Marxism—dialectical idealism and atheistic materialism—are shown to be inadequate views of reality.⁵⁴ Nor does existentialism escape Henry’s intellectual scalpel. It is both irrational and workable as a basis

for life, even though the philosophical version of it, though rejected by most intellectuals in the West, has entered into popular religious and even academic theological thought.

Henry exposed the assumptions of radical secularity and calls them myths, myths by which it is impossible to live daily life.⁵⁵ But religious speculations and faiths abound, too, and Henry showed why their claims, including the supposed insights of mystics, lack both external verification and internal consistency.

Though people talk about ‘post-modernism’ as though it were something new, readers of *GRA* will see at once that Henry saw this trend decades ago and overturned its arguments throughout *GRA*. His extensive treatment of literary meaning and recent literary criticism indicates why ‘post-modern’ views of texts are untenable.⁵⁶

14 Limitations of reasoning, evidence, and experience

Unlike many Christian evangelists and apologists, however, Carl Henry did not try to ‘prove’ either the existence of God or the truth of the Bible.⁵⁷ Thus, he denies the priority of reason, of experience, and even of evidences (such as the resurrection of Christ, fulfilled prophecy, and miracles) as sources of ‘proof’ for the Christian faith. Discussing each of these, he shows how they fail to withstand legitimate criticisms from non-believers, and how only the assumption that God has revealed him-

⁵³ *GRA*, Vol. 1, chapters 5, 13-15.

⁵⁴ See, for example, *GRA*, Vol. 4, chapter 24, ‘Marxist Exegesis of the Bible’.

⁵⁵ *GRA*, Vol. 1, chapters 8-9.

⁵⁶ See, for example, *GRA* Vol. 4, chapters 13, 14, 17.

⁵⁷ See especially *GRA* 2:104-117.

self (especially in the Bible) provides a firm foundation for demonstrating the truthfulness of the gospel.⁵⁸

On the one hand, he shows that other belief systems are founded on unproven assumptions; on the other, he does not try to demonstrate beyond a doubt that Christianity is true. He shows that the Christian faith is reasonable, true to the experience of believers throughout the ages, and generally supported by historical evidence. At the same time, he insists that we must begin with faith in God as he has revealed himself in the Scriptures, and then use our reason and research to understand the revelation God has given us. We are saved by faith, not sight. As God's Spirit takes his Word and convinces us of its truth, we come to see our sins and repent of them; to trust in Christ; and to receive new life. Reasoning, evidence, and persuasion are not enough; only God can reveal himself to us. Thus, Henry maintains a balance between faith, on the one hand, and reason and experience on the other.

15 Dealing with other belief systems

Chinese Christians are confronted today with formidable rivals. These include Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism, popular religion, and western scepticism. Personally, I have found Henry's doctrine of knowledge (epistemology) to be a most helpful framework for dialogue with Chinese intellectuals. As mentioned above, Henry shows that there are four main ways of knowing ultimate truth: experience, which in-

cludes history, personal experience, and scientific experimentation; reason, which includes logical argument; intuition, which includes feelings and insights which just seem 'true' to us, though we cannot fully explain them; revelation from God.

All of these are valid and valuable, but the first three are very limited. Experience is not self-explanatory. As the famous parable of the four men touching the elephant shows, we are limited in our experience. Furthermore, even when we have accurate knowledge of something, we need some way to interpret it. We must get that interpretive framework, that model, those categories, from somewhere else.

Likewise, local reasoning is necessary to show whether a belief system is internally consistent. If it is not, then we don't have to accept it. But an argument can be fully reasonable, and still wrong.

What about intuition? It's valuable, even essential. We have an innate sense of beauty and of right and wrong. We can also have mystical experiences, but these experiences have to be interpreted to have lasting meaning, and that requires some outside set of valid ideas and concepts. Furthermore, how do I know that what I sense is true?

Finally, there is revelation. If there is a God, and he has revealed himself to us, then we can know the truth. That truth, in turn, helps us understand our experiences; it provides proper assumptions for our reasoning; and it enables us to test our intuition against external reality. As we deal with other belief systems, we can ask them, How do you know? I find that most people who are not Christians simply cannot answer that question. It's a good start-

58 See especially Henry, *GRA* 1: 216-224.

ing point for sharing the gospel with those who doubt.

Throughout his theological work, Carl Henry demonstrates how the Bible appeals to all these ways of knowing: There are many historical events and empirical statements that point towards the truth of the Bible. It is internally consistent logically. It speaks to our hearts, especially as God's Spirit within us to reveal God to us personally.

Partly as the result of the writings of Rudolf Bultmann, much of the Bible has been relegated to the status of myth by some modern western scholars. Educated Chinese also often ask why the stories of the Bible differ in kind and value from the countless myths and legends which can be found in Chinese literature and religion. In his careful analysis of myth as a literary form, Carl Henry demonstrates the complete dissimilarity between myths from the ancient Near East, Greece, and Rome, and the historical accounts in the Scriptures, but his discussion applies equally to similar stories from China's rich literary and religious heritage.⁵⁹

As you can see, even this short overview reveals why *GRA* is so useful to the Chinese situation. Chinese believers face both secular and religious challenges to their faith, and need the tools to build a convincing argument for the unique truth of the Bible and its proclamation of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ alone.

III Relevance to China

1 Influence

We should not be surprised at the relevance of *GRA* to the Asian context. Indeed, Henry composed this book during the years that he served as Lecturer-at-large with Word Vision. For several months each year, he taught at a seminary in Korea and lectured at schools and churches throughout Asia, including Hong Kong, Singapore, and Taiwan. His conversations with Chinese, both Christians and non-Christians, alerted him to the spread of western ideas into Asia. He saw that the same winds of doctrine that had unsettled culture in Europe and America had begun to affect the Chinese as well. Here is how he put it: 'New views, projected mainly by speculative German scholars, were being carried to Asia and Africa by American and European ecumenists fascinated by theological novelties.'⁶⁰ Thus, *GRA* was written partly with the Chinese in mind.

Indeed, Carl Henry has had at least some influence on Chinese Christian theology. The first four volumes of *God, Revelation, and Authority* were translated into Chinese and published by China Evangelical Seminary (CES) Press. An abridgment of those volumes by me was later published by Campus Press in traditional characters, and unofficially in simplified characters for distribution in China. The translator, Paul Kang, was for a while Dean of China Evangelical Seminary and has become a widely influential preacher and teacher, not only in Taiwan, but

⁵⁹ See especially *GRA*, Vol. 1, chapters 3 and 9.

⁶⁰ *Confessions of a Theologian*, 360.

internationally, with programs on the radio as well. The current president of CES, Dr Peter Chow, says,

- (1) Chinese evangelicals are influenced by the evangelical movement in America, and Henry was a prominent leader of that movement.
- (2) Henry did as much as anyone to encourage evangelical scholarship. CES, of course, is an attempt in Taiwan in this direction.
- (3) I myself have been helped by a book he edited—*Revelation and the Bible*. The first article in the Confession of faith of CES has to do with inerrancy of Scriptures in their autographs.⁶¹

At least one dissertation on Henry has been written in China, and a review of *Carl Henry: Theologian for All Seasons* was published in a leading theological studies journal there. An earlier version of this article appeared in the Chung Tai Theological Seminary journal. Considering the extensive influence of CES among, at least, house churches in China, one can surmise a derivative influence of Henry through some at least of its faculty.

2 Personal example

Finally, let us close with a few ways in which Carl Henry set an example for educated Chinese Christians.

a) Scholarship

To begin with, he makes a mockery of the charge that Christians must commit intellectual suicide in order to believe in the Bible and its teachings. His own brilliance and astounding

scholarship in a dozen different fields prove that an earnest believer can – and should – love God with his mind as well as his heart. As I told my daughter when she went off to college, ‘You will meet many professors who are smarter than your father, but I doubt that you will meet any that are more intelligent or learned than Dr Henry. Indeed, I doubt that you will meet anyone who comes near him in intellectual power.’ As King David had his ‘mighty men’ (2 Samuel 23), so King Jesus has his, and one of them was Carl Henry.

Educated Chinese Christians may take Henry as their model in their studies, research, and writing. His thoroughly meticulous scholarship, always fair and balanced, demonstrates that there is no substitute for hard work and clear thinking as we seek to glorify God with our minds.

b) Awareness of world situation

But some sincere Christian scholars are well-versed in the Bible and in traditional religion or philosophy, but ignorant of contemporary events, including trends of thought. Henry again shows us how we are to be in the world as keen observers. Just as Jesus knew both the Old Testament and the flaws of pharisaical doctrines, so Henry immersed himself in the Scriptures and in modern thought, as well as in current events. His language is filled with references to contemporary people, events, and concepts.

We don’t have to spend our lives reading difficult books, as he did, but we can at least read the newspapers and the journals and the major books of our time in order to know what others outside the church are thinking and doing. Only then will we be able

⁶¹ Personal correspondence with the author. March 27, 2013.

to make contact with them and speak the gospel to them in terms they can understand.

Henry took great pains to understand how non-Christians thought. He took equal trouble to relate with them in a friendly way. Though he would not compromise his own beliefs, he did not proudly mock those of others, either, except when it was necessary to show in writing the falsity of non-Christian ideas. He maintained courteous and cordial relations with people of all sorts of beliefs and convictions.

The same was true for his relationships with other professing Christians. He made his own position clear, so that everyone knew where he stood on a variety of issues. At the same time, he considered cooperation among evangelicals of all sorts essential for a united witness to a watching world. He criticized fundamentalists for their militant posture towards all who disagreed with them, and parted company even with those evangelicals who insisted that belief in the inerrancy of the Bible was an essential test of orthodoxy. He himself argued for the inerrancy of Scripture, of course, but acknowledged the genuine Christian faith of all who held to historic orthodox Christianity even though they did not affirm that the Bible was without error.

His peaceful approach earned the respect of not only evangelicals, but also others with more liberal theology, so that he was the only person ever to have been elected president both of the Evangelical Theological Society and also of the American Theological Society.

This gracious dealing with those whose ideas he could not share ex-

tended also to his relations with others within the Christian church. His view of the church was wide enough to include sincere believers with whom he disagreed. Throughout his career, he sought to promote unity among Evangelicals, even while he respected differing stances on secondary doctrines. He would not argue in public with Evangelicals unless the issue was fundamental, like the doctrine of Scripture.

c) Balance

Much of Carl Henry's value to us comes from the remarkable balance which he displayed in his thought and action. He engaged both in serious theology and in simple evangelism. His brilliant scholarship combined with a sincere faith in Jesus as his Saviour and Lord. His books did not keep him from long hours reading and pondering the Bible, nor from fervent prayer. Though a workaholic, he also tended to his marriage, which was a long and happy partnership with Helga, who often accompanied him on his journeys. He loved not only his books, but good music, historic sites, and his garden. He could not only write, but fix things around the house. He was serious, but had a marvellous sense of humour.

He loved his country and did all he could to promote its reformation, while travelling the world to spread God's truth to the nations. He spent long hours in his study, and equally long hours with people with whom he worked for the advance of God's kingdom. Unlike some scholars, Carl Henry possessed a winsome personality, gracious manners, and a sincere love of people; you always felt comfortable in his presence, almost unaware that you

were speaking with a great man. In my mind, this was his greatest virtue: an awareness of his remarkable gifts joined to a deep sense of his sins, and thus a profound humility and gentleness.

d) 'Love and good works'
(Hebrews 10:24)

Finally, as I have written in my chapter on 'Carl Henry: Twentieth Century Augustine', we see in this remarkable

man a consuming love for God, a simple faith in Jesus, and a passion for the conversion of lost souls. Despite migraine headaches, he went to work faithfully every day; without secretarial help for many years, he still managed to write his six-volume work of theology. In these respects, perhaps he is one of the few western Christians worthy to receive the admiration of our Chinese brothers and sisters. To God be the glory.

Missionary Theology in Context: Marks of Mission from CLADE V

Samuel Cueva

KEYWORDS: *Latin American Theological Fraternity, dialogue, Liberation Theology, evangelisation, communism, integral mission, social responsibility, mission, contextualisation*

I Introduction

In accordance with the aims of the Latin American Theological Fraternity (Fraternidad Teológica Latinoamericana, or FTL), the Latin American Congress on Evangelism (Congreso Latinoamericano de Evangelización, or CLADE V) was held in San Jose, Costa Rica, 9 – 13 July, 2012. In attendance were 570 delegates from across Latin America, as well as observers and guests from other countries.

Recognizing that the importance of CLADE V lies in the fact that it expresses the marks of the contextual missionary theology which characterizes the theological reflection of FTL, my intention here is essentially to situate the event historically and theologically with the aim of gaining a deeper appreciation for the Congress, some

of the issues it has raised, and for its contribution to missionary theology. By way of conclusion I will consider some of the challenges raised by the various presentations made during the Congress.

II Historical Context of CLADE and FTL

The CLADE congresses began in Latin America in the context of the major social, political and religious changes of the 1960s. Among these were the Cuban Revolution (1959), the restlessness associated with the music of the Beatles, U.S. presence in Latin America through the 'Alliance for Progress', the Second Vatican Council (1962), the second Latin American Episcopal Conference (CELAM), held in 1968 in Medellín, which opted for liberation theology and a missionary pastoral care,¹ and guerrilla movements influ-

¹ Enrique Dussel, *A History of the Church in Latin America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 113, 142, 143, 147.

enced by the Argentine physician 'Che' Guevara. Changes among evangelicals were noted in the presence of Kenneth Strachan, son of Harry Strachan and founder of the Latin America Mission (LAM), who initiated the program 'Evangelism in Depth', a movement which aimed at mobilizing churches in Latin America in the task of evangelization and whose strategy was to promote personal evangelism, prayer groups and mass campaigns.²

At the same time, the World Congress on Evangelism,³ held 26 October to 4 November, 1966, in Berlin, carried the theme, 'One People, one Gospel, one Task', and brought together 1200 delegates from 100 different nations; with few exceptions, participants came from the conservative evangelical wing of Protestantism. Organized by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and the magazine *Christianity Today* (as it celebrated ten years since its founding), the conference considered it necessary to make an urgent appeal to the world church to return to the commitment to world evangelization which characterized Edinburgh 1910.⁴

A major event of the 1960s, Berlin 1966 helped to give rise to the first CLADE, which was a regional continuation meeting following on from Berlin. Shaping FTL as well as CLADE were the great tensions of the Cold War, the

presence of communism in Latin America, the ecumenical movement, 'Church and Society in Latin America' (ISAL), which was guided by Marxist analysis and interpretation and was promoted by the World Council of Churches from 1957 onwards, and fundamentalist evangelicalism, promoted mostly by independent missions and characterized by premillennial dispensationalism. As Samuel Escobar explains in his essay on the founding of FTL, it is clear that the sixties were theologically polarized.⁵

III The 'Old Lions', CLADE and FTL

The quality of FTL's roots was evident at CLADE V by the presence of the 'old lions',⁶ by which I mean the most influential figures of FTL's older generation, including Samuel Escobar, Pedro Arana and René Padilla. Also present were Juan Stam and Sidney Rooy. The inaugural panel was enriching because these men helped to recall the movement's past as they were primary sources of its history.

Right from the start, it was the intention of CLADE V to trace its history within FTL. This legacy ought to be

² See further Paul E. Pretiz and W. Dayton Roberts, *"Like a Mighty Army" R. Kenneth Strachan and the Global March of Evangelism-in-Depth* (Miami, Latin America Mission, 1998).

³ Carl F. H. Henry and W. Stanley Mooneyham, *One Race, One Gospel, One Task: World Congress on Evangelism* (Minneapolis: World Wide, 1967) Volume I, 3, 5-6.

⁴ Henry and Mooneyham, 12, 13, 22.

⁵ Samuel Escobar, 'La fundación de la Fraternidad Teológica Latinoamericana: Breve ensayo histórico', *Boletín Teológico FTL*, 59/60, (1995): 7-25.

⁶ The term 'old lion' was used among university Bible groups (GBU) to refer to the pioneers of student work in Peru in the 60s and 70s. Rene Castro, former Secretary General of the Association of University of Peru evangelical groups (AGEUP), wrote his novel, *The Old Lions* (1969), which recounts the missionary experience of the 'old lions', including Samuel Escobar and Pedro Arana.

recorded firmly not only in terms of important dates, but also with respect to the creative tension experienced by the founders as they sought to work out a dynamic process of reflection in the critical times of that day. In this way, future generations might learn that the task of contextual theology in Latin America is not as simple as it seems.

From one angle, it required people of deep conviction in order to promote the changes that the church and society needed. From another angle, it required people with a deep passion to see God do something new both in the church and society. This is what the 'old lions' accomplished in their more than four decades of hard work in the struggle to promote and develop fraternal dialogues which would result in a Latin American contextualized biblical theology. Committed to the *missio Dei*, these men have sought to put it into practice in the Latin American context. Herein lies the strength of FTL's missionary theology.

On the fortieth anniversary of FTL's founding, celebrated in Chile on December 17, 2010, the Chilean Oscar Pereira (one of the founders of FTL) offered the following historical overview of the organization.⁷ From 12–18 December 1970, 25 leaders (5 of them missionaries) from a variety of denominations gathered in Carachipampa,

Cochabamba, Bolivia, at the Jorge Alan Seminary, and founded the Latin American Theological Fraternity. Principal leaders were Samuel Escobar from Peru, René Padilla from Ecuador, and Peter Savage, an Anglo-Peruvian. The movement had begun as a means of theological reflection in the first Latin American Congress on Evangelism (CLADE I) held in Bogota, Colombia in 1969.

At first the organization was called the Fraternity of Latin American Theologians, but the name was soon changed because its membership included theologians, missionaries and non-theologian professionals.⁸ Escobar explains that the former name was felt to be pretentious, as the members saw themselves primarily as students of theology and not theologians as such.⁹ FTL's first document was the Cochabamba Declaration, which expressed the missionary, pastoral and contextual concern which characterized FTL's deliberations. Escobar describes that Declaration as

A reflection that takes into account its ecclesial context and which is critical of that reality while remaining within it. A reflection with a dynamic sense of missionary obligation. A reflection that seeks to contextualize obedience to the Lord of the Church. Of course the work of contextualizing has to distinguish between the message's core and

⁷ Oscar Pereira, 'Comunidad de Reflexión y Espiritualidad Ecueménica', 'Fratela, 40 años', Part 1, 17 December 2010, <http://comunidadereflexionyespiritualidaddeva.blogspot.co.uk/2011/01/fraternidad-teologica-latinoamericana.html> (Accessed online 12 July 2012, 7.10). See also Samuel Escobar, *Evangelio y realidad social* (Lima: Ediciones Presencia, 1985), 43.

⁸ Pereira, 'Comunidad de Reflexión y Espiritualidad Ecueménica', Part 1. See also Sharon E. Heaney, *Contextual Theology for Latin America* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008), 60.

⁹ Samuel Escobar, Personal Communication with Author from Valencia (13 August 2012).

shell, or content and clothing. This requires mature and realistic self-criticism.¹⁰

Carlos Mondragón¹¹ indicates that it was by way of response to ultra-conservative groups within CLADE I which were trying to impose their own views on the mission of the church that one year later a group of young dissidents decided to found FTL. Escobar explains that the straw that broke the camel's back at CLADE I was the distribution of a book written by the American missionary to Bolivia, Peter Wagner, *Latin American Theology: Radical or Evangelical?*, which was regarded as simplistic and anti-theological. There was also a desire to impose the Frankfurt Declaration's insistence on the inerrancy of Scripture on the CLADE conference.

Padilla responded to these moves during FTL's formation, stating that it was sufficient to affirm the full authority of the Bible without the use of the term 'inerrancy', not only because it was a concept created outside the Latin American theological context, but also because inerrancy was not an issue among Latin American evangelicals.¹² Padilla went on to state that Wagner was eager to see that Fuller

Seminary's (in Pasadena, California) Church Growth strategy was accepted, although it was inappropriate for the context.¹³ As a result, Wagner returned to the U.S. and maintained a hostile attitude towards FTL.¹⁴

In its infancy, FTL's missionary theology reflected a contextual emphasis focused on Latin American reality. This can be seen clearly in the papers presented at the Consultation in Cochabamba, which Samuel Escobar summarizes in his work, 'The Founding of the Latin American Theological Fraternity', on the occasion of the celebration of 25 years of FTL.¹⁵

Pedro Arana dealt with 'God's Revelation and Theology in Latin America', Ismael E. Amaya with the 'Inspiration of the Bible in Latin American Theology', and Rene Padilla with 'The Authority of the Bible in Latin American Theology', while Andrew Kirk took up the subject of 'The Bible and Hermeneutics in Relation to Protestant Theology in Latin America'. The program also included lesser presentations aimed at contextual application, such as 'Church Growth in Latin America' by Peter Wagner, 'The Bible and Social Revolution in Latin America', by Samuel Escobar, 'The New Catholicism and the Bible' by Emilio A. Nunez, and

¹⁰ Escobar, 'La fundación de la Fraternidad Teológica Latinoamericana', 22-25.

¹¹ Carlos Mondragón, 'CLADE V con más de 800 participantes y una historia que se remonta a 1969', <http://www.clade5.org/index.php/es/congresos/108-articulo1> (Accessed online 31 July 2012, 13.21).

¹² Escobar, 'La fundación de la Fraternidad Teológica Latinoamericana', 20-23. See also Daniel Salinas, 'The Beginning of the Fraternidad Teológica Latinoamericana', *Journal of Latin American Theology* Vol. 2, N. 1, (2007):58-60.

¹³ Rene Padilla, electronic communication to the author, from Buenos Aires (13 Aug 2012).

¹⁴ For an extensive analysis of the formation of FTL, see Daniel Salinas, *Latin American Evangelical Theology in the 1970s: The Golden Decade* (Brill Academic Publishers, 2009), a published version of his doctoral thesis, 'Hispanic Evangelical Theological Production in Latin America Between 1969 and 1979'.

¹⁵ Escobar, 'La fundación de la Fraternidad Teológica Latinoamericana', 7-25.

'The Bible and its Proclamation' by Paul Pérez.¹⁶

In his historical essay, Escobar concluded that the emergence of FTL represented part of the search for an evangelical theology which was at one and the same time biblical and contextual. This theological position is evident in the main papers presented at the first consultation in Cochabamba, while all relate to the Latin American context.

The 25 individuals who signed the Declaration of Cochabamba were the founders of FTL.¹⁷ The founder and first president of FTL from 1970 until 1984 was the Peruvian, Samuel Escobar, who currently serves as Honorary Chairman. Other well known founding members are Peter Savage, Pedro Arana, Andrew Kirk, Emilio Antonio Núñez and Robinson Cavalcanti (d. February 2012). More members were added over time, including Orlando Costas, Jose Miguez Bonino, Tito Paredes, Valdir Steuernagel, Arthur Stone, Victor King, Humberto Lagos, Humberto Bullón, and many others who have had links with FTL throughout its more than 40 years of existence.

Faced with new changes in 1960, evangelical theologians and pastors set out to develop a contextual missionary theology formulated in the Latin American context and which was faithful to the gospel. In his book *From Mission to Theology*, Escobar defines the benchmark for the new theology and missionary of FTL as follows:

Neither Geneva-style ecumenical dialogue nor liberation theologies born in Roman Catholic lands could provide appropriate responses. The ecumenical theology coming from Geneva reflected the doubts and fatigue of a declining European Protestantism. Catholic liberation theologies depended largely on the assumption that America was a 'Christian continent'.¹⁸

In the process of Latin American theological reflection, Rene Padilla and Samuel Escobar were invited at the Lausanne Congress in 1974 to present papers on social justice and the need for a holistic mission that included social responsibility and not only the salvation of souls. Since 'Lausanne 1974', FTL's stress on a comprehensive missionary theology has been felt globally among evangelicals.

FTL then made the wise decision to extend the boundaries of its reflective work through regular publications. So the first *Boletín Teológico* ('Theological Bulletin') appeared in May 1972, then in 1982 *Misión* magazine, founded by René Padilla, featured many FTL associates. The first book was *El Debate Contemporáneo sobre la Biblia* ('The Contemporary Debate about the Bible'), edited by Peter Savage in 1972, followed by *Fe Cristiana y Latinoamérica hoy* ('Christian Faith and Latin America Today', Certeza, 1974), *El Reino de Dios y América Latina* ('The Kingdom of God and Latin America', *El Paso, Casa Bautista de Publicaciones*, 1975),¹⁹ and in 1984 *Hacia una teología*

16 Pedro Savage, *El Debate Contemporáneo Sobre la Biblia* (Barcelona: Ediciones Evangélicas Europeas, 1972).

17 Savage, 'Declaración Evangélica de Cochabamba', *El Debate contemporáneo*, 225-228.

18 Escobar, *De la Misión a la Teología* (Buenos Aires, Kairos: 1998), 8-9.

19 Escobar, electronic information to the au-

Evangélica Latinoamericana ('Toward an Evangelical Latin American Theology', edited by Rene Padilla, San Jose, Caribe, 113-120).

IV Five CLADE Congresses

Thus far, five CLADE congresses have been held, and can be described as follows:

CLADE I

CLADE I was held in Bogotá, Colombia, 21-30 November 1969, and brought together 830 delegates. The key theme of the congress was 'Action in Christ for a Continent in Crisis'.²⁰ The era was typified by the 'cold war' between the world's superpowers, military coups in several Latin American countries, and a growing number of foreign missionaries from North America. Since FTL had not yet come into existence, this was the only CLADE that was not organized by FTL.

Sponsored by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, CLADE I was the result of a series of meetings that began with the Congress of Berlin in 1966 and culminated with the famous 1974 Lausanne Congress. The report found in the archives of the Billy Graham Centre states that it was in response to the request of Latin American delegates at the Berlin Congress of 1966 that Graham called on the assis-

tance of American Clyde Willis Taylor, then Executive Secretary of The Evangelical Foreign Mission Association (EFMA), and the Puerto Rican Efrain Santiago, evangelist and coordinator of the Latin American Division of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, to organize CLADE.²¹

As it happened, the theological agenda was set by the theological views of the organizers of that time. Escobar presented his paper on the 'Social Responsibility of the Church', a key issue in the formation of an integral missionary theology based in Latin America. This paper had a surprisingly good reception which showed that it was a burning issue for Evangelical churches in Latin America.

CLADE II

CLADE II was called together by FTL to reflect on the theme: 'That Latin America May Hear God's Voice'. 266 delegates were present when the Congress was held in Huampaní, Lima, Peru, 31 October to 8 November, 1979. At least two major events were influential to CLADE II in its agenda: the Lausanne Congress (1974) and the 'Gospel and Culture' consultation at Willowbank (1978). CLADE II took place in the context of tensions between conservative evangelicals, who were concerned with evangelistic strategies, and those who favoured an integral mission on the part of the church, motivated by an understanding of social responsibility.

Theological papers presented at

thor, from Valencia (13 Aug 2012).

²⁰ 'Records of the Primer Congreso Latinoamericano de Evangelización (CLADE)', Billy Graham Center, Collection 324, <http://www2.wheaton.edu/bgc/archives/GUIDES/324.htm> (Accessed online 1 August 2012, 9.02).

²¹ 'Records of the Primer Congreso Latinoamericano de Evangelización (CLADE)', Collection 324.

CLADE II aimed at contextualizing basic themes of the gospel message. Samuel Escobar explains that each issue was addressed by two authors who represented different traditions and generations in the work of the Fraternity: 'Spirit and Word in the Task of Evangelization', 'Christ and Antichrist in Proclamation', 'Sin and Salvation in Latin America', and, finally, 'Hope and Despair amidst the Continental Crisis'. These made up roughly one third of the topics addressed at CLADE II, while the rest of the time was devoted to models of evangelization, specific needs, and strategies for the future.²²

Some important post-CLADE II consultations within the global evangelical world were 'An Evangelical Commitment to a Simple Lifestyle' in High Lee, United Kingdom, 1980; the 'Consultation on World Evangelization' held in Pattaya, Thailand, 1980; the Consultation on Evangelism and Social Responsibility in Grand Rapids, U.S.A., 1982, and the consultation on 'Theology and the Bible in Context', in Seoul, 1982.²³

CLADE III

This Congress was preceded by the Lausanne Congress II, held in Manila

22 Samuel Escobar, 'Los CLADES y la Misión de la Iglesia', *Kairos*, http://www.kairos.org.ar/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=840&catid=90%3Aarticulos-de-la-revista-iglesia-y-mision&Itemid=156 (Accessed online, 17 July 2012, 16.07).

23 'Declaración de Seúl: Hacia una Teología Evangélica para el Tercer Mundo', http://www.kairos.org.ar/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1435, *Iglesia y Misión*, no.4, (1982); note 10, printed edition: vol.2; no.1.

in 1989, which produced the 'Manila Manifesto'. The year 1992 was also significant as it marked 500 years since the so-called discovery of America, which was, more than anything else, a form of oppressive colonization using religion as a source of oppression. It was in this context that CLADE III was held from 24 August to 4 September, 1992, in the Anderson School of Quito, Ecuador. There were 1080 men and women from 25 countries focused on the theme, 'The Whole Gospel to all Peoples of Latin America', during plenary sessions and workshops devoted to theological, missiological, historical, social and economic concerns. In his book, *Time for Mission*, Samuel Escobar maintains that CLADE III was the realization of a Latin American self-awareness not merely as a mission field, but as a base for sending missionaries to other parts of the world, and of a search for new mission models through biblical and theological reflection.

As the most representative gathering of Latin American Protestantism of the 20th Century, CLADE III involved the Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI) as well as the conservative Evangelical Latin American Evangelical Fellowship (CONELA). One of the conclusions of CLADE III established the need for self-criticism that leads us once again to the example of Jesus and to pedagogical, prophetic and evangelical forms of mission rather than to those 'Christendom' forms—whether Catholic or Protestant—which are based on military, economic and technological power.

CLADE IV

CLADE IV was organized once again

in Quito, 2-9 September, 2000, under the banner of 'Evangelical Witness for the Third Millennium: Word, Spirit and Mission'. Attended by over 1200 delegates from Latin America, as well as observers from other continents, the Congress was held in the newly inaugurated SEMISUD campus of the Church of God Seminary in Ecuador.

As a participant observer, I noted that at least three marks of mission were encouraged: an openness to dialogue with a view to deepening and projecting the church's mission with the Word of God and with the guidance of the Spirit in the new millennium; a strengthening of the link between the theory and the practice of integral mission through a strategy that includes social responsibility in the life of the church in Latin America, and furthering the presence of the Kingdom of God through the kind of comprehensive mission which directs a message to the whole person and is aimed at the transformation of all aspects of life.

These three marks developed at CLADE IV were to turn up at CLADE V with the latter's call for a multi-faceted effort in favour of models of service to others through NGOs and community projects for the needy.

CLADE V

CLADE V was held in San Jose, Costa Rica, on the premises of the New Life Pentecostal Church 9-13 July, 2012, and was attended by 570 participants. The president of FTL was Jorge Enrique Barro, while Ruth Padilla served as Secretary General. The theme set for the Congress by FTL board was, 'Let us Follow Jesus in his Kingdom of Life. Guide us, Holy Spirit!' CLADE V

invited a process of theological reflection, communion, confession and celebration of God's mission in the Latin American context.²⁴

Of special note was the fact that CLADE V was broadcast live for the first time through the internet. As an on-line participant observer I was able to take part in the discussions as well as the vibrant liturgy during each worship occasion. I was moved by the presence of the 'old lions', who, despite their age and physical limitations, reflected the same spirit that moved them to promote a Latin American missionary contextual theology—that is, a living, incarnational theology which is relevant to each context. In this regard Samuel Escobar observes:

Theology is a living thing if it does not limit itself to the servile repetition of forms developed in London, Geneva, Tübingen or Nashville. It may have been nurtured by these forms, but it does not remain there, but moves on. It is a form of reflection which takes the experiences of service of today, of the here and now, and reflects on them in the light of God's Word. In this way, it becomes a form of thought and proclamation that has relevance for human beings today.²⁵

24 Ruth Padilla, 'Congreso Latinoamericano de Evangelización', <http://www.clade5.org/index.php/es/congresos/71-clades> (Accessed online 10 July 2012).

25 Samuel Escobar, 'Nuevos Libros: Lideres siervos que hacen teología' <http://www.protestantedigital.com/ES/Blogs/articulo/3522/Nuevos-libros-lideres-siervos-ue-hacen-teologia>, *Protestante Digital*, Wednesday, 1 Aug. 2012.

V Understanding the Missionary Theology of CLADE V

For reasons of space I will offer here briefly just some aspects of the missionary theology of CLADE V. As an agent of God's Kingdom and righteousness, FTL celebrates different theological perspectives while laying stress on integral mission, that is, on God's mission understood as proclamation and social responsibility; the two going hand in hand. As such, CLADE V has described the history of its founding as a theological movement for integral mission. The five regions of FTL that exist today share the following three unifying marks for mission in common:²⁶

- Fraternal theological reflection which is not merely academic, but which seeks missiological engagement and a committed ethic.
- Theological reflection that is centred on a common passion to look for evidence of the Kingdom of God and his righteousness in the present time.
- Theological reflection that is articulated in the midst of the dynamic relationships between Word, people and context.

In relation to these three unifying marks, it seems to me that CLADE V harmonised with the call which FTL is-

sues every decade by promoting God's Kingdom and by its emphasis on reflection on Scripture in the context of integral mission. With this in mind, we can say that every CLADE held three theological considerations to be necessary: We are all disciples; we are all agents of the Kingdom of God, and we are all dependent on the Holy Spirit. For CLADE V, all the topics were, first and foremost, pastoral proposals for observing reality, making judgments about it, and acting; that is, proposals for reflection and action for an incarnational gospel which include the theology of worship and arts as a form of mission.²⁷

I understand that one of the marks of CLADE V has been to remember, and to put into practice, a historical theology of more than 40 years of pilgrimage in mission. The dialogue addressed the opportunity of re-articulating the theological vision of following in the footsteps of Jesus as a mature movement. This historical theology was driven by some of FTL's founding members which was a helpful development in passing on the baton to the new generation of FTL leadership.

In relation to the local congregations, FTL agrees with Miguez Bonino that our faithfulness to Jesus Christ begins with our faithfulness to our local congregation. Regarding a Trinitarian theology, it is stressed that for FTL and CLADE congresses every work of God involves the three persons of the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This historical theology explains that FTL is not a static movement, but a story in

²⁶ Ruth Padilla, 'Day One CLADE V', San José, Costa Rica, Monday 9 July 2012, http://www.livestream.com/cladev/video?clipId=pla_8793e6a9-89a6-41a1-a2e0-6ecb0347ee73&utm_source=lslibrary&utm_medium=ui-thumb (Accessed online, 11 July 2012, 10.40).

²⁷ Jorge Barro, 'Congreso inaugural CLADE V' (9 July 2012, San José, Costa Rica).

the making, and, as Pedro Arana suggests, at CLADE V FTL was finding its prophetic voice in the midst of history.

In relation to the mark of discipleship, the Methodist Mexican Alejandra Ortiz explored in her paper, 'Doubt and Mystery', a theology of reconciliation by raising the question of reconciliation with God in the midst of doubt which sometimes arises in the context of Christian discipleship. Hence, we need the constant presence of the Holy Spirit in order to overcome all obstacles. FTL's pastoral theology seems to identify with the doubts of Thomas, the 'unbelieving' disciple; this gives us an idea of the anthropological emphasis of CLADE V, expressed in the need for the transformation of the whole person in recognition of human weaknesses. We might say that the basic proposal here is that God reconciles the weak to make them strong.

Why did CLADE V invite critical voices outside FTL? The Colombian Harold Segura explains that FTL organizers agreed not to fill the time with papers delivered by renowned individuals, as has been the traditional approach.²⁸ Rather, they opted for generational and cultural diversity mixed with the experience of the 'old lions'. They also sought out critical voices outside FTL in the hope of forging a valid way ahead for the coming decades in FTL. For this reason they enlisted the participation of a prominent theologian outside FTL, by inviting the Catholic liberation theologian Juan José Tamayo, and also Erika Izquierdo

as a representative of a new generation of FTL.

In Tamayo's view the most important elements of FTL are the sense of community and its practice of sharing, which was evident in the sharing of life together, mealtimes, relationships and solidarity. He also pointed out that it is a festive fraternity (noting that a fraternity without celebration is in danger of extinction), and that its future lies in the contextualization of its theological concerns.

Accordingly, contextualization requires a great deal of care, since one cannot (for example) sing the popular worship song, 'I bow to you' to the rhythm of Salsa! Contextualization can be interpreted as a creative clash between the word and the context, so we must remember that the purpose of theology is to fulfil the *missio Dei* and not to entertain people.

Padilla stresses that in Latin America there is now a better connection between the preaching of the message and its application to the context. He says:²⁹

The FTL includes professionals who have not studied theology academically, but who are striving to communicate the message contextually. This is due to the interdisciplinary nature of theological reflection. The theology of questioning helps us to discover new contextual references that can be applied to reality. We need to take into account the questions that reality presents us with in order to go to the text, and in that way to find appropriate responses

²⁸ CLADE V, 'Foro Teológico Jueves', Thursday, 12 July 2012, <http://www.clade5.org/index.php/es/clade/103-transmisionenespanol> (Accessed online 12 July 2012, 20.15).

²⁹ Rene Padilla, at CLADE V (Day three, 11th July 2012).

for society. For this we have to distinguish between theology and ideology, as in the case of the so-called 'prosperity theology', which in itself contains more ideology than theology. It is Scripture that should help us to understand the answers society requires, not the other way around.

What are the identifying marks of FTL? For Tamayo there are ten marks of mission that FTL has developed. To be sure, Tamayo's stress on liberation from oppressive systems is a sign of his liberation theology, which must be examined with wisdom and without absorbing all its theological content. One needs to distinguish between theology, ideology and methodology whenever one enters into dialogue with other theologies. Here I offer a summary of what I call the theological marks of FTL as perceived by Tamayo:³⁰

- The mark of mission. It is the fundamental charge of Jesus to believers. As the Kingdom of God and his righteousness is emphasized, faith in action has priority over organizational structures.
- The mark of commitment. This refers to praxis, or to what FTL refers to as evidences of the kingdom, such as verification of kingdom mission; without commitment, mission becomes empty.
- The mark of reflection. This refers to a reasoned as well as lived faith, as faith must be

thought out. At the same time, however, intellectualism should be avoided, as well as activism (which does not give one time to think) and irrationalism (since belief is not absurd).

- The mark of a basis for dialogue. Religious wars have steadily given way to encounters, to pluralism in dialogue. Differences can never be points of contention, but rather occasions for dialogue which involve listening and argumentation, not conversion, as the time is not right for conversions but rather for dialogue.
- The mark of contextual biblical interpretation. The word of God illuminates the context for liberation.
- The mark of inheritance. In view here is not the dividing up of family assets, in which the best of the past is recovered. 'What is called for is an inheritance that is inherited correctly', not in anger but with balance, seeking to look towards the future, the time of the Kingdom of God.
- The mark of a hopeful vision for the future. This is the kind of hope that is an active virtue aimed at building the Kingdom of God. The evangelical vision is an active hope, not a passive one which expects God to do everything.
- The mark of the church's integral mission. Mission has to do with being sent, in which the initiative belongs to God. So there is no place for conceit. What is integral gathers together the whole message of God, which leads to integrity of life and harmonizes

30 CLADE V, 'Foro Teológico Jueves', Thursday, 12 Jul 2012, <http://www.clade5.org/index.php/es/clade/103-transmisionenespanol> (Accessed online 12 July 2012, 20.15).

theory with practice. It is a mission through integral discipleship, which for Tamayo is a discipleship of equals.

- The mark of the Spirit. The Spirit has been neglected for a long time in the life of the church.
- The mark of contextualization. Without a context the universality of Christianity becomes a disembodied gospel.

Finally, Tamayo's consideration of FTL's work presents the following challenges for the church, which Luis Andavert defines as 'macro challenges':³¹

- Poverty and the response which it requires.
- An inclusive form of globalization, as opposed to exclusive.
- Patriarchy and feminism (the control of power by men).
- The destruction of the environment and ecological awareness.
- Neo-colonialism and the 'decolonization' of churches.

Another aspect that CLADE V sought to promote was a relational missionary theology. In this sense, another theologian invited to evaluate the meeting, Dana Roberts,³² professor of

World Christianity and History of Mission at Boston University, asserted that a theology of relationships needs to be connected with global realities, and emphasised that the strength of FTL is its fraternal nature. Further, the selection of John's Gospel for daily topics clearly reflected the desire to promote a missionary theology of relationships.

Evidently, the idea that evangelization comes through relationships has been understood better. Thus a theological vision of the kingdom is based on the model of Jesus and his Father. In my theological understanding, Roberts presents FTL's marks of mission in a way that differs entirely from that of Catholic observer Tamayo:

- FTL's frontier goes beyond denominational divisions.
- There is a need to build bridges between the theology of the kingdom and local congregations. What is needed is a missionary theology of relationships designed for the Latin American diaspora.
- The peace of Christ should mark the relationship between the gospel and society. There have been calls for a false peace and false theologies of domination which have sought to bring about a society of peace. Therefore, friendship must be visibly evident in mission; it is a kingdom mission based on mission practice.
- Friendship is the kingdom based on the practice of mission.
- FTL's relational mission seeks to nurture interrelational dialogue between evangelicals of different generations, being a Christian community of theological reflection which comes from particu-

³¹ Jose Luis Andavert, 'A Propósito de CLADE V (3), Propuestas para un itinerario Teológico', *Actualidad Evangélica*, 28 August 2012, http://www.actualidad-evangelica.es/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=4364:a-proposito-de-clade-v-3-propuestas-para-un-itinerario-teologico&catid=47:columnas (Accessed online, 30 Aug 2012, 16:05).

³² Samuel Cueva, Following CLADE V via the internet, Day Four, 2012, <http://www.clade5.org/index.php/es/clade/103-transmisionen-espanol> (Accessed online 14 July 2012, 9.50).

lar church traditions and which points to Jesus as coming King.

- FTL promotes an extensive use of art as mission. This includes poetry, painting, drama, dance, and contextual songs with a strong emphasis on Latin American realities.

In line with Roberts' analysis within CLADE V, I suggest that FTL might articulate problems of society with one voice by building and strengthening biblical relationships. Thus strengthening, for example, the mark of prayer and the affirmation of women's role in the task of theological reflection will help to produce one voice within society.

A critical aspect of CLADE V relates to the tension between the social aspect and the evangelistic message of mission. Hence, regarding CLADE V, British theologian Andrew Kirk, one of the founders of FTL, remarks:³³

In general terms, I have the impression that by promoting a particular vision of integral mission which emphasizes social aspects (the 'good news' for those who are marginalized and oppressed politically and economically), the evangelistic message (the 'good news' for the lost) is being neglected. The pendulum is moving in the other direction. I'm not sure whether the FTL has yet done full biblical justice to the notion of God's mission as an integral whole, and not just a series of disconnected parts. Nonetheless, this is a very generalized comment

regarding a complex issue. The discussion goes on, and without a doubt there will be different voices within the FTL.

Accordingly, it seems that CLADE V could give the impression of polarizing the double mission mandate. This apparent dichotomy has to be clarified if FTL wants to avoid unnecessary conflict within the evangelical movement. Spaniard Jose L. Andavert,³⁴ points out that many papers were devoted to social injustice, marginalization, and poverty, coming across as a stale repetition of Liberation Theology, given the social changes which the gospel has brought since 1970.

The British missiologist, John Corrie, believes that the Congress was lacking in discussion, critique, analysis and debate on the topics raised, and that on occasion the papers presented very little that was challenging from a theological perspective and little by way of integral mission models which are working well in Latin America. What was positive about CLADE V, in Corrie's view, was the appearance of a new generation of young theologians with a passion for social justice and ecology.³⁵

One weakness of FTL is that because of institutional limitations, the results of theological reflection are not spread

33 Andrew Kirk, Information to the author regarding CLADE V, sent by email 3 August 2012.

34 Andavert, 'A propósito de CLADE V, Una mirada retrospectiva', *Actualidad Evangélica*, 9 August 2012, http://www.actualidadevangelica.es/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=4285:a-proposito-de-clade-v-una-mirada-retrospectiva&catid=37:pensamiento (Accessed 30 Aug 2012 at 16:15).

35 John Corrie, Information sent to author (12 Sep 2012).

as quickly and as broadly as might be desired. (Sometimes this has been regarded as 'elitism', but it is more of a logistical problem).³⁶ At the same time, one of its strengths is the way a conference like this and FTL itself provide members with opportunities for mutual encouragement, theological reflection, all in the service of the church. Moreover, one of the riches of FTL has been the way it has encouraged its members to write and publish their articles and reflections in books. In the need for a systematic Christology, perhaps Escobar's recent book in Spanish *En busca de Cristo en America Latina* (*In Search of Christ in Latin America*) will help to answer the question, 'Who is Jesus for Latin America today?'³⁷

The Latin American theological constituency is called to transcend its own times and circumstances and to make use of the social sciences, theology, missiology, history and other tools to find evidence that is appropriate to the context without diluting the message of the gospel.

VI Challenges and Conclusions

1 Missionary theology

In my understanding the marks of FTL's missionary theology are as follows:

- Integral mission. There exists a

transnational community which is intertwined with the practice of integral mission, which means that the gospel includes proclamation and demonstration, which clothes integrity with the hope that Christ brings.

- Incarnational theology. Theology is not abstract, but rather grows from the reality of life. Faith and theology are intimately related, as theology arises from an encounter with God.
- Corporate theology. The whole body of Christ—youth as well as adults, and women—participates in the mission of sharing the gospel.
- Hope. There is a sense of hope in every context. This is a hope which is not based on circumstances, but is rather a total commitment to a life of hope.
- Contextualization. FTL has helped us to understand that mission is cultural, which means that the gospel is translatable.
- Theology connected with the church. FTL has offered its own particular way of doing theology as it has promoted a missionary theology of reflection which helps us to understand God's mission as well as the mission of the church.
- A deep sense of celebration in following Jesus, with a commitment to the radical demands of Christ.
- Art as mission. This is the most recent mark, and will require critical reflection as it becomes implemented as an expression of missionary theology. The first consultation organized by FTL

³⁶ Humberto Bullón, Information to the author, 9 Aug 2012.

³⁷ Samuel Escobar, *En Busca de Cristo en America Latina* (Buenos Aires, Ediciones Kairos 2012).

on art, liturgy and mission took place in April, 2012.³⁸

2 Challenges

Some of the challenges for strengthening a missionary theology through the CLADE Congresses are:

- Firstly the challenge of humble dialogue. The CLADE Congresses should maintain a continuous dialogue with various other conferences or consultations in order to gain a comparative sense of topics covered from a Latin American perspective. Following the historical thread from the Edinburgh 1910 and Panama 1916 Congresses in dialogue with Lausanne I, II and III will help maintain a humble attitude such as that of the founders, who reflected deeply without falling into theological arrogance and still less into imposing their ideas dogmatically on others. They recognised the need to wait upon the *Kairos* of God in order to establish dialogue with the other theologies of their day and context. In this way, a Latin American systematic missionary theology could be forged.
- Secondly the challenge of being a Latin American movement. To remember what the CLADE Congresses represent for present and future Latin American mis-

sion. Escobar puts it this way:³⁹

The congresses represent a moment of balance and reflection, as well as awareness, which together may act as a ferment that has a quiet, long-term effect in various denominational spheres, mission agencies and local churches.

- Thirdly the challenge for future generations—to maintain the methodology used in the CLADE Congresses. Pedro Arana points out that there are several key aspects: hearing the Word of God, the content and experience of personal faith and the faith of the community; observing the historical situation; and responding with reflection and action.⁴⁰ These elements will help to strengthen a biblical evangelical identity.

In speaking of such an identity, I agree with Escobar when he insists that a recovery of our identity is essential.⁴¹

To recover our identity is first of all to look to our past and to our roots, but is also something more: to look forward with a sense of mission. It is not about looking back in order to repeat in servile or routine form the models of yesterday. At the heart of

³⁸ Fraternidad Teológica Latinoamericana, 'Art, Liturgy and Mission Consultation', http://www.ftl-al.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=303&Itemid=100 (Accessed online, 8 August 2012, 18.25).

³⁹ Escobar, 'Los CLADES y la Misión de la Iglesia'.

⁴⁰ Escobar, 'Los CLADES y la Misión de la Iglesia'.

⁴¹ Samuel Escobar, '¿Que significa ser evangélico hoy?', *Iglesia y Misión*, number 1, 1982, note 2, http://www.kairos.org.ar/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1363 (Accessed online 19 July 2012, 8.50).

the evangelical way there is faith in a Holy Spirit who blows, renews and creates, and in his Word which is a sure guide and anchor, but also always fertile seed which vivifies.

3 Trends

Finally, there are three trends in Latin America which will present the greatest challenge for evangelicals in the upcoming decades, and for which FTL and the CLADE Congresses to come will have to discern the corresponding contribution.

In the first place, the radicalization of evangelization which will persist in both evangelical and Catholic churches will promote an ecumenical approach to evangelism. Liberation Theology will continue to stress a concern for social justice, and FTL will point towards a hopeful evangelical vitality on a global scale as long as it stresses a theology centred on the local church, while its focus on integral mission will translate into a certain weakening of verbal proclamation.

Second, the charismatic movement will continue to experience disputes on account of its theology, but will continue to increase its social presence, as well as to provide a vital and signifi-

cant stimulus for evangelistic growth; it will require stronger support of a biblical theology as well as a deeper bond with traditional churches.

Third, the stress on integral mission on the part of the church in Latin America is bound to produce a sense of social responsibility. Mission is a constant tension between evangelism and social responsibility. Evangelistic vitality put together with commitment to social responsibility will result in an important theological synthesis for the Latin American church.

Our forecast suggests that FTL will foster a better and more fraternal dialogue within the protestant and evangelical world, as well as with other existing theological traditions, working in this way to systematize its missionary theology in dialogue with the world missionary movement.

CLADE V seems to be a crucial moment for giving credit to FTL's commitment to fostering a Latin American missionary theology, and for acknowledging the effort of the 'old lions' who have offered their lives to God's mission and have lived out and promoted a distinctive Latin American theology through both theological reflection and practice.

Growth of Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria: Lessons for World Evangelization

Wilson E. Ehianu

KEYWORDS: *Evangelism, Holy Spirit, spiritual gifts, social concerns, traditional religions, testimony, women, media, leadership, pastoral training*

I Introduction

The astronomical growth of Pentecostal churches across the world remains a marvel to all, apologists, cynics and critics alike. More surprising is the fact that such a major development occurred almost unnoticed by religious and secular historians. Analyzing the population distribution of Christian denominations from *World Christian Encyclopedia*, David Barrett surmises that the numerical, and perhaps also the spiritual, centre of Christianity will shift away from western forms to this new type of Christianity.¹ By the term

'new type of Christianity', Barrett refers to the Pentecostal, Independent and Charismatic movements.²

Barrett's postulation is applicable to Nigeria and is corroborated by C. M. Ezekwugo's observation that 'the advent of this firebrand organ of spreading the gospel acts like a surging flood which carries everything along its path'.³ The main thrust of this paper is to highlight the strategies that account for this unprecedented feat in the history of the Christian missionary movement in Nigeria and also to discuss the relevance of such strategies for evangelism at the global level.

II Roots of Pentecostalism

The term 'Pentecostalism' refers to certain elements of the Christian life,

1 W.J. Hollenweger, 'After Twenty Years Research on Pentecostalism', *International Review of Mission* Vol. LXXV No. 297, 3.

2 Hollenweger, 'After Twenty Years', 3.

3 C.M. Ezekwugo, *Philosophical Concept* (Enugu: Agatha Series Publishers, 1992), 163.

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usually associated with the Feast of Pentecost and Christ's gift of the Spirit.⁴ According to the Acts of the Apostles, the apostles received the full manifestation of the Spirit through prayer. It is also evident that in the Acts, charismatic activities were commonplace and were dynamically tailored to meet the needs of the moment.⁵ For inspiration and vindication of its practices, the fledgling Christian fold often made allusions to the prophecy of Joel that the spirit would be poured forth on all flesh (Joel 2:28).⁶ In a sense therefore, everybody in the early church was a Pentecostal.

However, over time, there was a diminution of the emphasis on the power and gifts of the Spirit. Instead, official church teaching put the stress on receiving the sacraments, the salvific value of suffering and a way of life that was predicated on a certain moral code.⁷ According to V. M. Walsh, modern Pentecostalism began in the 1900s among non-Catholic groups. These groups, he said, 'rather than renewing the churches, led to the formation of Pentecostal Churches and to what has been called a third force in Christianity'.⁸ The Pentecostal movement attempts to pattern church life according to the scriptural mode of the Acts of the Apostles in order to re-enact the power evident in the early church.⁹

Some features of Pentecostal churches which also apply to the Nigerian variant include:

- a. Baptism of the Spirit as something separate from and subsequent to the baptism of water.¹⁰
- b. Healing by prayer.¹¹
- c. Personal holiness and community holiness.¹²
- d. A premium is placed on the book of Acts.¹³
- e. Emphasis on communion, friendship, care and interest for the members of the churches¹⁴
- f. Faith seen as a personal encounter with Jesus and salvation as a concrete, social and pragmatic experience.¹⁵

A thorough analysis of the dynamics of Pentecostal growth in Nigeria is still a major challenge. That notwithstanding, effort will be made in this paper to explore a range of issues which hopefully will serve as guide for evangelists in Nigeria and around the globe in similar socio-economic and political circumstances.

4 V.M. Walsh, *A key to Charismatic Renewal in the Catholic Church* (Holland: Key of David Publications, 1974), 4.

5 Ezekwugo, *Philosophical Concept*, 3.

6 Ezekwugo, *Philosophical Concept*, 3.

7 Ezekwugo, *Philosophical Concept*, 5.

8 Ezekwugo, *Philosophical Concept*, 5.

9 Ezekwugo, *Philosophical Concept*, 3.

10 P. S. Raj, 'The Influence of Pentecostal Teaching on some folk Christian Religions', *International Review of Mission* Vol. LXXV No. 297, 4.

11 P. S. Raj, 'The Influence of Pentecostal Teaching', 4.

12 P. S. Raj, 'The Influence of Pentecostal Teaching', 44.

13 P. S. Raj, 'The Influence of Pentecostal Teaching', 42.

14 A.G. Nnamani, *The New Religious Movements in Nigeria: Pentecostalism in Perspective* (Benin City: Ava Publishers, 2007), 332.

15 Nnamani, *The New Religious Movements*, 332.

III Features of Pentecostalism

1 The application of the Gospel

G. A. Akinola attributes the growth of Pentecostal churches in Nigeria in the 1980s to two forces, namely: a rapid decline in the country's socio-economic circumstances and a world view which encourages a literal application of biblical injunctions and doctrines as solutions to local problems.¹⁶ Unlike the mainline churches that highlight the seeming contradiction between the stark realities of earthly life and the chances of a heavenly abode (as illustrated by the parable of the camel passing through the needle's eye), the Pentecostal fold has little problem reconciling both. Consequently, the Pentecostal churches have a mass appeal as people could easily identify with such practical Christianity. Indeed, suffering humanity can hardly be impressed by the promise of a blissful hereafter in the face of an excruciating earthly situation. A practical demonstration of love and care for their present plight will undoubtedly make them amenable to the gospel message. This is an area where the Pentecostal movement surpasses the more traditional denominations.

It is true that in its nascent stages, the early Christian missionaries realized the importance of social welfare activities as a positive tool for evangelism. Nevertheless, there was a progressive decline in the employment of these tools as the various churches entrenched themselves; there also developed a certain aloofness of the clergy

from the laity. This gap is what the Pentecostals try to bridge, and in doing so have won over a great number of converts from the other churches.

It is therefore wise that missionaries/evangelists pay attention to the peculiar needs of the people among whom they hope to make converts. For instance, missionary organizations working in South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria and other countries which are ravaged by HIV/AIDS will do well if they arm themselves with anti-retroviral drugs for distribution to those who are afflicted with the ailment and pay attention to their peculiar needs. In the same vein, renewed interest by the World Council of Churches (WCC) to broker a peace settlement between the Sudanese government and Southern Sudan, peopled mostly by Christians and animists, will no doubt elicit sympathy for Christianity among the animists.¹⁷

While it is needful to adapt the presentation of the gospel to the hearers' prevailing situation, caution is necessary. Attempts by some Pentecostal pastors to keep and satisfy their members have led them to the extreme of adding extra-biblical modes of worship and ministry. In an obvious expression of concern, Amuluche Nnamani bemoaned the fact that, despite the popularity of Pentecostalism, it suffers from inclusive, hasty and ambivalent appropriation of the African culture. If not addressed, this would lead to a retrogressive restoration of some negative elements of the African culture.¹⁸

¹⁶ G.A. Akinola, 'Religion and the Intellectual Climate in a Nigerian University', *The Scholar*, Vol. 2, 17.

¹⁷ K. Prah 'Afro – Arab War in the Sudan; African Longest War and its Roots', *The Scholar*, Vol. 42-43.

¹⁸ J. S. Mbiti, *Introduction of African Religion*

In fact, there are testimonies or information from disaffected members of Pentecostal groups to the effect that leaders of some of these churches have alliances with witches and wizards. They engage in spiritism and occultism in order to achieve their desired goals of numerical increase, which, of course, translates to more money, power and prestige. In 2004, for instance, Chris Okotie, a prominent Pentecostal church founder, was quoted as having denounced Chris Oyakhilomen, another church founder, for meddling with the occult because of the latter's association with T. B. Joshua whose miracles had become the subject of controversy. The scandal and animosity generated by the mudslinging in 2004 prompted the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission (NBC), the country's broadcast regulatory body, to ban the display of miracles in the electronic media.¹⁹ The incident provided mainline churches with what appeared to be a much needed opportunity to discredit the Pentecostal movement in Nigeria.

2 Vestiges of traditional rituals

Africans like to celebrate life, and therefore they make much of events in the everyday life of the individual and community. Traditionally, these celebrations involve sacrifices and offerings such as animals, food, tools and money.²⁰ African converts who hitherto had not embraced any Christian de-

nomination find a home in Pentecostal doctrines.

Voluntary offerings and sacrifices earlier made to ancestors, divinities and spiritual forces are now offered to God who is believed to be omnipotent. Annual In-gathering, or Harvest Thanksgiving, replaces the New Yam festival while baptism and Holy Communion take the place of traditional initiation and communal meals with which the people are familiar. Prayer patterns are not any different. Speaking in tongues, visions, dreams, prophecies are no strangers to African cosmology; people merely substitute the God of the Bible for the ancestors and deities.

3 Worship a channel for emotional release

In his book, *Introduction to African Religion*, J. S. Mbiti observes that a lot of traditional African music and songs deal with spiritual ideas and practices. The religious rituals, ceremonies and festivals are always accompanied by music, singing and sometimes dancing.²¹ Music, he says, gives an outlet to the religious passions of the people and it is a powerful means of communication in African traditional life.²²

One attraction of the Pentecostal churches is the perfect synthesis of African music with the Christian genre. The rhythm of drum, flute, rattle, whistle and other instruments pervades

(London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1975), 19.

19 J.S. Mbiti, *NewsWatch*, 9 April, 2004, 12-17.

20 J.S. Mbiti, *Introduction of African Religion*, 24.

21 A. G. Nnamani, 'The Ambivalent Impact of Pentecostalism in Inculturation' in A. G. Nnamani (ed) *New Religious Movements: Pentecostalism in Perspective* (Benin City: Ava Publishers, 2007), 245.

22 *NewsWatch*, 19 April 2004, 2-17.

church premises and crusade venues. C. M. Ezekwugo made an apt observation when he said, '[I]f you do not like what they are doing, do not attend their crusades; if you do, you will be carried along with them, clapping hands and praising God.'²³ American Southern Gospel music, which is in vogue in Nigeria and which has become a potent tool for evangelism, was popularized by the Pentecostal movement. It will for a long time remain a source of attraction to Pentecostal congregations.

This is especially so in Nigeria where night clubs manage only to break even owing to frequent internal security challenges and where the majority live on less than a dollar per day. Africa and the Caribbean lands are places where this form of evangelism could be effective, given their historical and cultural affinity.

4 Individual ownership and commitment

In most cases, Pentecostal churches are founded by individuals, the level of their charisma determining the growth rate of the church. They take care of the day-to-day administration of the church and may delegate jobs to junior officers who are themselves potential church founders. Decision making is easy and fast as the leader may not need to consult anybody else. The commitment of the Pastor, General Overseer, President, Founder, Spiritual Head or General Superintendent (as he may be addressed) is total, as his fortune, and that of his family, is intricately tied to the church. Unlike the mainline churches where the priest is

contracted and subject to retirement, Pentecostal church founders remain in charge of the church until death. It is not uncommon these days that at the death of a church founder, the wife, son, or a very close relative steps into his shoes as successor.

Individual church ownership is not without abuses. There is the danger of over-centralization of authority which exposes the church to the same pitfalls perceived in the mainline churches. Added to this there are the challenges of accountability. For instance, in Jude Ukaga's opinion, the crisis between Archbishop Benson Idahosa, founder of the Church of God Mission, and his foremost pastors had economic undertones. The senior pastors, Ukaga said, struggled in vain to have an input into the manner in which the huge wealth which accrued to the church was used. For Ukaga, the controversial court cases and threats to life and church properties were consequences of the frustration which became the lot of these people.²⁴ Notwithstanding, Idahosa's assistance, in the form of financial grants and equipment to selected individuals who have shown genuine interest in evangelical work, will expand the frontiers of evangelism in the 21st century.

5 Testimonies reinforce faith

Personal experience and testimonies play an integral role in the Pentecostal worship service. Popular testimonies include:

²⁴ J. C. Ukaga, cited in W.E Ehianu, 'Benson Idahosa and the Church of God Mission: An Appraisal' in *EPHA*, Ekpoma Journal of Religious Studies Vol. 4, Nos 1 and 2 2002, 216.

²³ Ezekwugo, *Philosophical Concept*, 163.

- 'I was sick, the doctor was helpless, I came to the church, today I'm well';
- 'I was barren, pastor prayed for me, now I have children';
- 'I was jobless, pastor prayed for me, now I have a job';
- 'I am the only survivor in an accident that claimed many lives.'

Miracles are attributed to the pastor's prayers to God. Sermons are interspersed with testimonies of the pastor's exploits and buttressed with praise songs. In discussing the growth of Pentecostalism in Africa, for instance, Elizabeth Ezenweke cites Dempster, Klans and Peterson as saying:

Pentecostals all over the world, but especially in the third world, see the role of healing as good news for the poor and afflicted. Early twentieth century Pentecostal newsletters and periodicals abounded with thousands of testimonies to physical healing, exorcism and deliverances.²⁵

The new-comer or visitor to the church is obliged to cast doubts aside and join the bandwagon; clapping away sorrows, replacing defeat with victory and despair with hope and faith.²⁶ The presentation of testimonies in Pentecostal church gatherings align with the African mindset which celebrates practical and visible demonstration of metaphysical powers. However, the fact

that some persons frequent churches and crusade grounds seeking miracles for problems purportedly already solved and for which testimonies were made, casts doubt on the genuineness of Pentecostal miracles. Miracles, as in the early church, could constitute a source of strength and growth in a church. However, when abused, they could become a source of discord, embarrassment and delusion as was the case with Montanism in the early church.

The vehement claims in Pentecostal churches to miracles and the teaching that 'God is not a poor God' and that all his followers must, therefore, be prosperous materially, physically and spiritually seem to run contrary to the actual socio-economic conditions of most adherents of Pentecostal churches. The attention of most preachers is on the believer, who must pray, fast and 'sow seed'. They do not seem to be interested in addressing the reasons for the socio-economic and political problems of Nigeria.²⁷ Moreover, reliance on miracles would begin to pale with improvements in the economy. This is because an improved economy implies more and better jobs, health care and security for which people currently seek miracles.

6 The Pentecostal sermon

The aim of every public speaker is to influence the hearer. The public speaker, therefore, chooses his words and organizes his presentation in such a way that in the end, the feelings,

25 E. Ezewenke, J. E. Madu, 'Skin- Deep Christianity: The Outcome of Evangelization Cultural Neglect and Upsurge of Pentecostalism' in A. G. Nnamani (ed), *New Religious movements*, 278.

26 Ezekwugo, *Philosophical Concept*, 163.

27 C. O. Isiramen, 'Pentecostalism in the society: A Therapy or Delusion', A. G. Nnamani (ed) *The New Religious Movements*, 287.

perceptions and convictions of the audience are altered. Ezejideaku has observed that the success of Pentecostalism in Nigeria may be traced to the edge Pentecostal pastors seem to have over their mainline counterparts in exploiting the potentials of language in their sermon. Such potentials, he said, include repetitions, focusing, phono-aesthetic devices, psycho-stylistic strategy, and rhetorical questions among others.²⁸ These serve to inspire, persuade, inform and enhance memorability and audience participation.

Though the performance of miracles is a significant factor in Pentecostal success, these miracles are dependent on language since they usually come at the end of penetrating sermons whose aim is to put the congregation into the spiritual state in which miracles can take place.

The effectiveness of the Pentecostal sermon has become so outstanding that the mainstream denominations have had to adopt the same strategies to minimize their loss of members to these groups.²⁹

In assessing the overall quality of Pentecostal preaching, and noting that a good sermon is known by the impact it makes on the audience, some questions need to be asked: how deeply has Christianity penetrated the minds of Pentecostal Christians as shown by their beliefs and attitudes in relation to the commandments of God? Has Pentecostalism produced better Christians at home, the work place and in society?

A sermon should not only produce a large following but produce Christians who are indeed 'born again' in their private and public lives.

7 Leadership skills by observation and participation

In his book, *History of Education in Nigeria*, Fafunwa posits that

Children learnt by doing, that is to say, children and adolescents were engaged in participatory education through ceremonies, rituals, recitation and demonstration.³⁰

This assertion is largely true with respect to accession to leadership positions in Pentecostal churches. In line with informal traditional education in Africa, pastoral skills come through informal apprenticeship to a senior pastor. Until recently, most Pentecostal pastors had scanty education. In fact, formal Bible training was rarely required for ordination. The gate was thus opened for all to enter the ministry, quite unlike what obtains in the non-Pentecostal churches where entry requirements limit the number of entrants. In short, some Pentecostal pastors obtain a basic school certificate and attend Bible college when already on the field.

Since the training period of the Pentecostal clergy is short, their availability is correspondingly rapid, resulting in a good number of labourers in the ministry. This is in contrast with mainline churches where stringent admission requirements into Bible colleges

28 E.U.C. Ezejideaku, 'The Rhetoric of Pentecostal Homiletics in Nigeria', *Nigerian Journal of the Humanities* No 13, (2006), 22.

29 Ezejideaku, 'The Rhetoric of Pentecostal Homiletics', 22.

30 A.B. Fafunwa, *History of Education in Nigeria* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1974), 15–16.

limit entrance which then translates to a dearth of manpower in the vineyard. On the debit side is the danger of letting loose half-baked preachers into a religiously pluralistic and volatile environment. Some episodes of religious violence in the country have been linked to unguarded utterances of zealous but indiscreet preachers.

Missionary organizations that are faced with the problem of inadequate personnel should relax their admission requirements into the seminaries and then make provision for in-service training to compensate.

8 Crusades

Crusades are a common sight in Nigeria. They are either organized to announce the opening of a new branch, or to inaugurate a new church, or to inform the public of an up-coming programme, or for general spiritual revival. For instance, on the 6 December 2002, Christ Embassy had a crusade which was tagged 'Night of Bliss'. The venue was the National Stadium, Surulere, Lagos. Over 500,000 people were in attendance, a record for recent times. For the Pentecostals, Christian faith is the only faith for all mankind. Speakers and preachers speak with such a conviction and faith that they give the impression of a close communion with God. Under such circumstances, it is difficult to resist an altar call to be born again and submit one's life to Christ.

9 Empowerment of women

One of the distinctive features of Pentecostal churches is the attention that is given to women. Even though mainline churches in Nigeria preach

equality of sexes, men usually hold the principal positions of authority. Pentecostal churches, like the African indigenous church organizations, have been exceptional in encouraging women to participate in the ministry of the church. Some women have founded, or hold leadership positions in, churches in Nigeria.³¹ In the list are Evangelist Eunice Osagiede (Spirit and Life Bible Church), Archbishop Margaret Benson Idahosa (Church of God Mission), Evangelist Helen Ukpabio (Liberty Gospel Church) and several others.

Pentecostals accept the 'common priesthood of believers'. Men and women may be called to preach and may do so with equal authority with the Bible in their hands. This gives a public role and great empowerment to women. They are as entitled to proclaim the faith as their male counterparts. Furthermore, Pentecostal women attain leadership status as prophetesses, evangelists, deaconesses and preachers. In some cultures, only women can theoretically bring the gospel to pagan women who must remain in *Purdah*, for men are not allowed to approach them. The woman evangelist, as homemaker and example of God's liberating grace, has the singular opportunity of manifesting to the heathen world what God can do for women.

Pentecostalism's scriptural notion of equality before Christ more directly contradicts female subordination and encourages more egalitarian relations within marriage. In this way, Pentecostals harness the evangelical energy of women, who in most cases constitute

31 D. Ayegboyin, S. A. Ishola, *African Indigenous Churches: An Historical Perspective* (Lagos: Greater Heights Publications, 1997), 156.

the majority in the church, to their advantage. Such offices place on them an obligation of commitment to the work of evangelism.³²

10 Electronic and print media

P. N. Van Der Laan cites Boerwinkel as saying, 'one must not count Pentecostals but weigh them; every one of them is an evangelist in his own right'.³³ Every means of communication is employed to communicate the gospel message. Church programmes feature regularly on television and radio as well as in newspapers and magazines. Posters of different churches with different messages of hope, or announcing church services or crusades, adorn the walls in every street of the towns and villages. Evangelical groups visit market places, hospitals, prisons, motor parks, hotels, where they distribute tracts and leaflets and stress the urgency of Christ's coming and the imperative of repentance.³⁴

Asonzeh Ukah has observed that the Pentecostal churches have been most active in exploring the medium of video films to dramatize and exhibit their practices, major figures and the organization's head. Almost all Pentecostal churches are involved in the

commercial production of videos. The first church to be so involved was the Mount Zion Faith Ministries (MZFM), established in 1985 which produced its first video in 1990.³⁵

Recognizing the evangelistic potential inherent in the use of video films in soul-winning, other churches quickly adopted the same practice. Thus, by the mid-1990s there was the flowering of such groups as Kay Technical, based in Ibadan, Maranatha Powerhouse, established by The Redeem Evangelical Mission (TREM) and based in Lagos, and Liberty Films and Music Plaza (LFMP) established in 1998 by Liberty Foundation Gospel Ministries (LFGM).³⁶

In addition, church members are encouraged to buy, sell or give out copies of such films to friends as part of their contribution to evangelism – for which they may expect rewards from God. The use of video films by Pentecostal organizations enhances their visibility and provides them with a competitive edge over other actors on the mission field.

11 Reception and follow-up of new members

In African culture, premium is placed on hospitality. The arrival of an important guest to a family is announced in the neighbourhood, and neighbours come out to accord the visitor a warm reception. In the liturgy of Pentecostal

32 P.N. Van Dar Laan, 'Dynamics in Pentecostal Mission: A Dutch Perspective', *International Review of Mission*. Vol. LXXV No. 297, 49.

33 Van Dar Laan, 'Dynamics in Pentecostal Mission', 49.

34 AFK UKAH, 'Pentecostal, Religious Expression and the City: Lessons from the Nigerian Bible Belt' in P. Probst et al (eds), *Between Resistance and Expansion, Explorations of Local Vitality in Africa* (Munchen: Let Verlag, 2004), 432.

35 AFK UKAH, 'Pentecostal, Religious Expression and the City', 432.

36 S.U. Eriwo, 'The Hound of Heaven and the Children of Men', Text of an Inaugural lecture delivered at the Bendel State University, Ekpoma 1987, 50.

churches, the same holds true. Time is set aside to welcome new comers. In an atmosphere soaked with excitement, members are requested to introduce themselves, give their names and occupations; home and workplace addresses are recorded and information given to the evangelism committee of the church for follow-up. With on-going visits by the committee and at times the church pastor, and the display of love exemplified in the commitment to ameliorate the new comers' problems, what may have begun as a trial visit could translate into a genuine desire for membership.

12 Social benefits

Pentecostal organization reflects the age-old extended family system in Africa. Commenting on the reality of love among Pentecostals, Ezekwugo observes that they 'can easily surrender their beds to fellow church members while they and their wives sleep on the bare floor'.³⁷ In prosperity and adversity, there is a strong display of solidarity. A popular song among them translated, in English, says:

Where is benefit?
Benefit is in heaven
He who has no mother
Let him start attending church
He gets father
He gets mother
He gets relatives

As a result of brotherliness, indigent men could have their marriage financed by the church or wealthy church members. Sisters could equally have husbands arranged for them. The

bereaved are given financial and moral support; the jobless are given financial assistance to undertake small scale business. The sick are visited with gifts, and a special offering is instituted for widows and orphans. Showing such love and concern knits members of the church together in a tight bond of fellowship.

While we admit that charity and concern for one another's welfare constitute an integral part of the Christian life, its limitations must not be overlooked. It reminds one of Jesus' rebuke to his followers whom he accused of following him, 'not because ye saw the miracles but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled' (John 6:26 KJV); of course, when the bread was no longer forthcoming many of them deserted him. When converts are won and sustained through acts of charity, they tend to see the church as a social insurance institution and are therefore amenable to the highest bidder. It is little wonder denominational boundaries are very fluid for most Pentecostal adherents.

With the present move by government to introduce social welfare programmes, Pentecostal groups in Nigeria might well begin to lose what appears to be a potent instrument of evangelism.

13 Psychological refuge

Emmanuel Ezejideaku attributes the flowering of Pentecostal churches in Igbo land, which he said were rarely known before the Nigerian Civil War (1967 -1970), to the search for psychological relief. During the war, people who were rich became poor; and many were devastated, having lost their dear

37 Ezekwugo, *Philosophical Concept*, 163.

ones. There was a serious decay of the social supports and infrastructure; the future was bleak as Igbo land was consigned to the status of a conquered territory. In this situation, there was the frenzied search for happiness, socio-psychological expression and spiritual security.

With claims to have answers to these needs, many Igbo identified with the Pentecostal movement. Moreover, as Ezejideaku has observed, the environment of Pentecostal worship was preferred by many because they created more happiness than the mainline patterns which were solemn and systematized.

Igbos who could not leave the mainline churches took solace in social clubs, which were experiencing an upsurge. Some of these clubs include: People's Club of Nigeria, Star Club of Nigeria and *Nwanne Di Namba* (meaning a brother could be found in a strange or foreign land).³⁸

The growth and significance of any religious movement depend largely on the prevailing issues of the day. Thus, an evangelist must be visionary, proactive, and be able to identify and to employ the right strategy for every situation.

IV Lessons to be Learned

The Pentecostals are the most combative, aggressive and apparently fanatical members of the family of Christendom. Equally true is the fact that the growth of Pentecostal churches is gen-

erally recognized as the most remarkable development in contemporary mission history. However, it must be recognized that religious vitality and visibility do not necessarily translate into religious growth. In other words, numerical growth and increased contextualization of religion might have been achieved at a price—lack of depth.

Notwithstanding, Pentecostalism has come to stay in Nigeria. There are positive and negative elements of the phenomenon. But as the Latins say, *abusus non tollit usus* (abuse does not forbid use). Mainline churches in Nigeria and indeed evangelicals elsewhere should be able to evaluate the features of the movement: take away the bath water and retain the baby.³⁹ Echema's admonition is apposite as caution, counsel and conclusion:

The time has come when we must take into account all that is positive in the Pentecostal Movement if we hope to make progress in the areas of liturgical renewal, inter-faith dialogue, enculturation of Christianity, the ministry of healing, especially towards psychotics and addicts, and new approaches to church union and ecumenism. The age of antagonism, indifference and neglect or even arrogance is over.⁴⁰

³⁹ I. K. E. Oraegbulam, 'Meeting the Challenges of Pentecostalism in the Seminary Formation in Nigeria Today' in A. G. N. Nnamani (ed), *The New Religious Movements*, 105.

⁴⁰ E.U Dim, 'New Religious Movements: Notes For Seminary Formation' in A.G. Nnamani (ed), *The New Religious Movements*, 116.

³⁸ Ezejideaku, Personal Interview.

J. R. Tolkien: Theologian in Disguise?

Small is Powerful: a Guiding Principle of *The Lord of the Rings*

Raymond J. Laird

KEYWORDS: *Weak, fool, choice/chosen, providence, wise/wisdom.*

I A Strange Hero

Small is powerful; so thought Tolkien, so thinks God. If there is one scene from *Lord of the Rings* that encapsulates this principle, consider this one: At a critical point in the saga, just as Frodo, the hobbit or halfling is about to enter the territory of Sauron the Dark Lord where the Ring can be destroyed, he pauses, deep in thought. Mindful of Gandalf, the good wizard and the leader of the Fellowship of the Ring, whom he thinks he will see no more, he searches in his mind for any direction that may have been given for this crucial part of his mission. Nothing; and as he thought about it he concluded that Gandalf had never been in the dark realm since the power of the Dark Lord had come to its fullness. Thus, he reflects: 'And here he was, a little

halfling from the Shire, a simple hobbit of the quiet countryside, expected to find a way where the great ones could not go, or dared not go. It was an evil fate.'¹

Tolkien, in the depiction of his small hero, has him here expressing his despair while articulating the amazing role for which he has been chosen. Frodo's despair heightens the crucial nature of the operating principle: he is far too weak and inadequate for the task. He admits to having taken it upon himself, but at this point it was obviously an evil choice. Once more he must choose, and both of the paths before him appeared to lead to terror and death. He cannot do it, but he must

¹ J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring: The Lord of the Rings Part 1* (London: Harper Collins reset ed., repr. 1999), 2.4.3.310. All references here to *The Lord of the Rings* will be to this 3 vol. edition, and will be abbreviated as Part, Book, Chapter, page, e.g. *LoR*, 2.4.3.310.

make the attempt and die in so doing.

He thinks he has been given a task that is utterly beyond him, a judgement which was both right and wrong. It was a task he had not sought, a burden he had not wanted, but he had been chosen by the consensus of the wise who had ears for the wisdom of the past, and eyes for the workings of providence in their own times. They were as surprised as Frodo at the choice, but acknowledged that however inadequate he appeared, this most unlikely being was unmistakably the one among them to be trusted with the assignment.

II A Strange Author

Strange? Who on earth would write a story like this? Most likely, it would be someone who was conversant with the ways of God as revealed in the Bible, someone who thought theologically about life as being fundamentally religious. In Tolkien's Foreword to the second edition of *The Lord of the Rings*, he has gone on record, concerning his remarkable epic fantasy, declaring that, 'as for any inner meaning or "message", it has in the intention of the author none'.² There he also asserted his dislike of allegory, so we must take note that he did not intend to write a Christian allegory. He indicated that readers will make of the epic what they may, but for him it was simply a story.

That may mean that this writer is voicing only his own response to the tale. On the other hand, there is little doubt that a particular world-view

is expressed in Tolkien's great work, perhaps subconsciously, but present as the very fabric of his grand epic. This he admitted in a letter in 1953, acknowledging that his literary creation was fundamentally religious, but that 'the religious element is absorbed into the story and symbolism'.³

What then do we find in this work of fantasy besides a good read? We find this: a world where, in the conflict between the forces of good and evil, it is the weakest and smallest beings who carry the day against the strong. *The Lord of the Rings* is about the passion for power, which is portrayed as the ultimate evil, an evil so destructive that not only does it poison its environment, but also inevitably destroys those who would seize and embrace it, or rather, who are embraced by it. It is both ironic and perceptive that the weakest of the beings who people this story should be the key instruments through which the fall of the mighty bastions of evil is accomplished.

The passion for power is epitomised in the One Ring around which the story revolves. The Ring had been forged in a former age along with others that by the time of the setting of this story had been destroyed, neutralised, or possessed by the Dark Lord, Sauron. Possession of this master instrument of power unleashes the worst aspects of this passion in those who seek to own and use it. The passion for power, along with the jealousy, hate, suspicion, deceit, anger, ruthlessness, and the contempt for compassion and mercy that it spawns, rises in intensity

2 J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring: The Lord of the Rings Part 1*, xvii.

3 Humphrey Carpenter and Christopher Tolkien (eds), *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*, 142, 1953 (London: Allen & Unwin 1981).

over time to poison all relationships. Even those entrusted with the Ring in order to destroy it, in spite of a simple integrity that fitted them for the task, find it a burden that sets up an inner conflict which would tear them apart and shorten their existence.

Such was it with Frodo Baggins, the hobbit, the halfling, who was chosen to carry the Ring in order to destroy it in the smoking Cracks of Doom in the Fire-mountain in Mordor, the realm of the Black Lord. Called away from the Shire of Middle-earth where the hobbits tilled the ground and went about their lives in peace, contentment and simplicity, Frodo found the Ring to be a burden that sapped his energy, wore away his strength, and at times distressed and even skewed his spirit.

Therefore, in the initial phases of his mission, Frodo was provided with companions, the Fellowship of the Ring. This Fellowship was comprised of three other hobbits, Sam Gamgee, Peregrin (Pippin) Took, and Meriadoc (Merry) Brandybuck, plus Gandalf the wise wizard, Legolas the elf, and Gimli the dwarf. Completing the band were representatives of the best of men, Boromir, a prince of the Stewards of Gondor, and Aragorn, the last of the descendants of the line of the great kings of Gondor, but working incognito against the Dark Lord as a Ranger. These companions, a mixture of simplicity, integrity, wisdom, supernatural powers, extraordinary skill, exceptional courage, human greatness, and loyal equals, served their purpose in the initial conflicts, sharing their wisdom and their strengths.

When the fellowship divided as Frodo and Sam left to face their onerous task of taking the Ring to its place

of destruction, the others would play their parts in events elsewhere to participate in the final triumph. The decisive critical stroke was left to Frodo, the Ring-bearer, and his faithful friend Sam. In the end it was to be as Gandalf had long since predicted, 'Many are the strange chances of the world', said Mithrandir (Gandalf), 'and help oft comes from the hands of the weak when the Wise falter.'⁴

III A Strange Principle

This observation echoes a familiar biblical principle, enunciated by the apostle Paul in the context of his message of the apparent foolishness of the Cross, in relation to the Corinthian church:

But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose things that are low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, so that no one might boast in the presence of God. (1 Cor. 1:27).

This principle populates the history of salvation: Joseph, the youngest of the sons of Jacob, hated by his brothers and sold by them into servitude in Egypt, becomes the saviour of his people (Gen. 37-45, esp. 45:4-8). Gideon, self-confessed as the least member of the weakest clan of the tribe of Manasseh, is chosen by God to lead his people, with a force cut down by God

4 J.R.R. Tolkien, 'Of the Rings of Power and the Third Age' in *The Silmarillion*, ed. Christopher Tolkien (London: Allen & Unwin 1977, repr.1979), 363.

to three hundred warriors, to a mighty victory over the oppressing Midianites and Amalekites who 'lay along the valley, as thick as locusts; and their camels were without number, countless as the sand on the seashore' (Judg. 7:12).

David, the younger son of Jesse's seven sons is chosen by God through the prophet Samuel, to replace Saul as king. David with his slingshot and stones slays Goliath the dreaded Philistine champion who with 'the shaft of his spear like a weaver's beam' (1 Sam. 17:7), put such fear into all the Israelite warriors that they fled. Saul remarked of David when he volunteered to fight Goliath that he was 'just a boy', and the writer noted that David was disdained by Goliath because he was 'only a youth' (1 Sam. 17: 33, 42). Saul, himself, had been chosen by God for kingly office when he was humble and unassuming (1 Sam. 9:21).

Jeremiah pleads his youth, inexperience, and his inability to speak when called by God to become a prophet to the nations (Jer. 1: 6). Amos, a God-chosen prophet to Israel, answers the pagan priest of Bethel with the startling fact that he, Amos, was no professional prophet, but only a herdsman and a farmer who had been entrusted with a specific word from God for the Northern Kingdom, Israel (Amos 8:5).

An undistinguished maiden from Gentile-infected Galilee is chosen to be the bearer of the Jew's Messiah, a lowliness which she celebrates in her beautiful song (Lk. 1:46-55). The placement of Jesus in Nazareth, deliberately made by God, brings forth from the guileless Nathanael, soon to become a dedicated disciple of Jesus, the remark, 'Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?' (Jn. 1:46). God had sidestepped the centres

of power and authority, Caesarea and Jerusalem, for a town which was more than one hundred kilometres away from the mainstream of Roman political and Jewish religious significance in which to nurture the Messiah for his first thirty years.

To commence his ministry, Jesus chose to move from South Galilee to the North, to Capernaum, in 'Galilee of the Gentiles' (Mt. 4:12-17), even more distasteful to the strict custodians of Judaism. At the start of Jesus' public ministry he is introduced by John Baptist, as 'the Lamb of God', a remarkable image to describe the long expected mighty deliverer.

Many have noted that God bypassed the great, and the mighty, and those considered wise in this world in the choice of the twelve apostles of Jesus. A few fishermen, a hated tax-collector for the Romans, and a revolutionary zealot, made up at least half the number. No priests, Pharisees, scribes, or religious experts of any kind made up the group, and yet, these 'uneducated and ordinary men' (Acts 4:13) became the touchstone of Christian faith and doctrine.

The apostle Paul, as a converted Pharisee, was a seeming exception to the principle. It should not escape us that as Saul of Tarsus, Paul took the role of a beast in his savage persecution of the infant church. His surprise encounter with the risen Christ, the Jesus he was pursuing through the Christian disciples, reduced him to submission and, at first, to impotence and blindness. Thus, though one of the 'not many wise, powerful or noble' included in the calling of God, his initial humiliation was indicative of what he was to learn, experience, and then to

teach as an ambassador of Christ. He was prepared to sacrifice his impressive ancestry and accomplishments to follow Christ (Phil. 3:4-11).

He describes himself, not as a captain, but as a prisoner in Christ's triumphal procession (2 Cor. 2:14). He glories, not in his strengths, but in his weaknesses and in the apparent weak weapons of victorious spiritual warfare depicted in 2 Corinthians 10:1-5. After cataloguing his various trials and sufferings in 2 Corinthians 11, he spells out the working principle by which he lived and laboured, the word he received from God: 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness' (2 Cor. 12:5-10). He would eventually write of Jesus that, 'He was crucified in weakness, yet he lives by God's power' (2 Cor. 13:4), having already told the Corinthians that 'the message of the Cross is foolishness to those who are perishing . . . we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling-block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles. . . for God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.' (1 Cor. 1: 18-25).

It seems evident that Tolkien had absorbed this critical aspect of the Christian world-view, and that he had incorporated it into the heart of his epic fantasy. Tolkien captures the weakness of his chosen vessels in a section after they had negotiated the vile Passage of the Dead Marshes. Frodo and Sam, now at the edge of the dreaded land of Mordor where their destination, the Mount of Fire was located, were overwhelmed by the environmental devastation that lay before them:

The light broadened and hardened.
The gasping pits and poisonous

mounds grew hideously clear. The sun was up, walking among clouds and long flags of smoke, but even the sunlight was defiled. The hobbits had no welcome for that light, unfriendly it seemed, revealing them in their helplessness—little squeaking ghosts that wandered among the ash-heaps of the Dark Lord.⁵

'Little squeaking ghosts' they were, merely figures without size or substance, unable to make even a coherent statement, let alone accomplish the mammoth task assigned to them. They were as ghosts that wandered, as though they had little heart or focus for the serious business committed to them. Discovered by the dawning sun in their helplessness, they seemed totally unsuitable to face the grim challenge before them. Surely, a mistake has been made. Who could ever have chosen such weak vessels for so great a mission, one upon which the destiny of the inhabitants of Middle Earth depended? As noted above, Frodo certainly thought that was the case.

Tolkien not only puts this sentiment on the lips of the main instrument of deliverance, but also on those who thought themselves wise in the lore and wisdom of this world. The note of the foolishness in the choice of a hobbit for the great task is sounded by Denethor II, the Lord of the city of Minas Tirith, the knowledgeable but proud and deceitful Ruling Steward of Gondor. He thought that his son, Boromir, had accompanied Frodo into the land of the Dark Lord. In an exchange of opinions with Gandalf, who did not

5 *LoR*, 2.4.2.294.

trust him, Denethor responded that his own wisdom was,

Enough to perceive that there are two follies to avoid. To use this thing [the Ring] is perilous. At this hour, to send it in the hands of a witless halfling into the land of the Enemy himself, as you have done, and this son of mine [Boromir], that is madness.⁶

It is crucial to observe that Denethor's younger son, Faramir, had already thrown the responsibility back on his father, pointing out that it was his father's choice that had sent Boromir on the fateful errand that brought him into the Fellowship of the Ring. Denethor could only respond, 'Stir not the bitterness in the cup that I have mixed for myself.'⁷ What a confession of the failure of his wisdom as distorted by his jealousy of the influence of Gandalf. This was allied with a perverted favouritism for his elder son, and with an arrogant selfishness that excluded everyone who did not exclusively serve his own interests.

It is implicit that Denethor's wisdom was, to use his own words against him, 'witless'. Wisdom, if it is to be authentic, must be accompanied by humility, impartiality, and a love that reaches out to encompass those beyond its own immediate circle of concern. Otherwise, it cannot discern the ways of true wisdom, that is the thoughts and ways of God. It is obvious from Tolkien's characterisation that he was well versed in the biblical principle of the way of true wisdom.

Whilst Frodo and Sam are pressing

toward the goal of their task, the disposal of the Ring, elsewhere the other hobbits are demonstrating the same principle in their spheres of this heroic contest against the forces of evil. Merry had ridden, though forbidden by King Theoden, Lord of the Mark, with the disguised King's daughter, Eowyn, into battle against the troops of Sauron led by the Black Captain, the Witch-King, a Ringwraith or ghost, mounted on a giant bird-like creature. Theoden's horse, killed by the Black Captain, fell upon the King crushing life out of him.

The winged creature with its Black Rider lighted on the King's horse, but was withstood, to the Black Rider's utter amazement, by Eowyn. The creature leapt down upon her, only to have its head severed from its body by her skilful sword. In fierce rage, the Black Captain shattered Eowyn's shield with his mace. He stood over her to wield the fatal blow. Merry, with his special sword, acted quickly to pierce the sinew of the knee of the Black Captain, thus 'breaking the spell that knit his unseen sinews to his will'.⁸ The Black Captain, now with the vital link between his earthly body and his corrupted soul deactivated, melted into the wind as a bodiless spectre when Eowyn dealt the final blow.

A woman and a hobbit, neither of whom ought to have been present on this battlefield, had brought about the demise of the chief of the spiritual beings, the Black Riders, whose threatening presence had hung over the Fellowship of the Ring from its very beginning. Who had accomplished this impossible feat? – not a wizard, not a

6 *LoR*, 3.5.4.92.

7 *LoR*, 3.5.4.91.

8 *LoR*, 3.5.6.130.

famous warrior, not an elf or a dwarf, not any other being with special power—simply a woman and a halfling, the latter being one whom the Black Rider ‘heeded no more than a worm in the mud’.⁹ The principle holds.

Pippin, too, plays his part. Denethor had given up hope when Sauron’s troops attacked Minas Tirith. In despair he built a pyre on which to burn his wounded son Faramir in company with himself. Pippin vigorously opposed him, but being unheeded, he then found Gandalf to effect the deliverance of Faramir in the nick of time.

Also, not only weakness but foolishness is taken into account by Tolkien. After the fall of Isengard and the defeat and humiliation of the corrupted White Wizard, Saruman, Pippin had sneaked a look into the Palantir, the magic Stone by which Saruman had kept in touch with Sauron. It had hurtful consequences for Pippin, including a scolding from Gandalf. But then, Gandalf recognized that Pippin’s rash foolishness was probably a stroke of fortune. ‘Maybe, I have been saved by this hobbit from a grave blunder. I had considered whether or not to probe this Stone myself to find its uses.’¹⁰ Thereby he would have revealed himself to Sauron, a trial for which he felt unready and could well have been disastrous for the mission.

Five days later Gandalf learned from Denethor that Sauron had moved prematurely with his plans. As Gandalf thought on this he realised that this resulted from Pippin’s foolish action of looking into the Stone, after which

it had been given to its true owner, Aragorn, the heir of Isildur and thus the king of Gondor. Gandalf rightly guessed that Aragorn had used the Stone to challenge the Dark Lord and that this was to their advantage. It had turned the eyes of the Dark Lord away from Mordor at the very time Frodo and Sam were approaching their goal. Gandalf turns to Pippin, ‘Maybe...maybe even your foolishness helped, my lad.’¹¹

Thus all four hobbits played their special parts in the overcoming of the evil shadow that spread its pernicious grasp over the land. Strength had been made perfect in weakness, or even more to the point, in the foolishness of weakness.

IV The Wisdom of the Strange Choice

The choice of a witless halfling, to use Denethor’s words, is basic to the story. Here is a choice that cannot be plumbed, certainly not by the wisdom of this world, whether based upon history or lore as in the story, or upon supernatural powers such as belonging to wizards and elves as in this epic tale. Tolkien makes it clear that the possession of exceptional wisdom, supernatural insight, and special powers are insufficient to overcome the power of the Ring and its evil maker, the Dark Lord.

At the beginning of the story, the good wizard, Gandalf, tells Frodo the truth about the Ring and his responsibility to destroy it. Frodo becomes upset, protests and suggests that Gan-

⁹ *LoR*, 3.5.6.129.

¹⁰ *LoR*, 2.3.11.244.

¹¹ *LoR*, 3.5.4.94.

dalf should embrace the task. Gandalf vehemently refuses, asserting that the Ring would gain deadly power over him and turn him into a Dark Lord: 'I dare not take it, even to keep it safe, unused. The wish to wield it would be too great for my strength.'¹² Gandalf needed to be free of it to fight it and to help Frodo destroy it. In this way, he confesses the power of the dark side, and the inherent weakness of his own considerable strength.

This, as Frodo had suggested, is amazing; Gandalf appeared very much more qualified than a hobbit for this task. Why then was he, the much weaker vessel, chosen? Gandalf tells him that there is no answer to that, but one thing he may be sure about is that it was not for any merit, power or wisdom that he possessed more than any other being. Indeed, he was lacking all the features that would fit someone for the task: special wisdom, physical stature, great strength, and magical powers.

The gathering at Rivendell of the personnel from various populaces chose Frodo as the one who was to be bearer of the Ring to the Mountain of Doom. Elrond Halfelven, Lord of Rivendell, who presided at this gathering, voicing his wonder at what was happening, remarked to Frodo: 'I think this task is appointed to you—who of all the Wise could have foreseen it?'¹³ Was this not then foolishness, that such a choice had been made? So it would seem, but this is the essence of the principle. Yes, Frodo should use to the utmost all the abilities native to him,

but even under normal circumstances these would fall far short.

Boromir, who had questioned the decision at the Council, echoed this sentiment with eyes blazing and mad with anger when at Parth Galen where the Fellowship was split up for a time, and where Boromir was killed by a company of Sauron's Orcs. There, under the influence of the power of the Ring which he desired to take from Frodo, he said: 'The only plan that is proposed to us is that a halfling should walk blindly into Mordor and offer the Enemy every chance of recapturing it for himself.' Resisted by Frodo, he shouted: 'Folly! Fool! Obstinate fool!'¹⁴ There was indeed no logical reason why there should be any different outcome in the immense task that lay ahead of the hobbit. Indeed, the task was far beyond his personal resources and was obviously headed for failure.

All this sounds an evangelical note. As noted above, this principle wends its way through Holy Scripture as the bedrock of God's dealings with humankind. This indicates how wrong we got it in the first instance as shown in Genesis 3 in its depiction of the devastating consequences of the grasp for wisdom and power independent of the Creator. The last book of the New Testament, Revelation, is in essence a theology of power. What figure do we see standing as the pinnacle of power in the visions of John? A Lamb! (Rev. 5:6ff.). How are the enemies overcome? By a Lamb! (Rev. 17:13-14). The contrast of the Lamb with the beast who is the peak of evil dominion is patently obvious (Rev. 13-14).

¹² *LoR*, 1.1.2.81.

¹³ *LoR*, 1.2.2.355.

¹⁴ *LoR*, 1.2.10.524.

In the final outcome, who but the Lamb is revealed as the heart and glory of the New Jerusalem? (Rev. 21:22-27). Power and triumph is vested in the one who bears this beautiful metaphor of weakness, the Lamb of God, the one who laid aside his greatness to be crucified through weakness.

Thus, while there is no answer to the wherefore of the Divine choice, there is a compelling inner logic in God's ways. Universal agreement among Christians is found on this issue: it is not for any surplus of merit, power or wisdom more than any other person that the Divine choice is made. Only the blindness of pride would allow us to say otherwise. In the matter of salvation and in the fulfilment of any divine commission, the underlying cause and power is the grace of God concretely applied by the Holy Spirit. Although that is not explicit in Tolkien's work, the principle is woven into the fabric of the story. Let us hear Elrond again:

This quest may be attempted by the weak with as much hope as the strong. Yet such is oft the course of deeds that move the wheels of the world: small hands do them because they must, while the eyes of the great are elsewhere...I think that this task is appointed for you, Frodo; and that if you do not find a way, no one will. This is the hour of the Shire-folk, when they arise from their quiet fields to shake the towers and counsels of the great. Who of all the Wise could have foreseen it? Or if they are wise, why should they expect to know it, until the hour has struck?¹⁵

Another instance of Tolkien's embodiment of this principle in the coalition against the Black Lord occurs the morning after the triumph of Eowyn and Merry. A war council of the lords that had lent their strength to the battle met outside the walls of Minas Tirith. Gandalf counselled advance under the leadership of Aragorn, now acknowledged as the King of Gondor. Aragorn laid out his strategy, proposing it not as a command but as a choice. All present vowed their allegiance to Aragorn, and then their agreement with the details of the plan of action, a perilous venture that could bring death to many and probable defeat to the alliance. When they had reckoned up their strength, Prince Imrahil, Prince of Dol Amroth, burst into laughter, saying:

Surely...this is the greatest jest in all the history of Gondor: that we should ride with seven thousands, scarce as many as the vanguard of its army in the days of its power, to assail the mountain and the impenetrable gate of the Black Land! So might a child threaten a mail-clad knight with a bow of string and green willow.¹⁶

Once again, the task is allotted to the weak to confound the strong. So off they set with little better than children's toys to the final battle: to enter the stronghold of Mordor and overcome the Dark Lord. Madness, some would say. Yes, as mad as the mention by Jesus of his forthcoming death in Jerusalem seemed to Peter who had only just confessed Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah, the long-expected, all-powerful deliverer of the Jews (Mt. 16:13-23).

15 *LoR*, 1.2.2.353.

16 *LoR*, 3.5.9.182.

But Peter was as unaware of the basic principle that Jesus embodied (Mt. 16:24-26), although he himself was living testimony to it, as were the majority of those who are depicted by Tolkien in their march upon Mordor. If there is anything to be learned from Tolkien's epic, it is that in the economy of God small is powerful, simply because its bearers are aware of their weaknesses and limitations. They have no other choice than to depend upon Divine providence. Therein lies the fullness of wisdom.

V Conclusion

The last word comes from the small tract with which these musings began, 'Of the Rings of Power and the Third Age', concerning the final battle that saw the demise of Sauron:

In that last battle were Mithrandir (Gandalf), and the sons of Elrond, and the King of Rohan, and lords of Gondor, and the Heir of Isildur with the Dúnedain of the North. There at the last they looked upon death and defeat, and all their valour was in vain; for Sauron was too strong. Yet

in that hour was put to proof that which Mithrandir had spoken, and help came at the hands of the weak when the Wise faltered. For, as many songs have since sung, it was the Perianth, the Little People, dwellers in hillsides and meadows, who brought them deliverance.¹⁷

Tolkien thus enunciates a principle that not only lies at the heart of his story, but also at the heart of God's story, a principle that has its richest and most powerful application and enunciation in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, 'who was crucified in weakness but lives by God's power' (2 Cor:13:4). Hidden in that Cross was the paradoxical omnipotent weakness which provided and released deliverance, redemption, forgiveness, spiritual power, and eternal life to a world in darkness, conflict, and desperate need, as those who are committed to the Lord Jesus have found. As for Tolkien, there is much in the way of entertainment to be gained from him. More so, we can learn much from him about the ways of God.

¹⁷ Tolkien, 'Of the Rings of Power', 366.

Books Reviewed

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Book Reviews

ERT (2014) 38:1, 91-92

Ruth
Judy Fentress-Williams
(Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries)
ISBN 978-1-4267-4625-3
Abingdon Press Nashville 2012
Pb., pp 152 Bibliog, Index

*Reviewed by Rev. Professor N. T. Barker,
Brisbane, Australia.*

Judy Fentress-Williams, Professor of Old Testament at Virginia Theological Seminary, gives us a very modern-day commentary on the Book of Ruth. She notes the placement of the book after Judges (following the LXX), or in the third section of the Hebrew Bible, the *Ketubim*. Accordingly, scholars have argued for an earlier date in the Monarchical period, or later, in connection with the return from Exile. As such, it could address questions about the validity of King David, in spite of his Moabite ancestry, or be a counter-tradition to Ezra-Nehe-miah's exclusion of foreign wives in the post-exilic era. She notes the constant interplay of inclusivism and exclusiv-

ism, with a preference for inclusivism. Reading Ruth in the modern style of 'reader response' she holds that the text has 'multiple voices'. As such Ruth has the potential to challenge ancient and modern communities.

She notes the large amount of dialogue (55 out of 88 verses) and raises a number of suggestions on the literary genre—narrative prose, novella (where the 'truths' do not reside in historical accuracy, and history is at the service of the narrative), folktale (where historical background is not essential), and comedy (noting that agricultural cultures usually have a comedy-like drama association with harvest or change of seasons). She does not note the dramatic suspense created by the nearer kinsman. She affirms that she will read Ruth as a dialogic comedy in which the unexpected is found, a Moabite woman who demonstrates faithfulness. She develops her reading of Ruth to highlight how Ruth finds a new identity as a revered ancestress who 'gives Israel a new lens through which to view those outside the people of God'. Apart from levirate marriage, she notes the themes of women (both in prominence and

gender roles), survival, love, harvest, covenant and faithfulness.

She explores each episode of the text, noting literary, exegetical and theological points. Her literary analyses on parallel structuring of the chapters are illuminating. She extends the boundaries of the text to draw on wide-ranging themes of Scripture, and makes literary/structural comparisons with the *levir* passage of Tamar and Judah in Gen. 38 or the background of Moab in the incest of Gen. 19. At other times she stretches the boundaries of interpretation, including psychological concepts such as 'luminous space' (in-between spaces where decisions are made) – as somewhere on the road between Moab and Israel, or in the night on the threshing-floor.

She assumes the *levir* concept of the kinsman-redeemer, but does not note the difference from the pattern of Deuteronomy 25 and Mark 12, envisaged by Naomi in ch.1. She does not raise interesting questions that arise from chapter 4 where Naomi assumes the mother-role and Ruth's child is listed in the genealogy of Boaz and David, rather than Elimelech. She mentions other ANE concepts such as harvest and fertility, without contrasting the peril for Yahwism, in Moab in Numbers 25, and the constant challenge in Canaan from Baal type worship. She draws modern parallels to such ancient practices as gleaning, such as social-welfare recipients.

She notes the themes of fullness into emptiness in ch. 1 (reflected in 1:21), followed by Ruth going out empty in ch. 2 but then enjoying a sumptuous meal with Boaz and returning to Naomi with an abundance, the interaction of formal and spontaneous dialogue (with the inference that formal is less genuine), the interplay of dialogue in private and public places and the blessing of the

men in ch. 4 and that of the 'women' that embraces the marriage of Boaz and Ruth.

These undoubtedly enrich our appreciation for this simple little tale, but does the author overlook obvious lessons, such as the presence of true godliness in a chaotic period, the presence in King David's family line of a godly heritage, much as Mary and Joseph, Anna and Simeon indicate the same for Jesus?

She notes but does not develop the nine-fold use of *shw* in Ch. 1. The turning of Ruth from the paganism of Moab to 'shelter under the wings of YHWH' is not developed. The inclusion of Ruth in Matthew's genealogy and the liturgical use of *Ruth* at the Festival of Weeks (Pentecost) are not exploited. Ruth remains a Moabite who challenges Jewish and modern exclusiveness, not as a precursor of the Gentile mission.

ERT (2014) 38:1, 92-93

John Bunyan—The People's Pilgrim

Peter Morden

Farnham, Surrey: CWR, 2013
ISBN: 978-1-85345-836-1
Pb pp 176, illus.

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

John Bunyan (1628-88) lived during a tumultuous period of English history and was the author of one of the most widely read and influential Christian books in the language. This made him a highly significant figure, and so Peter Morden's new presentation of his life and ministry is a welcome addition to the extensive literature on this Bedford pastor.

The author, who teaches church history

and spirituality at Spurgeon's College, London which makes him well qualified for the task, has aimed at the general reader (as hinted at in the subtitle). The book itself is most attractive—with well designed pages, many colourful and informative illustrations (including facsimiles of pages from Bunyan's books), photographs of geographical locations, memorabilia and especially reproductions of some of the impressive stained glass images from the present day Bunyan church at Bedford. The cover and general feel of this paperback book are inviting. The author occasionally uses the first person in the text and at the close of every chapter there are two sections to help the reader interact more fully with the story—one called 'Going further' for additional thought and research about some of the themes of the chapter, and the other, 'Your own journey' which encourages deeper spiritual reflection at a personal level.

However, while the author is genuinely appreciative of his subject, this is no hagiography, and the book is full of the substantial and insightful content. There are effective portrayals of the complicated social, political and religious context of the mid-17th century, and a sensitive account of the life of Bunyan and the people around him, his church and town, and particularly his long years in prison and its impact on his family.

More importantly, the author vividly describes Bunyan's spiritual journey (not hiding the many hardships along the way and struggles with doubt and uncertainty), and analyses clearly his pastoral principles. Naturally, Bunyan's extensive writings receive special attention, with striking summaries of many of them, including the lesser known but perhaps more valuable ones. Pride of place is of course given to the most famous ones, *The Holy War*, and above all, *The*

Pilgrim's Progress Parts 1 and 2—which are given several pages each.

As his biographical work, *Grace Abounding*, shows, Bunyan was a man whose life was radically transformed by the gospel and who endured some of the worst treatment that could have been handed out to a person of his times, but he was also one who gave himself in faith and hope to the calling of a 'pilgrim'. He was extremely popular and influential in his day, and this impact has since been perpetuated in many parts of the world through his writings. The author believes Bunyan's 'life and writings have the potential (still) to help equip a new army of so-called "ordinary people" today' (p. 187). If so, this splendid presentation of 'the people's pilgrim' will be a useful companion.

ERT (2014) 38:1, 93-95

The Heart of the Gospel: The Theology Behind the Master Plan of Evangelism

Robert E. Coleman,

Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2011.

ISBN 978-0-8010-1370-6

Pb, pp 304, index

Reviewed by Matthew Cook, Boone, NC, USA

Having offered the book *The Master Plan of Evangelism* to the evangelical world over 40 years ago, Robert Coleman has remained a pre-eminent voice in evangelism, contributing through both practical and academic reflection. Coleman has taught in major evangelical institutions (being this reviewer's professor over 20 years ago at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, IL) and remains connected to Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary as distinguished senior profes-

sor of evangelism and discipleship. He has trained evangelists and scholars. He has written academic works and preached at evangelistic events. Robert Coleman has seen, participated in, and shaped evangelism. This book is a welcome addition to his continued influence in the Christian world.

The Heart of the Gospel: The Theology Behind 'The Master Plan of Evangelism' by Robert E. Coleman was released by Baker in 2011 with its back cover filled by expert affirmations which catch the flavour of the book: 'devotionally rich and practically helpful', 'magnificent study', etc. In fact, what is entitled as a theology is far more. The classical theological elements are treated, but the practical and devotional theology needed for evangelism is included as well.

The book starts in classical theological fashion: 'The Character of God', 'Revelation and the Bible', 'Creation and the Celestial Hosts', etc. Looking at the table of contents one may suspect that this will be just another survey of theology. Most of the topics in this book support that conclusion. However, there are certain chapters which clearly veer from that course. Chapter 13 entitled 'Sanctification' is less theology and more preaching. Even the 'Problem Areas' section of the chapter focuses more on problems experienced by Christians during the life of sanctification rather than heresies commonly believed. The work is full of illustrations as one would expect from a preacher and a trainer of preachers. In a unique chapter (from a theological perspective) on 'Coming to Christ', Coleman does not so much give an *ordo salutis* as the steps through which the sinner must proceed in accepting Christ as saviour. This book provides a good balance between the theological summary and the practice of that theology.

The unique and most interesting value of this book comes in the latter part of every chapter. Each chapter starts with a summary of the doctrine. Then Coleman treats popular misconceptions and concludes with practical application of the doctrine. This concluding section of practical application is the great value of this book. It is in this section that the true value of the theological dialogue becomes clear for evangelism and the heart and warmth of Coleman's fervour are most evident.

Although Coleman is a thorough Arminian, he occasionally made an effort to address multiple theological camps, e.g., grace, 144; new life in Christ, 175ff; overcoming sin, 188; perseverance of the saints, 200f; divine sovereignty and human freedom, 242ff. Even though his position is always clear, Coleman usually remains faithful to the quote from Spurgeon which he helpfully provided: 'Always stand to it that your creed must bend to the Bible, and not the Bible to your creed, and dare to be a little inconsistent with yourselves, if need be, sooner than be inconsistent with God's revealed truth (203).'

Keeping this book under 300 pages proved frustrating at times for the reader. Coleman states his position instead of dealing with many thorny theological controversies in the text (e.g., the atemporal nature of God, 18; the creation of time, 45; Jesus' descent into Hades, 116). An experienced theologian sees the iceberg of historical and theological debates upon which Coleman has reflected below the few superficial comments included on these topics. Coleman has retained some elements for the text, but has relegated a tenth of the book, including bibliographic references, to the endnotes.

He summarizes the divine and human

nature of the Son of God in three short paragraphs (85) and then deals with denials of Christ's divinity and Christ's humanity in two short paragraphs each (92f). Of course, his point is not to deal with all of the ancient or modern heresies nor is it to explain beyond further question. One must not look in this book for a full development of Christian theology, but a summary so that the author may apply it to evangelism. The best part of this book as a reference work is the preponderance of scriptural references. A short 4 page index at the back refers to both text and notes in a helpful but limited way.

The illustrations, scripture references, and application make this work especially useful to people engaged in evangelism, those who have used the 'Master Plan of Evangelism', and others who want to see the application of theology for evangelism. This book is not the best for someone seeking a detailed theological dialogue nor those wanting help learning how to share their faith. No book can do everything. We are grateful to Robert Coleman for providing this niche book to help us connect the dots between evangelical theology and evangelism to keep the fires burning to bring the nations to Christ.

ERT (2014) 38:1, 95-96

Sorrow and Blood: Christian Mission in Context of Suffering, Persecution, and Martyrdom, edited by William D. Taylor, Antonia van der Meer, Reg Reimer (Pasadena: William Carey Library Publications, 2013) ISBN 9780878084722; Pb, pp 568

The conception of this book, produced by three commissions of the World Evangelical Alliance (Missions, Theological and Religious Liberty) goes back to the missiological consultation in Iguassu, 1999. The editorial team of William Taylor (USA), Tonica van der Meer (Brazil), and Reg Reimer (Canada) worked over six years to compile this biblical, historical and case study anthology which is part of the Globalisation of Mission Series. It discusses themes such as the church's response, especially in mission terms, to the growing harassment, persecution and martyrdom of Christians; the impact of persecution on the growth or decline of the church, harassment in the Global North and how to provide pastoral care and encouragement for those affected by persecution.

It is a large book, involving 62 writers from 23 nations; there are 5 parts comprising 69 chapters of varying lengths which include bibliographies and questions for reflection. A 6th part provides a series of resources such as the text of the Bad Uruch Call, a select annotated bibliography, and information from the web on persecution, organisations and forms of assistance. Prefaces are provided by Ajith Fernando (Sri Lanka) and Christopher Wright (United Kingdom) and there is a Foreword by editor in chief, William Taylor. An important feature of the publication is the extensive website devoted to the book, <http://www.sorrowandblood.com> which carries detailed information about the background and contents of the book and its authors, and many pages which can be read on-line or downloaded.

Reviewed by David Parker, Editor, Evangelical Review of Theology

Michael Parsons (ed.), *Aspects of Reforming.
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'Aspects of Reforming is an invaluable contribution to the field of Reformation theology, and a vital resource for the Church's ongoing efforts to be "always reforming".' *Andre A. Gazal, Northland Graduate School, Dunbar, Wisconsin*

'Aspects of Reforming is an essential purchase for theologians, clergy, and laity with more than a passing interest in the the Reformation There are insights galore in every included essay [in] this exceedingly valuable collection.' *John Warwick Montgomery, Patrick Henry College, Virginia*

Michael Parsons is Commissioning Editor for Paternoster, Associate Research Fellow of Spurgeon's College, London

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Peter S. Williams, *A Faithful Guide to Philosophy.*
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‘*A Faithful Guide to Philosophy* is an extremely well-researched book that is tightly argued, excellent in topic selection, deep in coverage yet readable in style. Williams has done a masterful job of producing a book that is now a must read for Christians who want to explore the intellectual underpinnings of their faith. I highly recommend this delightful volume.’

J.P. Moreland, Biola University

‘Peter S. Williams has a real gift of clarity and communication. He makes the complex accessible and interesting, without distorting the issues.’

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Peter S. Williams is Philosopher in Residence at the Damaris Trust

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‘The Future of Biblical Interpretation represents a good survey of the world-wide debate on hermeneutics and offers important new insights. It is an important contribution for present research. The volume is topical and important and I recommend it.’
Petr Pokorný, Charles University, Prague.

‘Given the list of contributors, this exciting book promises to expose us to a broad reading of hermeneutics. It is sure to be useful to those researching the topic, as well as those who simply wish to read Scripture more coherently. I warmly recommend it.’
Michael Parsons, formerly Director of Postgraduate Research, Vose Seminary, Perth, Western Australia.

Stanley E. Porter is President, Dean, and Professor of New Testament at McMaster Divinity College, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. **Matthew R. Malcolm** is Lecturer in New Testament and Greek, Trinity Theological College, Western Australia

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Nicholas Ansell, *The Annihilation of Hell Universal Salvation and the Redemption of Time in the Eschatology of Jürgen Moltmann*

PATERNOSTER THEOLOGICAL MONOGRAPHS

This work analyses and evaluates Jürgen Moltmann's model of universal salvation and its relation to his understanding of the redemption, or eschatological fulfilment, of time. If divine and human freedom are to be reconciled, as Moltmann believes, the confrontation between Hell and Hope will entail rethinking issues that are not only at the centre of theology but at the heart of life itself.

'Far-reaching and profound,' *Jürgen Moltmann*

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With philosophical originality, and scriptural sensitivity, Ansell lays bare the structure of Moltmann's highly complex thought. A stunning achievement!' *James H. Olthuis, Institute for Christian Studies, Toronto.*

Nicholas Ansell is Assistant Professor of Theology, Institute for Christian Studies, Toronto

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