

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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Evangelical Review of Theology

GENERAL EDITOR: THOMAS SCHIRRMACHER

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Editorial: Relationships

IN THIS FINAL ISSUE for the year, we focus on some aspects of the important relationships involved in the Christian life. First of all, Leonardo De Chirico (Italy) updates us on developments in dialogue between Evangelicals and the Roman Catholic Church, using the key concept of salvation as the thread to understand the story; following an explanation of the biblical background, the article covers various evangelical statements and then examines the status of this doctrine in some key dialogues.

Then we turn to relationships with the world as Judith Hill (CAR) discusses secularization – an issue which, as the author points out, is ‘an absolute necessity’ for some, while for others it is ‘anathema’. The article offers some definitions (‘moving away from a religious worldview’) and examples from various parts of the New Testament, concluding with ‘advice’ for both individuals and churches suggesting that it is possible and necessary to live Christianly in a modern secular world and make a positive contribution to the community.

Next we look at a Christian’s relationship with property, as joint authors, Clive and Cara Beed (Australia), review biblical teaching to show that ‘Jesus intend[s] property ownership to be widespread, that extreme dispari-

ties are to be alleviated, and that property should be distributed reasonably evenly, which does not mean equally’. Their discussion, which covers topics such as equity in ownership, private property, housing and employment, highlights a number of highly relevant issues facing people today and includes references to ways in which problems related to this topic can be tackled.

The last paper on this theme is much more theological, being an exposition of the theology of Puritan theologian, William Ames. However, in the course of discussion, the author, Billy Kirstanto (Indonesia/Singapore), does show how his subject relates to later theological voices which build on those who preceded them as well as making improvements and modifications in the light of their own context and convictions; he shows also how particular doctrines are related to other important beliefs to create an integrated body of faith.

We conclude with the second part of the Editor’s recent updated history of the World Evangelical Alliance’s Theological Commission which publishes this journal, and an expanded section of book reviews drawn from various sources, along with our Index for this volume.

Thomas Schirmacher, General Editor
David Parker, Executive Editor

Salvation Belongs to the Lord

Evangelical Consensus in Dialogue with Roman Catholicism

Leonardo De Chirico

THE CRY OF THE PROPHET Jonah in the big fish is an affirmation that expresses the biblical gospel in a nutshell (Jonah 2:9). In the midst of despair and powerlessness, the rebellious prophet cries to the Lord in repentance and faith and acknowledges that he finds himself in a deadly 'pit' and that God is the only Saviour to call upon for rescue. 'Salvation belongs to the Lord' is Jonah's final word of his prayer and is also the summary of the biblical message. At least, this is how evangelicals perceive it, articulate it and experience it.

Jonah's statement touches the heart of the evangelical faith: the need for a lost person to be saved and the prerogatives of God in granting salvation. This twofold emphasis on human need and God's gift is worked out in evangelical theology and life in such a way that it becomes a distinctive element of the evangelical faith itself and also a meaningful point of conversation with other Christian traditions.

This paper will seek to explore the evangelical doctrinal emphasis on salvation by showing its long historical trajectory and theological significance,

allowing respected evangelical voices to lead the argument.¹ The evangelical consensus, which is reflected in the *corpus* of present-day evangelical statements (mainly from the Lausanne Movement), will be used as exemplar of the general agreement that exists amongst Evangelicals. Then, the paper will turn to make reference to three recent Evangelical—Roman Catholic dialogues that have touched on the doctrine of salvation and will try to highlight some of the key questions that come to the fore that, in turn, will hopefully serve as points for further discussion.

I Salvation—a Broad and Defining Evangelical Identity-Marker

What is salvation and how to receive it

¹ Popular evangelical, yet theologically serious treatments of salvation are Ernest F. Kevan, *Salvation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1963) and David F. Wells, *The Search of Salvation* (Leicester: IVP, 1978). The bibliography of this paper will focus on resources in English.

Leonardo De Chirico is lecturer of Historical Theology at Istituto di Formazione Evangelica e Documentazione, Padova (Italy) and vice-chairman of the Italian Evangelical Alliance. His last book is *A Christian's Pocket Guide to Papacy. Its Origin and Role in the 21st Century* (Fearn: Christian Focus 2014). This paper was presented at the WEA-PCCU consultation held in Wheaton, IL in October 2012.

is a central concern of the evangelical faith. Dealing with salvation, in all its theological, experiential, evangelistic and symbolic connotations, leads to the very heart of what Evangelicalism is all about. In J. I. Packer's words,

Evangelicals have always seen the question of salvation as one of supreme importance, and their witness to the way of salvation as the most precious gift they bring to the rest of the church. This conviction rests not on the memory of the conversion of Paul or Augustine or Luther or Wesley of Whitefield or any other evangelical hero, but on the emphasis with which the Bible itself highlights salvation as its central theme.²

In Packer's view, both the evangelical understanding of the thrust of the biblical message and the main feature of its historical development as a movement are the focus of salvation. More than anything else, Evangelicalism is a 'redemptive' religion. All the different ways to describe Evangelicalism, no matter how many different angles and emphases they may cover, recognize in one form or another the centrality of salvation as a major, defining concern of the 'evangel' from which Evangelicalism derives. 'Eternal salvation through personal trust in Christ' captures the gist of the Evangelical faith.³

According to Carl Henry, the 'evan-

gel' itself can be evangelically defined as 'the momentous biblically-attested good news that God justifies sinners who for spiritual and moral salvation rely on the substitutionary person and work of Jesus Christ'.⁴ This definition of the gospel needs some theological unpacking because it is framed within evangelically distinctive language, but nonetheless shows the organic relationship between the gospel itself and the evangelical insistence on salvation. So, a certain understanding and experience of salvation lies at the heart of what Evangelicals have been standing for throughout the centuries.

1. The Biblical scope

Salvation is one of the key-terms of the Bible's soteriological vocabulary and Evangelicals are prone to emphasize this fact. Furthermore, salvation represents a wide semantic field that denotes the multifaceted, yet unitary redemptive purpose of the triune God in history.

The biblical terms of *jāsha'* (hiphil) and *mālat* (piel) in the Hebrew Bible and *sōzō* and *sōtēria* in the New Testament form the soteriological perimeter which describes God's saving action for his people and for the world as a whole.⁵ While the Old Testament words stress God's intervention to rescue from oppression, fear, sin and guilt, the New Testament terms are linked to the person and work of Jesus Christ who,

2 J.I. Packer, 'Evangelicals and the Way of Salvation' in K.S. Kantzer, C.F.H. Henry (ed.), *Evangelical Affirmations* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 111-112.

3 This is one of the five characteristics of Evangelicalism according to George Marsden (ed.), *Evangelicalism and Modern America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), ix-x.

4 Carl Henry, 'Who are the Evangelicals' in Kantzer, Henry, *Evangelical Affirmations*, 75.

5 '*sōtēria*' in G. Kittel—G. Friedrich (ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. VII (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 965-1003.

as the Incarnate Son of God, crucified and risen from the dead, saves from God's judgment and delivers from evil.

In the whole Bible, the accent of salvation is placed on God and his saving initiative centred on the once-and-for-all death and resurrection of Jesus, whereas the individual is considered lost and is the recipient of God's salvation. Salvation is a broad category which is organically connected to other terms which enrich the soteriological vocabulary of the Bible. A whole cluster of related terms of the Christian life (e.g. grace, redemption, justification, rescue, being washed, healing) revolves around the terms and concepts and experiences of salvation.

The specific purpose of this paper is to touch on the evangelical understanding of God's salvation. In his usual neat and profound language, John Stott provides a useful summary of how Evangelicals perceive and articulate the rich Biblical account of salvation:

What then is salvation? It is a great word. It urgently needs to be set free from those narrow concepts to which it has often been reduced. Salvation is not a synonym for forgiveness. It is bigger and broader than that. It denotes God's total plan for man, and it includes at least three phases. Phase one is our deliverance from the guilt and judgment of our sins, our free and full forgiveness, together with our reconciliation to God and our adoption as His children. Phase two is our progressive liberation from the downdrag of evil, beginning with our new birth into the family of God and continuing with our transformation by the Spirit of Christ into the image of Christ. Phase three is our

final deliverance from the sin which lingers both in our fallen nature and in our social environment, when on the last day we shall be invested with new and glorious bodies and transferred to a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Further, these three phases, or tenses, of salvation (past, present and future) are associated in the New Testament with the three major events in the saving career of Jesus, His death, His resurrection and subsequent gift of the Spirit, and His return in power and glory. Paul calls them justification, sanctification and glorification.⁶

From Stott's summary salvation appears to have a threefold significance: a *legal* dimension whereby the person is freed from the guilt of sin and justified by grace, a *transformative* dimension whereby the person experiences conversion into the new life and becomes part of the people of God, and an *eschatological* dimension whereby the effects of sin will be eventually wiped out and the *shalom* of God will reign forever. Here the Evangelical mainstream appreciation of salvation begins to take shape and is the background of many evangelical accounts of what it means to be saved by God.

2. The 'Grace Alone, Faith Alone' trajectory

One of the claims of Evangelicalism is that, while being conscious of being historically and spiritually situated, it does not represent a new religious

⁶ John Stott, *Christ the Controversialist. The Basics of Belief* (Leicester: IVP, 21996), 109-110.

Christian movement, but stands within the orthodox historical tradition of the Christian church. Again, Stott is helpful here when he argues that Evangelicalism is not 'a new-fangled "ism", a modern brand of Christianity, but an ancient form, indeed the original one'.⁷

This claim can be applied also to the account of salvation that has been briefly sketched out. While certainly being influenced by the theological debates at the time of the Protestant Reformation and by the spiritual ethos of various subsequent Revivals, the evangelical theology of salvation can be traced first and foremost to the Bible, and secondly to the long trajectory of Christian thought. In describing the theological roots of the evangelical view of salvation, Gerald Bray argues that it is especially dependent on Augustine's doctrine of sin and grace as well as his own paramount experience of conversion as narrated in his *Confessions*, and on Anselm's satisfaction theory of Christ's atonement as argued for in the book *Cur Deus Homo*?⁸

From the former (Augustine), later evangelical theology draws from the insistence on God's gracious initiative and man's total inability, due to his sin, to cooperate in salvation. Because salvation is a free gift of God from beginning to end, our boast lies in God alone. From the latter (Anselm), it further

elaborated the doctrine of penal substitution in accounting for Christ taking the place of sinners on the cross. By his death Jesus atones for our sin and restores us to God. He died in our place, bearing the penalty for our sin.

While it can be argued that this is a selective appropriation of the Christian tradition, it must nonetheless be recognized that it is not simply a new post-Reformation development in Christian theology. There is an 'evangelical' thread running throughout all of church history of which Evangelicals are legitimate interpreters. Reflecting on the 'evangelical consensus' of the doctrine of salvation, Packer and Oden argue that it is 'the Christ-centered story of redemption that earlier creeds and confessions also told'.⁹ In this respect, Evangelicalism is nothing but 'a version of catholic Christianity, to be acknowledged and assessed as such'.

While acknowledging the organic evangelical relationship with earlier accounts of salvation, it is valid to say that the Protestant Reformation was a pivotal phase in shaping subsequent and present-day evangelical soteriology. Evangelical theology is rooted both in the 'formal principle' of the authority of Scripture and in the 'material principle' of justification by faith alone interpreted extensively to include the broader historic Protestant soteriology.¹⁰ Salvation plays a defining role in the story of evangelical theology. More

⁷ John Stott, *Christ the Controversialist*, 33. In the same book, Stott argues that evangelical Christianity is 'theological', 'biblical', 'original' and 'fundamental', 27-46.

⁸ Gerald Bray, 'Evangelicals, Salvation and Church History' in Thomas P. Rausch (ed.), *Catholics and Evangelicals. Do They Share a Common Future?* (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 2000), 77-100.

⁹ James I. Packer, Thomas C. Oden, *One Faith. The Evangelical Consensus* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2004), 163-164.

¹⁰ This is argued by Donald A. Carson, 'Evangelicals, Ecumenism and the Church' in Kantzer, Henry, *Evangelical Affirmations*, 349-354.

specifically, the evangelical theology of salvation is an offspring of the four *solus/sola* (*sola gratia, sola fide, sola Scriptura, solus Christus*) which were defended by Luther and by the Protestant Reformation as a whole.¹¹

All these *sola/solus* have a driving soteriological concern. The Holy Scripture is the final authority by which the gospel of salvation can be known, not in isolation from tradition but above all traditions. Christ is the only mediator between God and man and the only Saviour. Divine grace is the only ground of salvation, thus nullifying human merit. In order to be saved and have the assurance of salvation, faith alone is the only sufficient response. Human contribution can therefore play no part. The *sola/solus* of the Reformation sketch a distinctive soteriological framework that is decisive for evangelical theology.¹² The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, which are the capstones of our salvation, take centre stage. Post-Reformation Evangelical theology as a whole can be thought of as being an outworking of the message of ‘the cross of Christ’.¹³

Within this soteriological framework there have been and can be variations—even significant ones—on how to relate the sovereignty of God and man’s responsibility (predestination and free will), or the proclamation of the gospel and the role of the sacra-

ments, or the various components of the *ordo salutis* and their mutual connections, or the position of the individual saved and the involvement of the Christian community. These and other issues have been and continue to be hotly debated between different traditions in Evangelical theology.

However, the soteriological scheme of the Reformation with its focus on God’s grace and the sufficiency of the once-and-for-all saving work of Jesus Christ is the common ground for all evangelical accounts of salvation.

3. The evangelical message and experience of salvation

‘Saved from sin; saved by grace; saved through faith, saved for God’s glory’ is a way to reaffirm the Reformation heritage of the message of salvation.¹⁴ Yet, the evangelical theology of salvation is further enriched by the insistence on the personal need for salvation and the personal responsibility to respond to God’s grace in repentance and faith. The gospel is both an announcement of God’s intervention to save and a summons to respond with faith.

In David Bebbington’s terms, ‘conversionism’ (together with Biblicism, crucicentrism, and activism) captures the heart of Evangelicalism in that it recognizes the centrality of a personal encounter with Jesus Christ resulting in forgiveness of sin and a changed life.¹⁵ The Reformation doctrine of

¹¹ Robert Webber, *Common Roots. A Call to Evangelical Maturity* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 26.

¹² See Alister McGrath, *Reformation Thought. An Introduction* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988) ch. 5 on ‘The doctrine of grace’.

¹³ This is the title of one of John Stott’s classics: *The Cross of Christ* (Leicester: IVP, 1986).

¹⁴ These are the titles of the four parts of the book by Philip G. Ryken, *The Message of Salvation* (Leicester: IVP, 2001) and well reflect the gist of evangelical soteriology.

¹⁵ David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain. A History from 1730s to the*

salvation based on *Solus Christus* is matched with the revivalist emphasis on the reality of personal conversion.

Jesus' injunction to Nicodemus, 'You must be born again' (Jn 3:7) becomes paramount for each and every person. Regeneration through conversion is the necessary threshold for salvation and is achieved by the Holy Spirit through the preaching and witness of the gospel to which people respond in repentance and faith.¹⁶ Salvation does not come by simply being born into a Christian family, nor from being part of a Christian environment. Not even being a formal member of a Christian church, nor having received a sacrament of Christian initiation earn salvation. It is not by merit, it is not by works, it is not by tradition, it is not by sacraments: it is by grace alone through conversion to Jesus Christ.

The personal experience of salvation marks the evangelical approach to salvation and to the Christian life. 'Evangelicals are those who preach the same gospel, of punctiliar conversion and immediate assurance available through faith alone.'¹⁷ This is not to suggest, however, that Evangelicals are prone to look for a single pattern and timing of conversion. In this respect, Runia correctly says that 'When it comes to the "form" of conversion, there are some differences of opinion

among evangelicals (is conversion instantaneous, so that one can mention time and place, or is it more in the nature of a process?) but generally evangelicals do not prescribe a particular method or a particular manifestation.

The emphasis is on the *fact* of conversion, not on its particular form.¹⁸ Most Evangelicals can identify with the words of John Newton (1725-1807) who in his world famous hymn, *Amazing Grace*, could write: 'I once was lost, but now am found, / Was blind but now I see'. Personal stories may vary considerably, but they are all characterized by a personal conversion which can be recounted in a personal biography. Evangelicalism is a conversionist Christian tradition and every Evangelical Christian is taught to be always ready to give her/his personal 'testimony', i.e. an account of her/his conversion.

The objective message of the cross is the legacy of the *sola/solus* principles of the Reformation. Together with the personal experience of salvation, it forms the foundation of much evangelical preaching of the gospel, especially of those sermons that came out of the different revivals of post-Reformation history. Again Packer and Oden are helpful here when they write that

Evangelicalism characteristically emphasizes the penal-substitutionary view of the cross and the radical reality of the Bible-taught, Spirit-wrought inward change, relational and directional, that makes a person a Christian (new birth, regener-

1980s (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989).

16 There is a recent study on being 'born again' by John Piper, *Finally Alive. What Happens When We Are Born Again* (Fearn: Christian Focus, 2010).

17 Stephen R. Holmes, 'Evangelical Doctrine: Basis for Unity or Cause of Division?', *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 30:1 (2012), 64.

18 Klaas Runia, 'What is Evangelical Theology?', *Evangelical Review of Theology* 21:4 (1997), 299.

ation, conversion, faith, repentance, forgiveness, new creation, all in and through Jesus Christ).¹⁹

John 3:16 is the single Bible verse where the gospel of God's salvation and human responsibility to believe are masterfully condensed. Evangelicals champion, memorize and extensively use John 3:16 in their spiritual pilgrimage and personal evangelism.

In the long trajectory of Evangelical history, modern revivals have put an emphasis on personal conversion as the necessary step towards salvation. The stress on conversion has also strongly influenced the evangelical preaching of the gospel that invites people to repent from sin, believe in Jesus as personal Saviour and Lord and be saved, urging people to respond and to go through a conversion experience.

The 'sinner's prayer'—'Lord Jesus, I need You. Thank You for dying on the cross for my sins. I open the door of my life and receive You as my Savior and Lord. Thank You for forgiving my sins and giving me eternal life. Take control of the throne of my life. Make me the kind of person You want me to be'—captures an important feature of contemporary evangelical accounts of the presentation of the gospel of salvation and the expectations it produces.²⁰

In the 20th century, the global evan-

gelistic ministry of Billy Graham well epitomized a variant of this inherent combination between the objective (the cross of Christ) and the subjective (personal conversion) sides of salvation. The basic threefold structure of Graham's message (i.e. the human problem; God's solution; the way forward), as it is exemplified in his widely circulated book, *Peace With God*, reflects shared patterns of the evangelical way of understanding and presenting the message of salvation.²¹

The sheer fact that in his 60 year-long career Billy Graham has preached the gospel live to more than 210 million people in 185 different countries of the world, and that it is estimated that nearly 3 million people have responded to Jesus Christ by faith, are in themselves remarkable markers of his evangelical zeal for spreading the message of salvation. This is recognized and respected also by critical voices that advance more or less legitimate criticism on various aspects of his ministry.²²

II Salvation—Consensus of Present-Day Evangelicalism

The broad picture that has been painted of the basics of the evangelical account of salvation shows that, in spite of the significant historical, doctrinal, denominational and sociological differences that the movement reflects within itself, it is indeed possible to grasp a

¹⁹ Packer, Oden, *One Faith. The Evangelical Consensus*, 160.

²⁰ It should be noted that the worldview of the 'sinner's prayer' is a topic of growing uneasiness in evangelical circles. It is deemed to be too simplistic, too individualistic, too modernistic, too superficial, too close to western cultural patterns of individual decision-making processes and far from other cultural patterns, etc.

²¹ Billy Graham, *Peace with God*, 1953 and dozens of subsequent editions and reprints.

²² Some of the criticism from 'liberal' voices are found in Michael G. Long (ed.), *The Legacy of Billy Graham. Critical Reflections on America's Greatest Evangelist* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008).

sufficiently unitary and coherent theological map of evangelical soteriology, at least in its essential theological contours. The 'evangel' of God's salvation in Christ to a lost world is the common ground of Evangelicalism.

This theological assessment is further corroborated by reference to various statements and documents that stem from present-day Evangelicalism. In fact, for the past fifty years different evangelical networks and circles (from the 1966 Berlin Congress on Evangelism²³ to the 2010 Lausanne III Congress on World Evangelization held in Cape Town) have been producing a manifold *corpus* of declarations, covenants, manifestos, commitments, etc. that together constitute an important reference point for our purposes. This material shows a significant and comprehensive degree of 'transdenominational evangelical consensus' across the whole spectrum of the Christian faith, written mainly in a declaratory way and with an unmistakable evangelical missional tone.²⁴

Within this broader set of documentation, the Lausanne Movement has played a leading role in helping post-World War II Evangelicalism learn to appreciate its own gospel-centred unity and to speak with one voice on the missionary nature of the church and the missionary task for the whole world by the whole of God's people.²⁵

The analysis of this vast material could push the paper beyond its proper limits. Suffice it to select some of the most significant statements on salvation and point to some of their underlining concerns. One preliminary remark is that the accounts of salvation offered by these documents are given in the context of the wider rubric of evangelism and world mission. Their primary focus is missiological.

1. The Lausanne Covenant (1974)

The Lausanne Congress for World Evangelization in 1974 is perhaps the most significant event of 20th century Evangelicalism. Under the joint leadership of Billy Graham and John Stott, it was the first evangelical conference that reflected the global nature of Evangelicalism and the growing importance of the global south, together with re-launching the missionary task of the church in terms of evangelism and social responsibility. As far as the relationship with the Roman Catholic Church is concerned, the *Lausanne Covenant* should be read together with the 1975 Apostolic Exhortation of Paul VI's *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, which expresses similar missiological concerns.

Here are some significant Lausanne texts on salvation:

To proclaim Jesus as 'the Saviour of the world' is not to affirm that all people are either automatically or ultimately saved, still less to af-

²³ The proceedings of the Berlin Congress are published by Carl F.H. Henry, W. Stanley Mooneyham (ed.), *One Race, One Gospel, One Task*, vol. 1 (Minneapolis: World Wide, 1967).

²⁴ Packer, Oden, *One Faith. The Evangelical Consensus*, 24.

²⁵ The main Lausanne documents up to 1989 have been collected by John Stott (ed.), *Making*

Christ Known. Historic Mission Documents from the Lausanne Movement (1974-1989) (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1996). Later documents, especially the 2012 Cape Town Commitment, can be found at www.lausanne.org.

firm that all religions offer salvation in Christ. Rather it is to proclaim God's love for a world of sinners and to invite everyone to respond to him as Saviour and Lord in the whole-hearted personal commitment of repentance and faith (n. 3).

To evangelize is to spread the good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead according to the Scriptures, and that as the reigning Lord he now offers the forgiveness of sins and the liberating gifts of the Spirit to all who repent and believe. Our Christian presence in the world is indispensable to evangelism, and so is that kind of dialogue whose purpose is to listen sensitively in order to understand. But evangelism itself is the proclamation of the historical, biblical Christ as Saviour and Lord, with a view to persuading people to come to him personally and so be reconciled to God. In issuing the gospel invitation we have no liberty to conceal the cost of discipleship. Jesus still calls all who would follow him to deny themselves, take up their cross, and identify themselves with his new community. The results of evangelism include obedience to Christ, incorporation into his Church and responsible service in the world (n. 4).

The goal should be, by all available means and at the earliest possible time, that every person will have the opportunity to hear, understand, and to receive the good news' (n. 9).

The mainstream evangelical position is affirmed by Lausanne. Both the proclamation of the historic message of the cross of Christ and the urgency

to invite everyone to respond to it is a pressing concern. The 'cost' of conversion is mentioned (against the option of easy-believism) and the incorporation into the church is referred to as a natural result of conversion, yet without any indication of the church's sacraments.

2. The Manila Manifesto (1989)

The Second Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization took place in Manila in 1989. The outcome of the conference was a longer text than that of the Lausanne Covenant and has been given the name, *The Manila Manifesto*. It should be read in cross-reference with the 1990 Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* by John Paul II.

Here are some significant texts:

We affirm that on the cross Jesus Christ took our place, bore our sins and died our death; and that for this reason alone God freely forgives those who are brought to repentance and faith (n. 6).

We affirm that the Holy Spirit's witness to Christ is indispensable to evangelism, and that without this supernatural work neither new birth nor new life is possible (n. 10).

(5. God the Evangelist) The Scriptures declare that God himself is the chief evangelist. For the Spirit of God is the Spirit of truth, love, holiness and power, and evangelism is impossible without him. It is he who anoints the messenger, confirms the word, prepares the hearer, convicts the sinful, enlightens the blind, gives life to the dead, enables us to repent and believe, unites us to the Body of Christ, assures us that

we are God's children, leads us into Christlike character and service, and sends us out in our turn to be Christ's witnesses. In all this the Holy Spirit's main preoccupation is to glorify Jesus Christ by showing him to us and forming him in us... Every true conversion involves a power encounter, in which the superior authority of Jesus Christ is demonstrated. There is no greater miracle than this, in which the believer is set free from the bondage of Satan and sin, fear and futility, darkness and death.

At Manila the Reformation 'material principle' was clearly reaffirmed with a stress on the penal substitutionary view of the atonement. The other emphasis was on the role of the Holy Spirit in the salvation process, from the preaching of the gospel to its acceptance in conversion and the resulting Christian life. In this way, Manila welcomes the Pentecostal insistence on the work of the Spirit, but places it in the context of classical Reformation theology of salvation.

3. The Amsterdam Declaration (2010)

Born as the result of an International Conference of Preaching Evangelists (sponsored and led by Billy Graham), the *Amsterdam Declaration* is an affirmation of Evangelical convictions for the New Millennium aimed at nurturing the vision for world mission and personal evangelism.²⁶

²⁶ The proceedings of the conference and the *Amsterdam Declaration* can be found in *The Mission of an Evangelist* (Minneapolis: World Wide, 2001).

Salvation. The word means rescue from guilt, defilement, spiritual blindness and deadness, alienation from God, and certainty of eternal punishment in hell, that is everyone's condition while under sin's dominion. This deliverance involves present justification, reconciliation to God and adoption into his family, with regeneration and the sanctifying gift of the Holy Spirit leading to works of righteousness and service here and now, and a promise of full glorification in fellowship with God in the future. This involves in the present life joy, peace, freedom and the transformation of character and relationships and the guarantee of complete healing at the future resurrection of the body. We are justified by faith alone and the salvation faith brings is by grace alone, through Christ alone, for the glory of God alone. (Definition 7)

Amsterdam stresses the sinfulness of man and therefore echoes the anthropological pessimism of much of the evangelical tradition. Hell is also cited as the 'condition' for unsaved sinners to be in. The twofold temporal dimension of salvation—i.e. present: justification, reconciliation, adoption, regeneration, sanctification, transformation and future: full glorification—is referred to. The statement ends with a strong affirmation of the *sola, solus* of the Reformation.

4. The Cape Town Commitment (2010)

The last Evangelical global statement is the result of the third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization that took place in Cape Town in 2010. For

the first time, a congress of this size and scope happened without the direct participation of the two main evangelical leaders of the post World War II period, namely Billy Graham and John Stott (who died the following year), both aged and no longer capable of public commitments.

The Commitment was a further elaboration of the 1974 *Covenant* and the 1989 *Manifesto*, with an even more 'missional' emphasis on the over-arching theme of love. Mission is considered as God's mission that empowers the church's holistic mission in word and deed.

Note the 2010 coincidence between Lausanne III and Benedict XVI's creation of the new Pontifical Council for the New Evangelization. After Lausanne I and *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1974), then after Lausanne II and *Redemptoris Missio* (1989), one sees yet another missiological parallel between the evangelical movement and the Roman Catholic Church.

Concerning the account of salvation, here is a significant text of the Cape Town Commitment:

We love the assurance the gospel brings. Solely through trusting in Christ alone, we are united with Christ through the Holy Spirit and are counted righteous in Christ before God. Being justified by faith we have peace with God and no longer face condemnation. We receive the forgiveness of our sins. We are born again into a living hope by sharing Christ's risen life. We are adopted as fellow heirs with Christ. We become citizens of God's covenant people, members of God's family and the place of God's dwelling. So by trusting in Christ, we have full assurance

of salvation and eternal life, for our salvation ultimately depends, not on ourselves, but on the work of Christ and the promise of God. 'Nothing in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.' How we love the gospel's promise! God commands us to make known to all nations the truth of God's revelation and the gospel of God's saving grace through Jesus Christ, calling all people to repentance, faith, baptism and obedient discipleship. (8.C)

The standard evangelical view of salvation is rehearsed with its traditional emphasis on the 'Christ alone' grounds of salvation and the calling to make the gospel known to the whole world. The theme of Christian assurance is also evoked as stemming from salvation. The church is contemplated as the 'covenant people', 'God's family', and 'the place of God's dwelling', so to convey the message of salvation as not an overtly individualistic bent, but as an ecclesiological thrust.

Quite remarkably for an evangelical document of this kind, 'baptism' is also referred to as part of the calling to be extended to all nations. There is no hint of sacramental language, though. Even the position of baptism in the fourfold sequence is interesting in that it places baptism *after* repentance and faith, so as to allow an understanding of baptism as an ordinance that does not sacramentally *cause* repentance and faith, but rather follows them. The reference to baptism is nonetheless interesting with regards to the next section that deals with recent dialogues between Evangelicals and Roman Catholics on salvation.

III Case Studies—Evangelical—Roman Catholic Dialogue

The topic of salvation has been central in recent dialogues between Evangelicals and Roman Catholics. Given its biblical pervasiveness, its historical and doctrinal significance in the Christian tradition, and its paramount importance in defining both the evangelical and the Roman Catholic identities after the Reformation, it should not be surprising that this is the case.

Several Protestant denominations and traditions have been dialoguing with the Roman Catholic Church on the doctrine of salvation at different levels and with different focuses. What will be taken into consideration here is the dialogues that have taken place between self-defined evangelical bodies or self-defined evangelical groups and Roman Catholic representatives, both officially nominated and informally convened. The theme of salvation runs through the wider conversation and it is not often the main focus of it. Nonetheless, for the future of the dialogue it is necessary to take into account previous attempts at discussing various aspects of the doctrine of salvation.

1. The Evangelical Roman Catholic Dialogue on Mission (1977-1984)

Between 1977 and 1984 representative groups of Evangelicals and Roman Catholics met on three occasions for intensive dialogue on mission under the leadership of John Stott and Basil Meeking.²⁷ ERCDOM was the outcome

of this particular historical phase which both Roman Catholic and Evangelical constituencies experienced.

On the one hand, the Second Vatican Council with the decree, *Ad Gentes*, was integrated by Paul VI's apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, in 1975, and put mission back on the Roman Catholic agenda. On the other hand, the Evangelical International Congress on World Evangelization which took place in Lausanne in 1974 fully confirmed the traditional Evangelical emphasis on mission in the *Lausanne Covenant*.

Recognizing this parallel interest in mission, ERCDOM resolved to be 'a faithful record of the ideas shared' (11) in which the brief exposition of both positions was followed by the honest indication of areas of disagreement as well as points of agreement. Our interest here has to do with the section on 'The Gospel of Salvation'.

Participants found areas of consensus on the inseparability of 'repentance and faith, conversion and baptism, regeneration and incorporation into the Christian community' (57-60) as well as on 'certain convictions about the Church' (65-69). On the whole, ERCDOM testifies to the reality that 'deep truths unite' Evangelicals and Roman Catholics (82-83), and that on certain fundamental doctrines their understanding is 'identical or very similar' (88).

This, however, is only one side of the coin. ERCDOM also clearly shows that 'divisions continue' (82) and that they are rooted in 'real and important convictions' (83) that the two counter-

²⁷ John Stott, Basil Meeking (ed.), *The Evangelical—Roman Catholic Dialogue on Mission*

1977-1984 (Exeter: Paternoster, 1986).

parts wholeheartedly hold as essential elements of their doctrinal identity. Beside other areas of disagreement, the Report refers to the understanding of the soteriological significance of the work of Christ.

In this respect, Evangelicals stress the word 'substitution', whereas Catholics prefer the word 'solidarity' (43). On the basis of this divergence, the meaning of the word 'gospel' can change considerably. Moreover, there is the recognition that profound divergences are apparent in the doctrine of sin where Evangelicals are more pessimistic, stressing the concept of 'total depravity' while Roman Catholics are more optimistic, speaking of sin in terms of 'injury' and 'disorder' (40). Somewhat analogously, Evangelicals are referred to as underlining 'discontinuity' whereas Catholics focus on 'continuity' between man redeemed and man unredeemed (73). Consequently, the meaning of the term grace is articulated 'somewhat differently' (60).

Finally, an appendix to the proceedings is dedicated to Mariology, giving Evangelicals an occasion to express all their 'uneasiness' with a 'certainly ambiguous and probably misleading' vocabulary with soteriological implications used by Roman Catholics in relation to Mary (52).²⁸

On the whole, ERCDOM reflects a responsible ethos of dialogue on salvation. On the one hand it tries to allow both traditions to speak in their own terms and to compare the respective languages, thought-forms and expres-

sions of what they believe. Common features are appreciated and differences are not hidden nor minimised. On the other, though, it makes the effort to show awareness of wider theological issues that undergird the accounts of salvation. Salvation is not an isolated theological topic but has multiple connections with the whole of one's own 'system' of beliefs.

2. World Evangelical Fellowship-Pontifical Council Discussions (1993, 2003)

After the publication of the 1986 'An Evangelical Perspective on Roman Catholicism' by the World Evangelical Fellowship,²⁹ conversations began between WEF and the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity. The first official event between the delegations was held in October 1993 in Venice with 'Justification, Scripture and Tradition' as the general theme.

The choice of such a triangular topic was the result of a compromise. The Pontifical Council's proposal to focus on a fundamental issue like Scripture and tradition was fully endorsed. Yet, Evangelicals felt that the doctrine of justification by faith could not be ignored and pressed for it to be included in the course of the discussion.³⁰ The outcome of the agreement was thus,

²⁸ A more detailed examination of ERCDOM can be found in my book, *Evangelical Theological Perspectives on Post-Vatican II Roman Catholicism* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2003), 113-118.

²⁹ Paul Schrotenboer (ed.), *Roman Catholicism. A Contemporary Evangelical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987).

³⁰ Paul Schrotenboer, 'Introduction', *Evangelical Review of Theology* 21:2 (1997) pp. 101-102. WEF had previously sponsored an international symposium on justification by faith: Donald A. Carson (ed.), *Justification in the Bible and the World* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1992).

'Justification, Scripture and Tradition'.

In his paper,³¹ George Vandervelde surveys the US Lutheran-Catholic dialogue on justification, pointing out the 'convergences' as well as the persisting 'contrasting perspectives' that emerged as a result of the bilateral dialogue. The whole discussion is presented against the background of the Reformation *versus* Trent controversy. One aspect which deserves mentioning is that both parties now agree that justification by faith is only 'a criterion, not *the* criterion for the authenticity of the Church' as the Lutheran tradition used to maintain with the famous saying, *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae*.

On this point, Vandervelde introduces a distinction between a 'necessary and sufficient criteria' for guiding the church (146). Justification belongs to the former, not to the latter, in that 'salvation in Christ is too rich, too deep and broad, to be captured by the soteriological cutting edge' of this doctrine (147). On the whole, this dialogue touches on salvation only through a historical overview of the controversy over justification by faith, but does not really grapple with the issue.³²

More substantial is the contribution on the topic of salvation by the 2003 study document, 'Church, Evangelization and the Bonds of Koinonia' which stemmed out of the dialogue between the World Evangelical Alliance and the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity.³³

According to the drafters, 'a common reflection on the biblical notion of *koinonia* would help us to clarify some convergences and differences between us on the church'. The relevant passages of the document are the following:

(5) For both Evangelicals and Roman Catholics communion with Christ involves a transformative union whereby believers are '*koinonoi* of the divine nature and escape the corruption that is in the world by lust' (2 Pt 1:4). Catholics tend to interpret *koinonia* in this passage to mean a participation in the divine life and 'nature', while Evangelicals tend to interpret *koinonia* as covenant companionship, as it entails escaping moral corruption and the way of the world.

Here an important point is rightly highlighted. The word *koinonia* has obvious links with salvation, and because of that it is interpreted differently by Roman Catholics and Evangelicals. A participatory meaning is preferred in Catholic theology (based on a less radical view of sin, a more optimistic anthropology, a highly sacramental framework and a *de iure divino* hierarchical ecclesiology) whereas a covenantal significance is given priority by Evangelicals (such as referring to covenant-breaking and covenant-renewal, condemnation and acquittal, enmity and reconciliation, as it is stated in n. 58).

The word 'fellowship' is the same, yet its meaning is different. Words do not stand in isolation but are part of

³¹ George Vandervelde, 'Justification between Scripture and Tradition', *Evangelical Review of Theology* 21:2 (1997), 128-148.

³² More details on this Venice consultation can be found in my *Evangelical Theological Perspectives*, 131-135.

³³ The text can be accessed at: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/evangelicals-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20111220-report-1993-2002_en.html

theological frameworks that inform what they mean. In dialogue we can use the same words, yet we have to be sure that we understand what it is meant by those who use them.

3. The Gift of Salvation (1997)

1994 marked the release of the *Evangelicals and Catholics Together* (ECT) statement in the USA. It was the outcome of an informal dialogue that emerged out of the 'culture wars' that North America was experiencing between secularizing tendencies and more religious approaches to public life.³⁴ The first result of this initiative was a shorter document released in November 1997 under the title of *The Gift of Salvation* (GOS).³⁵ Sponsored and led by the same authors as ECT, namely Charles Colson and Richard Neuhaus, GOS can be thought of as being an elucidation of the 'We Affirm Together' of the previous document. The filial connection is also evoked when GOS is sometimes referred to as ECT II.

Granting the decisive importance of *sola fide* in historic Protestantism and noting the 'noisy silence' in ECT over it, Reformed theologian R.C. Sproul defined it as 'the missing doctrine' of the statement.³⁶ Taking these reserva-

tions seriously into account, ECT drafters eventually decided to engage in the debate precisely over the crucial issue of *sola fide*. In this way they wished to demonstrate that the kind of ecumenism favoured by the participants was an 'ecumenism of conviction', not one of 'accommodation'³⁷ as was charged against the vagueness of ECT on various matters.

GOS strives to deepen the theological quality of the professed unity after addressing the core soteriological issue of the Reformation. If ECT confessed unity on the basis of the Apostles' Creed, GOS claims that it is also possible to envisage 'a common understanding of salvation', including an agreed upon version of *sola fide*. With this development, the ECT process has gained some theological merit in its supporters' opinion, in that the unity expressed in GOS is 'not indeed unity in every aspect of the gospel, but unity in its basic dimension'.³⁸

Rather boldly and with a hint of triumphalism, after outlining the content of the accord over salvation, GOS states that what has been affirmed 'is in agreement with what the Reformation traditions have meant by justification by faith alone (*sola fide*)'. In view of such a statement, it should not be a surprise to read that, according to the signatories, 'for the first time in 450 years, Evangelical Protestants and Roman Catholics have publicly agreed to a

³⁴ Charles Colson, Richard J. Neuhaus (ed.), *Evangelicals and Catholics Together. Toward a Common Mission* (Dallas, TX: Word Publ., 1995). In this section I use parts of my article published as 'Christian Unity vis-à-vis Roman Catholicism: a Critique of the Evangelicals and Catholics Together Dialogue', *Evangelical Review of Theology* 27:4 (2003) pp. 337-352.

³⁵ The GOS text was originally published in *Christianity Today* (Dec 8, 1997), 34.

³⁶ R.C. Sproul, *By Faith Alone. The Doctrine that Divides* (London: Hodder & Stoughton,

1995), 22-24.

³⁷ These expressions are employed by T. George, T. Oden, J. Packer, 'An Open Letter about The Gift of Salvation', *Christianity Today* (April 27, 1998), 9.

³⁸ George, Oden, Packer, 'Open Letter'.

common understanding of salvation'.³⁹

Without making any reference to the Lutheran-Catholic dialogue nor to any other relevant ecumenical documents on the same doctrine, these claims sound rather curious because they give the impression of a major breakthrough of historical importance achieved through an informal, unofficial and relatively short dialogue culminating in the release of a concise text. The problem of ambiguity is evoked by Sproul, for whom GOS was drawn up with a 'studied ambiguity by which agreement is reached in words but not in substance, leaving each side the opportunity to maintain its original position'.⁴⁰ GOS only affirms 'ingredients' of *sola fide*, not *sola fide* itself.

It is fair to say that the newly discovered possibility of confessing together 'fundamental truths about the gift of salvation' goes hand in hand with the awareness of 'some serious and persistent differences' between the Evangelical and Catholic signatories on specific details or broad frameworks related to the doctrine itself which require 'further and urgent exploration'. Among these 'necessarily interrelated questions' there are 'the meaning of baptismal regeneration, the Eucharist and sacramental grace, the historic uses of the language of justification as it relates to imputed and transforma-

tive righteousness' and 'the normative status of justification in relation to all Christian doctrine'.

On the whole, then, while testifying to a further advancement along the path of an 'ecumenism of conviction' that ECT was able to express, GOS is somewhat wanting. In Sproul's telling words, 'the ECT initiative ... proclaims too much way too soon'.⁴¹

Another point underlined by some GOS evangelical signatories is that the professed unity testified to in the statement is a bond between 'some Roman Catholics and some evangelicals', thus by no means implying 'a unity of faith with the church of Rome'.⁴² The level of brotherly recognition concerns individual believers involved in the process, while no recognition of that kind is extended to Catholicism as an ecclesial institution. As Gerald Bray puts it,

one of the most painful parts of the ECT dialogue has been the need for Evangelicals to explain to the Catholics involved that we cannot regard the Roman Church in the way that a Baptist might look at Presbyterians. There is a qualitative difference between us.⁴³

GOS is therefore a further exercise in the on-going Evangelical-Roman Catholic dialogue on salvation which

³⁹ As reported by R. Frame, *Christianity Today* (Jan 12, 1998), 61.

⁴⁰ R.C. Sproul, *What ECTII Ignores. The inseparable link between imputation and the gospel, Modern Reformation* (Sept/Oct 1998). Other criticisms by Sproul to the whole ECT initiative are echoed in his book, *Getting the Gospel Right. The Tie that Binds Evangelicals Together* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999).

⁴¹ R.C. Sproul, *What ECTII Ignores*. In the same respect, Neuhaus writes that 'the Lutheran formula of *simul iustus et peccator*, which was Rome's chief objection to JD (Lutheran-Catholic Joint Declaration), is no part of «The Gift of Salvation»', *First Things* 86 (Oct 1998), 82.

⁴² George, Oden, Packer, *Open Letter*, italics original.

⁴³ Gerald Bray, 'Editorial', *Churchman* 113 (1999), 197.

shows some merits as well as some weaknesses. Its primary merit is that it rightly addresses the core issue of the historical and theological division that has existed since the time of the Reformation in a fresh way and with an open-minded attitude. The major weakness is that the conversation needs to be more historically conscious, theologically careful and ecumenically alert than previous contributions to both ECT and GOS have been.

IV Towards Future Conversations

The doctrine, experience, message and symbolic significance of salvation represent the core of the evangelical faith. The same could be argued as far as the Roman Catholic faith is concerned. Yet differences remain because salvation is received, lived out, and accounted for in different ways. Building on past experiences of dialogue between Evangelicals and Roman Catholics and given the fact that this dialogue will continue, it is important to learn the art of dialogue in a theologically informed, historically conscious, and pastorally alert way. The following are some broad perspectives which can be helpful in pushing the conversation further without losing sight of wider issues and concerns.

Christian doctrines are part of a more or less coherent theological system. The doctrine of salvation is no exception. It is rooted in the triune life of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; it is based on his grace alone that saves sinners and renews the world; it is anchored in the unique person and the once-and-for-all work of Jesus Christ and his mediatorship; it is

grounded in the on-going work of the Holy Spirit.

Furthermore, it presupposes man's sinful condition and total inability to be reconciled to God; it is attested to in the written and inspired Word of God; it is related to the whole of the Christian life that is changed by salvation; it is linked to the life of the church and its ordinances; and it is connected to the eschatological hope of the resurrection and eternal life.

The list could go on in spelling out all the doctrinal dimensions of the Christian faith and in appreciating their multiple relationships. What matters here is that salvation stands in the middle of a theological web, and is an organic part of the whole Christian vision.

The evangelical doctrine of salvation, in its essential yet coherent account, is not isolated from other biblical doctrines that define the evangelical faith. The same is true as far as Roman Catholicism is concerned. When Evangelicals and Roman Catholics discuss their respective soteriologies they do so with a specific focus on the topic itself, but also in its being part of their comprehensive theological meta-narrative.

With many theological issues that are organically related to salvation, there are different degrees of consensus or dissent between Evangelicals and Catholics that come to the fore as dialogue proceeds. Instead of stifling mutual understanding, the awareness of the respective theological 'system' helps to clarify the merits of one specific topic and allows one to grasp it responsibly. How is salvation related to the whole of the theological system? How does it impact the system and how

is impacted by it? How does it translate into spiritual practices?

Evangelicals tend to view salvation in *relational* categories whereby God saves lost sinners in reconciling them to himself by the work of Christ alone. The whole theological vocabulary of salvation is relational in focus and intent: regeneration (life language), justification (juridical language), adoption (familial language), and conversion (language of change). These are all pictures that depict the re-enacted relationship between God and man in different ways.

Evangelicals find it difficult to think of salvation in sacramental terms. In the evangelical understanding and experience of salvation, the sacraments are important, but not prominent. They are in the background, of course, as part of the God-given and Scripture-attested life of the church, but are not essential to salvation and the theological account of salvation.⁴⁴ To put it simply: Evangelicals would not say that they are saved because they have been baptized or because they are regular participants at Communion services.

The basic view of salvation is that it is God's free gift, in spite of ourselves, through the work of Jesus on the cross and his resurrection. John Stott is again helpful here:

If there is no saving merit either in our good works or in our faith, there is no saving merit in the mere reception of the sacraments either... It is not by the mere outward administra-

tion of water in baptism that we are cleansed and receive the Spirit, nor by the mere gift of bread and wine in Communion that we feed on Christ crucified, but by faith in the promises of God thus visibly expressed, a faith which is itself meant to be illustrated in our humble, believing acceptance of these signs. But we must not confuse the signs with the promises which they signify. It is possible to receive the sign without receiving the promise, and also to receive the promise apart from receiving the sign.⁴⁵

The cross, not the Eucharist, has centre-stage in the evangelical horizon.⁴⁶ The *hapax* (once-and-for-all) significance of the cross is emphasized much more than the *mallon* (more and more) aspect of the Eucharist.⁴⁷ Each evangelical tradition has its own sacramentology, but it does not lie at the 'centre' of the evangelical faith. Nor does sacramental language define the grammar and vocabulary of the evangelical understanding of salvation.

When Evangelicals and Catholics converse about salvation, a relational theological mindset is exposed to a sacramental theological mindset and vice versa. Many words and expressions are the same, but their theologi-

⁴⁴ This aspect is well presented in the 1996 WEF document on Roman Catholicism: Paul Schrottenboer (ed.), *Roman Catholicism. A Contemporary Evangelical Perspective*, par. 8.

⁴⁵ John Stott, *Christ the Controversialist*, 120-121.

⁴⁶ See my 'The Cross and the Eucharist: the Doctrine of the Atonement According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church', *European Journal of Theology* VIII (1999/1), 49-59.

⁴⁷ On the *hapax* and *mallon* as defining categories for Evangelical theology, see John Stott, *Evangelical Truth. A Personal Plea for Unity, Integrity and Faithfulness* (Leicester: IVP, 1999), pp. 34-38.

cal meanings are different because of the distance between their underlying, fundamental frameworks.

Linked to the evangelical uneasiness towards sacramental language is the place of the church in the account of salvation. Salvation is a *personal* salvation through the unique mediation of Christ. The emphasis is put on the direct relationship between the person saved and Christ, rather than on the church as a corporate agent that administers grace.

Stemming from the once-and-for-all work of Christ and the firm promises of the gospel, Evangelicals also experience a high degree of the assurance of salvation. Salvation is *certain* because of the juridical significance of justification and the eschatological trustworthiness of God's covenant promises. 'If I die today, I will go to heaven' is the standard evangelical language.

Sometimes this attitude is perceived as arrogant and misplaced, yet it reflects the 'grace alone', 'faith alone' and 'Christ alone' emphases of the

evangelical account of salvation. Indeed, salvation belongs to the Lord and those who receive it can be assured of it, despite their failures. Generally speaking, Roman Catholics find it difficult to appropriate this assurance, and this reluctance derives from a different way of approaching salvation.

We could also touch on the different anthropological views that form the basis of the different accounts of salvation. How much, for example, does the *homo capax dei* tradition affect Roman Catholic soteriology and the evangelical puzzlement over it because of its apparently overt optimism? How deep is the respective doctrine of man's sin as the natural condition that prevents any contribution on his part for his salvation?

Dialogue is a means of elucidating all of these dimensions. They are all inter-related because of the comprehensive and articulated nature of Christian theology. Staying on the surface could allow a faster dialogue but its quality and usefulness would suffer.

Secularization: A New Testament Perspective

Judith L. Hill

I Introduction

For many in this day and age, secularization (or even secularism) is an absolute necessity; for others, it is anathema, an affront to Christianity or to whatever religion the person professes. In 1905 legislation in France clearly separated the state from religious influences. American public schools cannot have prayers or post copies of the Ten Commandments. How should an evangelical Christian react to secularizing influences? Does the New Testament (NT) have any light to shed on the issue?

1. Secularization: what it is

At the outset, we need to make a distinction between 'secularization' and 'secularism.' The former refers to the *process* of moving from a worldview centred on religious realities to one that denies or ignores religious influence and significance in all aspects of life. The *end result* of the secularization process is known as 'secular-

ism,' a state of affairs and a state of mind in which the realities of life are considered to be without spiritual significance. This mind-set characterizes much of the Western world. For a cultural element to become 'secularized,' then, means that, in the minds of the group being described, the element—whether a thing, an action, or an attitude—no longer has any spiritual or religious significance attached to it. One can speak of secularization as a movement away from a mind-set that is Christian (or that is Islamic, or that is from any other religion). In all cases, the emphasis falls on the change taking place in the person's worldview.

This new mind-set or worldview which excludes religion as a basis is called 'secularism,' or occasionally 'humanism,' for the supernatural no longer has a part.

2. Secularization: what it is not

It would be a confusion of categories to equate secularization with the fact of a

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person's making necessary accommodations to a secular or non-Christian culture. Here I have in mind, for example, a first-century Jew paying his taxes to the Roman government. By that era, the Jews no longer lived under a theocracy; therefore, they had certain obligations to the ruling political authorities. To the extent that those obligations did not compromise their faith in the one true God (such as the practice of personally offering sacrifices to pagan deities or divinized emperors would have done), were not necessarily a secularizing influence. Otherwise, Jesus (Mk 12:13-17) and Paul (Rom 13:6, 7) would not have counselled paying taxes to a corrupt government that could misuse that money. In actual fact, both Jesus and Paul helped their audiences understand that all of life, even paying taxes, falls under God's sovereignty.

For the thinking Christian, no action can be divorced from a worldview in which God reigns supreme. Secularization is *not* the mere fact of doing some of the same things that unbelievers do. It is rather the process of leaving one way of envisioning and understanding reality, in which God (and by implication, the supernatural) enters into all of life, and moving to another mind-set in which God has no viable part. It is the process of leaving the supernatural as one's frame of reference toward relying solely on the possibilities inherent to the human being, to human society, and to human logic and its extension in what is considered 'natural science.'

Because secularization is a process, it can take decades for an individual to become secularized. For an entire society, whose traditions are passed down from generation to generation, the pro-

cess of secularization can take much, much longer.

II New Testament Examples

1. Challenges for a New Testament study

Having established the difference between secularization and secularism and also the difference between necessary accommodations and secularization, we now turn to the NT itself. In doing so, it is pertinent to remark that the very nature of the NT as a document written over a short period of time (50 years) precludes the possibility of noting great changes. The Old Testament, with its millennia of history, offers a far better opportunity to observe and trace such developments in a society. The time period for the NT evidence is simply too short.

Thus what we note in the following paragraphs are not so much 'examples' of secularization (though I have labelled them as such) but rather hints or precursors of what might lead down the path of secularization. None of the examples is clear-cut, yet each is suggestive of conditions that could indicate the start of secularization.

2. The absence of secularism as a worldview

To begin with, we need to underscore the fact that no part of the first-century society, whether Jewish, Christian, or pagan, was actually secularized. With the possible exception of a very few philosophers, no one ever denied the reality of the supernatural. They may sometimes have lived their lives as

though the supernatural had, practically speaking, no part in their lives. Yet the concept of supernatural beings and events was an integral part of the first-century mind-set.

As for the Jews, they believed in the Creator-God who ruled the universe and who had angels as his servants. They believed that fallen angels and Satan opposed God on a cosmic scale. Prayer was efficacious, according to their beliefs, because there was a God who could control events in history. The regulations proposed at Mount Sinai (and later extended by the Pharisees) made the Jews constantly aware that their life was lived in relation to God.

As for the non-Jewish world, the sheer variety of religions in the Roman empire attested to the interest in the supernatural. Every city had its patron divinities, and sacrifices to these divinities and in favour of the emperor(s) were considered a civic duty. Many of the religions even actively propagated of their beliefs.

Christians, of course, balked at such sacrifices (as had the Jews before them). But their refusal to offer pagan, civic, or imperial sacrifices of any kind was not based on the rejection of the supernatural. Rather, Christians recognized only the one true God (in three Persons) as being worthy of worship.

The presence of Jews, Christians, and other and various forms of local and empire-wide religiosity all demonstrate that, in one sense, the NT is not a document that has examples of secularism, which would be a totally non-religious worldview.

3. Tending toward Secularization: Some NT Examples

Yet, on the other hand, one can find examples of turning toward the attitudes which might *eventually* lead to secularism. Here I have four examples of varying gravity. The first three examples, which are treated briefly and in the order of their occurrence in the canon and history, involve individuals; the fourth example is that of a church. As mentioned previously, these examples are suggestive rather than definitive.

a) The rich young man

And as He was setting out on a journey, a man ran up to Him and knelt before Him, and *began* asking Him, 'Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?' And Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments, "Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honour your father and mother."' And he said to Him, 'Teacher, I have kept all these things from my youth up.' And looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him, and said to him, 'One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess, and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.' But at these words his face fell, and he went away grieved, for he was one who owned much property. (Mark 10:17-22 NASB)

The pericope as given in Mark sets forth an enthusiastic young man, ready to lay claim on eternal life, seeking to become a disciple of Jesus. He had already been living a life in accordance

with the prescriptions of Judaism, according to his own testimony, but he sensed a desire for something more.¹ Yet when Jesus actually called him to discipleship ('Come, follow me'), the young man rejected the offer. His priority in life lay elsewhere, namely, it seems, in material benefits. On his personal scale of values, discipleship and eternal life ranked lower than possessions. His initial enthusiasm cooled quickly as he gave a 'worldly' evaluation to what Jesus was demanding of him. Mark says that the young man was grieved and left Jesus, for he was attached to his many possessions.²

The Synoptic Gospels do not give us a follow-up pericope on the young man, but the implication is that he made no further effort to follow Jesus as a true disciple. His mind was set on other attractions. At least at first glance, we can propose this young man as a candidate who was not so very serious about his commitment to things spiritual and therefore might gradually fall into a way of thinking that would have little reference to God. But the Scriptures do not go that far. They merely give the example as a warning.

b) The Apostle Thomas

But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them

when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore were saying to him, 'We have seen the Lord!' But he said to them, 'Unless I shall see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.' And after eight days again His disciples were inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst, and said, 'Peace be with you.' Then He said to Thomas, 'Reach here your finger, and see my hands; and reach here your hand, and put it into my side; and be not unbelieving, but believing.' Thomas answered and said to Him, 'My Lord and my God!' Jesus said to him, 'Because you have seen me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed.' (John 20:24-29)

My second NT example is Thomas, the apostle of Jesus. For three years, he had been following Jesus. In contrast to the rich young man, Thomas had not been afraid to leave behind whatever possessions and inheritance he had. He had lived with Jesus, learned from him, and even acclaimed him with the others on the day of the triumphal entry to Jerusalem. He seemingly thought that Jesus was, at the very least, doing God's will and was directed by the Almighty. Yet when 'push' came to 'shove,' Thomas decided that he was not going to trust in anything supernatural. He would not accept the other apostles' declaration that Jesus had risen from the dead. How could he be sure that it was the very same person and not a substitute until he himself had physical verification of what the others had claimed?

¹ Perhaps what he desired was more recognition of his admirable lifestyle, as he perceived it.

² Augustine describes the young man as being 'trapped in his own earthly desires.' Cf. Thomas C. Oden and Christopher A. Hall, *Mark* (coll. Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, vol. II; Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 139.

Here we see a disciple who has been reduced to a dangerous mindset which, if not corrected, could have been the starting point for a journey toward secularism. Thomas did not deny that Jesus could rise from the dead; he still accepted the possibility of supernatural events. But he wanted to test the reality himself.³

The good news here is that, when confronted with the truth, Thomas recognized his error and acknowledged his true Master, the one whose authority should rule his life. Thus Thomas exclaimed: 'My Lord and my God!' (Jn 20:28).

The rich young man of Mark 10 had turned away from the Lord Jesus, but Thomas turned toward his Master. At the critical moment, Thomas resisted the temptation of wanting to control and verify everything by his own means. He made the choice to be a true disciple of Jesus, letting that perspective guide all of his thinking.

c) Demas

Luke, the beloved physician, sends you his greetings, and also Demas. (Col 4:14)

Make every effort to come to me soon; for Demas, having loved this

present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. (2 Tim 4:9-10)

The third NT example comes perhaps thirty years later and involves a Christian by the name of Demas. He is mentioned only twice in the NT. The earlier of the two references, which is found in Colossians, comes during the time of Paul's first imprisonment at Rome and speaks of Demas in positive terms as sending warm greetings to the believers living in Colossae. In that letter, Demas, along with Luke and others, seems to have been a helpful companion to Paul during that difficult period.

By the time of Paul's second Roman imprisonment, perhaps some five years later, Paul's second letter to Timothy gave a different evaluation of Demas. Demas had been in Rome, and Paul had had contact with him. Yet Demas had left (Greek: 'abandoned') Paul in order to go to (or return to) Thessalonica. That fact in itself was not negative. Others, such as Crescens and Titus, had also left but not been accused of desertion.

The problem, however, with Demas lay in his motivation for leaving Paul. According to 2 Timothy 4:9-10, Demas departed '... because he loved this present world'. Demas' value system had changed; instead of putting Christian charity and spiritual values first, his new priority had become 'the current age.' He chose the present over the eternal, 'this age' instead of 'the age to come.' His choices were influenced by something beyond his relationship with the Triune God. Thus he was in danger of increasing secularization in his life. Since the NT gives no further informa-

³ Colin J. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History*, ed. by Conrad H. Gempf (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 443, note 52: 'If we hold a supranaturalist world-view, exemplified in the acceptance of a traditional understanding of resurrection of Jesus, we are immediately in a different ballgame. Within that framework we may still require reasonably rigorous testimony before admitting other miracles, but their possibility may be accepted in principle.'

tion, we are unaware of how far down that path Demas actually went.⁴

d) The church at Ephesus

The fourth and final example which I will cite from the NT is that of the church of Ephesus. In the first century ad, this city, which was the metropolis (or chief city) of Asia and which ranked fourth in importance in the Roman empire, may have passed the zenith of its glory, but it was still important and wealthy, as evidenced by the numerous public structures built during the two centuries around the birth of Christ.

By tracing the history of this church as given in the NT, we can see a definite change in the basic outlook of the church as a whole. First we will start with the founding of the church and its early days, then its struggles, and finally the severe warning it received from God. We will then finish with a look beyond the NT to see the outcome for this church.

i) The good news comes to Ephesus

When Paul first landed in Ephesus (Acts 18), he was unwilling to spend a lot of time there, but he evaluated

the situation as a promising one from the point of view of Jewish interest in the gospel. Paul's deputies, Aquila and Priscilla, remained behind in Ephesus to act as conduits for the Good News. Here were people eager to understand the truth. Together with Apollos from Alexandria, this Jewish-Christian couple taught the people and had a good response.

ii) Initial impact of the good news in Ephesus

And this became known to all, both Jews and Greeks, who lived in Ephesus; and fear fell upon them all and the name of the Lord Jesus was being magnified. Many also of those who had believed kept coming, confessing and disclosing their practices. And many of those who practiced magic brought their books together and began burning them in the sight of all; and they counted up the price of them and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing. (Acts 19:17-20)

At his return to Ephesus, during the so-called Third Missionary Journey, Paul also encountered openness to the gospel message. Some who had known only of John the Baptist's ministry were introduced to the full story of salvation in Jesus Christ; and Paul, for a time, had easy access to the synagogue as a teaching base. When forced to leave there, he found other quarters for continuing his teaching. Luke says that he had his disciples with him (Acts 19:9; see also 19:30). The presence of disciples indicates the strength of the ministry among the Ephesians.

Indeed, the response in the city of Ephesus was generally spectacular.

⁴ The Church Father Chrysostom gives his own evaluation of Demas' choices: 'Demas, having loved his own ease and security away from danger, has chosen to live luxuriously at home, rather than suffer hardships with Paul and share his present dangers. Paul has indeed blamed him, not only in order to confirm us, that we may not sink to self-indulgent weakness in declining toils and dangers, for this would amount to 'having loved this present world.' Cf. Peter Gorday (ed.), *Colossians, 1-2 Thessalonians, 1-2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon* (coll. Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, vol. IX; Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 277.

Some non-Christians observed Paul and were so impressed that they tried to imitate his miracles of exorcism (Acts 19:13-16). Others believed in Jesus and openly confessed their sins (Acts 19:18). Those involved in sorcery were compelled by God's Spirit to burn, in public, their magical scrolls (Acts 19:19), a value of 50,000 drachmas, or the equivalent of 135 years' worth of work at the rate paid to a day labourer or a soldier.⁵

Luke gives two summary statements relative to the impact of the gospel in Ephesus. First, with respect to the general population, the author of Acts affirms that the effectiveness of the Christian ministry became known to the 'Jews and Greeks, who lived in Ephesus; and fear fell upon them all and the name of the Lord Jesus was being magnified' (Acts 19:17). Second, with regard to the Christian conversions, Luke says: 'So the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing' (Acts 19:20).

Thus, there was a strong, vibrant, and testifying church in the city of Ephesus. Its impact was significant

enough that the silversmiths feared that their trade in pagan idols of Artemis would be damaged. They knew what Paul and the Christians felt about the situation. Demetrius, the leader of a revolt, exclaimed: '... not only in Ephesus, but in almost all of Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away a considerable number of people, saying that gods made with hands are no gods at all' (Acts 19:26)

The disturbance was such that the town clerk finally had to remind the population that the Roman government would not tolerate anything that resembled a breach of the peace (Acts 19:35-41). But prior to that climax, Luke gives his readers a further insight into just how influential these Christians were in Ephesus. Paul was protected not only by his own disciples but also by some of his highly placed government friends, Asiarchs (Acts 19:31).

Here, then, was a church which was strong and influential, with trained local leadership (cf. Acts 20:17, 28), a church which Paul had faithfully nurtured on the individual level as well as in a larger group (Acts 20:20, 27, 31). Although he counselled vigilance against dangerous teachers whom he termed 'wolves' (Acts 20:29-30), he was assured that God's grace would be sufficient for their situation (Acts 20:32).

iii) The comfortably established church

Ten years later, the church at Ephesus continued to function. Nevertheless, the indications in Ephesians⁶ and 1

⁵ Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 582: 'The great difference in our account [from those detailing Augustus' burning of banned books] is that the owners here are voluntarily burning their books—these books were not seized. Inasmuch as the books were very expensive, and in view of the stress Luke places on the worth of these books, ... we are presumably meant to think that those undertaking this act were of some social means. Perhaps v. 18 [of Acts 19] refers to the actions of the lower-status and poorer Christians, and v. 19 to the actions of the higher-status and more wealthy Christians.'

⁶ The NT letter which is commonly known as 'Ephesians' was probably not directed ex-

Timothy are that, instead of influencing its environment and having a positive testimony, the church was being assailed by problems. The Ephesian church was alive and had a variety of members — rich, poor, those from a Jewish background, those from a pagan background, parents, children, masters, slaves, young men, young women, older men, and older women. They represented a cross-section of society.

On the positive side, Paul expressed concern that the leaders not be new converts (1 Tim 3:6), which indicates that the church continued to attract people to Christ. Paul also mentioned the need for a good witness, a good reputation in the larger community (1 Tim 3:7). The fact that the non-Christian community is called ‘the outsiders’ indicates that the church had solidified into an identifiable group which saw itself as distinct from those not belonging to the church.

Thus at this stage, the church was firmly established, but it was also facing challenges. In particular, they had to confront false teachers (1 Tim 1:3ff; 4:1ff) and internal divisions (rich/poor — 1 Tim 6:17-19; Jew/Gentile — Eph 2:11-22). Although persecution does not enter into Paul’s discussion, the problems of false teaching and internal tensions indicate a church that which was no longer at the height of its positive influence in the community. It had begun to be focused inwardly, on itself.

This picture is confirmed a few

years further on by Paul’s second letter to Timothy, in which the apostle laid a strong accent on the purity of the teaching and the need to guard against false doctrines. He warned against future problems and those who would deem the kerygma passé and would seek something new to which to listen, something which (inevitably) would not be the truth of the gospel:

... wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths. (2 Tim 4:3-4)

Their desire to have ‘interesting’ teachers had not yet, it appears, caused them to renounce the church at Ephesus. Instead, they wanted such (false) teachers to come and spread their so-called ‘enlightened’ message in the church.

iv) The Ephesian church in danger

To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this: ‘I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot endure evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false; and you have perseverance and have endured for My name’s sake, and have not grown weary. But I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I

clusively toward that church. More probably, it was a circular letter to a group of Asian churches (including the church at Ephesus). The problems highlighted in the letter can, however, by implication, be applied to the situation of the Ephesian church.

am coming to you, and will remove your lampstand out of its place — unless you repent. Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.’ (Rev 2:1-7)

The final picture of the Ephesus church given in Scripture comes from John’s writings, Revelation 2.1-7. In the letter to the angel/messenger of the church at Ephesus, the positive characteristics of the church were noted as its work for the Lord and its perseverance (Rev 2:2). The ‘work’ is defined as opposition to the assaults launched against the truth,⁷ including opposition to the Nicolaitans (Rev 2:6).⁸ The mention of perseverance seems to indicate sufferings caused by external forces, whether religiously stimulated (Jews or pagans) or government-incited (civic or imperial cults).

The negative side of the ledger has this condemnation: ‘You have left your first love’ (Rev 2:4). The initial enthusiasm which had characterized the church as its founding, when Chris-

tians had voluntarily burned expensive manuscripts in order to make it clear that they were following Jesus wholeheartedly (Acts 19:18-19), had been lost along the way. The church continued to exist, but its fervour was gone.⁹ The church became, seemingly, more institutionalized and less a living and vibrant entity. Instead of positively influencing their community, the Christians had turned inward as a group and forgotten that the main point was their relationship, intimate and all-pervasive, with Jesus Christ.

The letter in Revelation 2 which is addressed to the church at Ephesus contains direct instructions which could be thus paraphrased: ‘Remember your origins, repent, go back to doing what you did at the beginning.’ Complacency and a diminished love for God and for his people, including those not yet in the fold, demanded their repentance. Repentance would take the Ephesian church back to its starting place: a vibrant love for the Lord. The letter continues by explaining the consequences of a failure to apply the instructions given. Simply put, the church at Ephesus would disappear (Rev 2:5).¹⁰

⁷ The concern of 1 John with false teaching may mirror the conditions found in Ephesus, where the disciple John (to be equated with the Elder and with the Apostle) was said to live out his final years, overseeing the Asian churches, according to Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.1.1: ‘Afterwards, John, the disciple of the Lord, who also had leaned upon His breast, did himself publish a Gospel during his residence at Ephesus in Asia.’ [Quotation taken from Schaff’s edition of the Fathers].

⁸ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation* (coll. NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 233f. and 248-251, on idolatry.

⁹ This fervor has been variously defined by commentators as brotherly love within the Christian community, love for Jesus Christ, love for God, or zeal for witnessing to unbelievers. Cf. Beale, *Revelation*, 230f.

¹⁰ The disappearance of the Ephesian church could be either with respect to that particular locale [the position favored by William Ramsay, *The Letters to the Seven Churches* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), p. 177], or a permanent dissolution of the church [the interpretation favored by George Eldon Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), p. 39f.] This verse

v) *Ephesus beyond the New Testament*

I have learned that some people have passed through on their way from there with an evil teaching. But you did not permit them to sow any seeds among you, plugging your ears so as not to receive anything sown by them. You are stones of the Father's temple, prepared for the building of God the Father. You are being carried up to the heights by the crane of Jesus Christ, which is the cross, using as a cable the Holy Spirit; and for faith is your hoist, and love is the path that carries you up to God.

And so you are all traveling companions bearing God, bearing the temple, bearing Christ, and bearing the holy things, adorned in every way with the commandments of Jesus Christ. I exult in you, since I have been deemed worthy through the things that I write to speak with you and to rejoice together with you; for you love nothing in human life but God alone.

(Ignatius of Antioch,
To the Ephesians 9.1-2)¹¹

The city of Ephesus, which had been the focal point of all Asia Minor, a commercial hub and governmental seat, attracted to itself some of the ecclesiastical administration as well. As well

as serving as the home for the bishop, Ephesus hosted church councils into the fifth century ad. The church may have been moribund in some respects, but at least externally it functioned.

Ignatius of Antioch, in fact, wrote positively of the church in the second century ad. Whether the church was as free from problems as Ignatius seems to indicate is not otherwise known.¹² But if so, it would indicate that the church must have taken seriously the warning found in the book of Revelation and had a period of strength once again. The secularization process is not necessarily irreversible, and the Ephesian church may well have changed the direction in which it had been heading, just as the Apostle Thomas had done in his own life.

Two sorts of crises, natural and human, brought to an end both the city and the church of Ephesus. The initial crisis was sparked by two natural phenomena: First, the delta of the river mouth silted over, forming a swamp infested by malarial mosquitoes. Without the river traffic to which Ephesus had been accustomed, commerce and tourism became more difficult, and the city dwindled in importance. Second, the area was subject to many earthquakes, which destroyed many of the stately and beautiful structures in the city.

In later centuries, a human-initiated crisis rang the death knell for the city and church of Ephesus when the Otto-

has been the subject of dispute for many centuries as to the exact meaning of the verb, which could be translated as 'move,' with the implication of a change of location, or 'remove,' with the implication of a cessation. Cf. BDAG.

¹¹ Bart D. Ehrman, *The Apostolic Fathers*, Vol. 1 (Loeb Classical Library; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003), 229.

¹² Note the comments of Colin J. Hemer, *The Letters the Seven Churches of Asia in Their Local Setting* (coll. JSNT Supp Series 11; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986), 54: '[Ignatius] sees the energy and devotion of this church but not the seeds of decline which a closer knowledge might have revealed.'

man Turks overran the area, leaving destruction in their path. Today, Ephesus is completely abandoned as a habitation but has become an active site for many archaeological digs, adding to our knowledge of those distant times of the early centuries of our era.

Nevertheless, as far as the Ephesian church is concerned, it died out. Nothing indicates that it moved elsewhere; it simply died. And thus was fulfilled John's prophecy: Repent or I will remove your 'candlestick' (Rev 2:5).

The rich young man, the apostle Thomas, Demas and the church at Ephesus — four examples of varying intensity. They illustrate the fact that even in ancient times the danger of secularizing influences was present. Secularism was not yet a reality in the first-century world, but avoiding the secularizing process necessitated constant vigilance. How then did the writers of the New Testament attempt to help their readers deal with the challenge that secularization presented?

III New Testament Advice

The first thing that can be noted is that the various writers of the NT included examples which were deemed negative. The rich young man of the Synoptics missed out on the blessing of a close association with Jesus, the master, when he decided to turn away from discipleship. The apostle Thomas did not experience the benediction Jesus announced: 'Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed' (John 20:29). Demas, by deserting Paul, lost an opportunity to serve and to learn from the great apostle. The entire Ephesian church was in danger of heresy and of losing their 'candlestick.' These nega-

tive examples were a warning to the readers.

But beyond those examples, there are some words of advice to help believers maintain a mind-set in which God is central and involved in every aspect of life. In the paragraphs that follow, we will briefly note some advice given by Jesus and by the apostle Paul.

1. The advice of Jesus

Early in his ministry, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus explained to his disciples that worry was useless because everything in life falls under God's sovereignty and providence.

For this reason I say to you, do not be anxious for your life, as to what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; nor for your body, as to what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single cubit to his life's span? And why are you anxious about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory did not clothe himself like one of these.

But if God so arrays the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more do so for you, O men of little faith? Do not be anxious then, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'With what shall we clothe our-

selves?’ For all these things the Gentiles eagerly seek; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you. (Mt. 6.25-33)

The antidote to worry was to focus on God’s priorities and let him provide: ‘But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you’ (Mt 6:33). Some years later, during a difficult period for the disciples, Jesus reminded them again of that truth, using different words:

‘Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me.’
(John 14:1)

The advice given by Jesus was that of keeping God in view at all times, not allowing the cares of the world around to mould one’s thinking. God in his sovereignty would care for the believer.

2. The advice of the Apostle Paul

The apostle Paul also gave advice that would help the Christians avoid secularizing influences. He encouraged the believers in Asia Minor with these words:

Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. (Eph 5:15-17).

Paul’s value judgment, namely, that ‘the days are evil,’ gave the Christians a reference point. The days are ‘evil’ because they present temptations to ignore the supernatural (that is, to ignore

God) and consider that he has no part in moment-by-moment living. Nothing is neutral; all is to be evaluated according to how God himself would examine the matter: Is it wise or unwise? Is it the will of the Lord, or is it evil?

Paul also underlined the concept of right-thinking when he addressed the problematic congregation in the city of Corinth:

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ... (2 Cor 10:3-5).

Paul’s worldview is obviously organized around the religious dimension and his relationship to God through Jesus Christ. ‘Taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ’ indicates that that Christian might be tempted toward a non- or even anti-religious worldview. Their part as individual believers was to make a conscious choice to see the world as God sees it, with no part of life being unimportant or outside of God’s care. The situations in which believers find themselves are ones in which a very real enemy, namely: Satan and his agents (both human and celestial), attempt to side track Christians, to secularize them.

And for this reason, Paul had outlined for the Ephesians the necessity of using spiritual weapons: truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, salvation, the word of God, and prayer (Eph 6:14-18). All of these weapons

would help the Christian keep his/her mind centred on 'obedience to Christ' (2 Cor 10:5).

IV Conclusion

Although the NT does not directly address the subject of secularization, the issue is already in view. We have seen some examples of secularization—that is, moving away from a religious worldview—and some strategies suggested by Jesus and the apostle Paul for avoiding that very real temptation.

At least two of the examples given above indicate that repentance and a change of direction — a return to a worldview centered on God — are indeed possible. Thomas changed his perspective immediately and for the long term.¹³ The fact that the church at Ephesus apparently improved¹⁴ for a

period after the warning given in Revelation 2 should similarly encourage Christians of our day that we have the possibility of returning to the Lord in repentance so as to be renewed by him.

We as believers have the same 'weapons' as Paul himself had at his disposal and recommended to others. A lifestyle founded on the Word of God and prayer and lived in faith will be an integrated life. That person will be able, by God's grace, to withstand the assaults of a secular society and any temptations to secularize his or her own way of thinking and acting.

We have spoken here of the individual Christian. The way in which a church reacts to secularizing influences must be by working with individuals within the congregation. By unceasingly presenting God's truth, the church as a whole will be equipped to be a positive influence in the community and not be overwhelmed by the secularism that surrounds it.

13 Church history tells us that Thomas became the first Christian missionary to India.

14 Ramsay, *Letters*, 177: 'Surely in this milder denunciation [of Rev. 2] we may see a proof that the evil in Ephesus was curable ... The

failing can be corrected, the enthusiasm may be revived'

A Biblical Basis for Reducing Extreme Disparity in Property Ownership

Clive Beed and Cara Beed

I Introduction

To what extent is reducing extreme disparity in private property ownership a biblical guideline? If a high proportion of private property is owned by a few, with vast swathes of people precluded from owning property, how far does this deviate from normative biblical teaching? Smoothing or widening property ownership are terms used here to mean moving toward an ownership pattern where excessive disparities are reduced. If a biblical aim is for all people to have sufficient private property to be able to attain a lifestyle not vastly inferior to some average norm prevailing in their society, the presence of wide differences in property ownership undermines this aspiration.

A selection of Jesus' teaching is analyzed in the following sections, with the aid of biblical exegeses. The conclusion is that God and Jesus intend property ownership to be widespread, that extreme disparities are to be al-

leviated, and that property should be distributed reasonably evenly, which does not mean equally. Private property is such a good thing that everybody is meant to have a fair share. The meaning of smoothing, widening, widespread, norms, fair share, extreme disparities, reasonably, and so on emerge from the biblical analysis.

The guidelines proposed here to spread property ownership are not exhaustive, and do not constitute a comprehensive approach to poverty alleviation. For example, biblical guidelines not examined here include fostering and maintaining marriages, and facilitating people to use their talents to the utmost. A high proportion of the poor in the US are either single mothers or children of single mothers. A long-term marriage, or being a child of parents who stay married for a lifetime, is a strong indicator that a person will not fall into poverty.

This is also closely related to getting an education. Americans with a

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decent education stay married more frequently and consistently earn much more money than those without a good education. The initiatives reviewed here do not explore these issues, but they are complementary to enabling more poor people to access owner-occupied housing, and to getting a stable job.

The term 'property' is not used in the Bible, but can be identified as the assets people owned, including houses, land, domestic and farming implements, livestock, slaves etc. Since some of this property had a marketable value, it can also be called wealth or the sum of the value of exchangeable property people own.¹ This view accords with the definition of property in *A New Dictionary of Christian Ethics*, as 'that which one owns, one's wealth or goods'.² Nowadays, the gambit of ownership extends far further than in New Testament times, including ownership of copyrights, patents, and other intangibles.

By this definition, private property or wealth is equivalent to capital in modern terminology, wealth that can be invested to create further wealth. People are usually regarded as having rights over the property, wealth or capital they own, including 'rights to control, benefit from and dispose of property on an exclusive basis',³ apply-

ing in a more restricted sense in New Testament times than today.

If a biblical guideline is that property ownership should be widespread, to what extent does it apply in the contemporary world, looking just at the US example? Evidence on the issue is examined in section two. It appears that many people have few particular forms of private property. At the same time, a small minority has very large holdings of private property. We are not concerned with why this disparity exists. The *status quo* is taken as given. It suggests opportunity to extend the reach of property ownership for those low on the ladder.

Section three presents a restricted range of ways by which Christians and others are attempting to counter the imbalance, and help to spread ownership more widely. The paper does not endeavour to justify the reported exercises in which Christians and others are engaged. Suffice to say, as far as involved Christians are concerned, their motivation derives from what they interpret as God and Jesus' teachings. Beyond suggesting that their activities conform to the biblical guideline here under scrutiny, no further analysis is made on whether their chosen ways of approaching the biblical guideline are the most appropriate.

Also to be stressed is the limited nature of the kinds of programs examined here to widen property ownership. The argument does not deal with short-term assistance, such as food stamps, that may have effects indirectly on property ownership. Nor does

1 W. D. Rubenstein, 'Wealth', in W. Outhwaite and T. Bottomore eds, *The Blackwell Dictionary of Twentieth-Century Social Thought* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 706.

2 Brendan Soane, 'Property', in J. Macquarrie and J. Childress eds, *A New Dictionary of Christian Ethics* (London: SCM Press, 1986), 507-508.

3 Nicholas Abercrombie, Stephen Hill, and

Bryan Turner, *The Penguin Dictionary of Sociology* 5th ed (London: Penguin Books, 2006), 311.

it deal with longer-term approaches to redressing human capital imbalance, noted above, such as educational deprivation that is a contributor to property ownership patterns. Finally, it does not take account of other ways government might attempt to broaden ownership. It deals only with certain private initiatives, recognizing that government assistance might be involved in these enterprises.

II Jesus and Property Ownership

1. Advocating Equity

Rather than trying to cover the whole gambit of biblical teaching affecting property ownership, only Jesus' teaching on the matter is scrutinized. This follows the advice of Fee and Stuart⁴ to 'distinguish between the central core of the message of the Bible and what is dependent on or peripheral to it', in which they place Jesus in the central core. They suggest constructing a 'hierarchy of narrative' in the Bible, so that the more important teachings receive precedence. Jesus is taken as the exemplar for Christians in teaching God's requirements.

As a precursor to examining Jesus' views on the matter, we note that he accepted the authority of the Mosaic Law, as per Matthew 5:17-19, and Luke 16:17. Keener interprets Matthew 5:17-19 to mean that 'Jesus demanded total obedience to the Scriptures', that, '*Jesus' language clearly affirms his commitment to the law of Moses*', for 'to

"fulfil" God's law was to "confirm" it by obedience and demonstrating that one's teaching accorded with it'. Keener continues that 'the idea that Jesus' death and resurrection is the "goal of the world", thus allowing the law to be set aside as fulfilled, violates the whole thrust of the passage'. 'Jesus upholds the law ... but is the decisive arbiter of its meaning.'⁵

Hagner expresses similar views, that 'it is necessary at the outset to indicate Jesus' full and unswerving loyalty to the law'. His is 'the presentation of the true meaning of the Torah'. To 'fulfil' is 'to present a definitive interpretation of the law ... [for] Jesus' teachings ... penetrate to the divinely intended (i.e., the teleological) meaning of the law'. 'The ethical teaching of Jesus the Messiah ... is nothing other than the true meaning of the Torah.' For Hagner, 'the law, as interpreted by Jesus, will remain valid until the close of this age'.⁶

Given that Jesus upheld the substance of the Mosaic Law, but not its minutia, the views of selected exegetes concerning property ownership in the Law are summarized briefly. Wright argues on the basis of the God-given principles by which the Promised Land was divided among the Israelites that 'land was intended to be equitably shared out, so that each household had its share in the national inheritance'. In his view, 'property rights... were grounded in the strong land-gift

⁴ Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How To Read the Bible for All Its Worth* 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 91, 81.

⁵ Craig Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 175, 176, original emphasis, 178, 182.

⁶ Donald Hagner, *Word Biblical Commentary: Matthew 1-13* (Dallas, TX: Word, 1993), 103, 106, 110, 108.

theology'.⁷

No Israelite 'owned' the land, it being held for and in trust from God. There is broad agreement among exegetes that equi-proportional principles governed the area of land entrusted to each Israelite family in Numbers 26:54-56, and 33:54.⁸ A wide distribution of property (land) was to be achieved with no extreme disparities in holdings.

Those who received no holdings, such as Levites and resident aliens, and those who were indigent, such as orphans and widows, were to be supported by a raft of provisions siphoning possessions to them. These included interest-free loans to Israelites, and the cancellation of the outstanding balances of loans every seven years (Ex 22:25-27; Lev 25:35-38; Deut 15:1-11; 23:19-20). Food was also to be provided by the better-off to these groups (Ex 23:10-11; Deut 14:28-29; 23:24-25; 24:19-21; 26:12-13; Lev 19:9-10; 23:22; 25:1-7). The aim of all the safety nets in the Mosaic Law, had they been practised, would have been to ensure a more even distribution of private property than would exist without the Law's provisions.

An extensive pattern of private property ownership was sought from which extreme disparities were pre-

cluded. All families were intended to enjoy a reasonable standard of living that would allow them to participate in the life of the community.⁹ A summary of this orientation of the Mosaic Laws is given by conservative evangelical economist, Brian Griffiths: 'If they had been applied it would have been impossible for "labour" to be in conflict with "capital."' The problem Marx addressed was 'where capital was owned by a few, but the majority were without access to that capital... this was precisely the situation which the property laws of the Pentateuch were designed to prevent.'¹⁰

With this background from the Mosaic Law, Jesus' teachings with implications for property ownership are considered just from the gospel of Luke. An examination of the four gospels would be too lengthy here. The issue is whether Jesus' teaching, similar to that in the Mosaic Law, advocates reducing extremities in ownership, and thereby spreading property ownership more widely.

There are many of Jesus' sayings from which implications can be drawn that he was advocating a more extensive pattern of private property ownership.¹¹ Comment is made on

⁷ Christopher Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (Leicester, UK: Inter-Varsity Press, 2004), 89, 90.

⁸ See Roland Harrison, *The Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary: Numbers* (Chicago: Moody, 1990), 349; Jacob Milgrom, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Numbers* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publications Society, 1990), 480-482; Katharine Sakenfeld, *Numbers: Journeying with God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 145.

⁹ David Baker, *Tight Fists or Open Hands: Wealth and Poverty in Old Testament Law* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 306-314; William Domeris, *Touching the Heart of God* (New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 156-168; Leslie Hoppe, *There Shall Be No Poor Among You* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2004), 24-41.

¹⁰ Brian Griffiths, *The Creation of Wealth* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1984), 57.

¹¹ Lk 4:18, 31-35; 6:20-21, 24-25; 9:3-5; 10:4-7, 29-37; 12:16-21; 14:8-14; 16:19-31; 18:22, 25; 19:1-10).

each of these texts. Jesus' main purpose in these texts is not to instruct about property ownership. He is talking mainly about generosity as having more to do with the heart of the giver than any desired social outcome. Nevertheless, the argument will be that Jesus did desire equitable social outcomes among both believers and the wider world. Property ownership inferences can be drawn from Jesus' sayings above. His sayings with the most direct reference to property ownership are examined first.

A first saying is Luke 19:1-10, the story of Zacchaeus. Jesus extols Zacchaeus for offering to donate half of his possessions to the poor. The disparity between Zacchaeus and the rest is thereby diminished, even though Zacchaeus would still have remained a rich man. In Bock's view, Zacchaeus 'becomes an example of how to handle money generously', that his is an illustration of 'the proper way to use resources'. Zacchaeus 'is an example of a rich person who gets through the eye of the needle'. He 'becomes rich toward God'.¹²

For Ringe, redistributing 'his excess wealth to "the poor"' is one step in Zacchaeus' salvation. LaVerdiere looks further ahead, suggesting that the story 'prefigures the future course of Christian history, in which religious outcasts would repent, give to the poor and be saved'.¹³ While these further im-

plications of Jesus' story are uncertain, it remains the case that Zacchaeus would spread his wealth more evenly than he would have done without making the offer he did.

A second saying is Luke 16:19-31, Jesus' Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. The property ownership aspect of the parable is revealed by Jesus' condemnation of the rich man because he did not share his wealth with Lazarus. Had he done so, property ownership would have been shared more equally between the two. Bock expresses this notion that 'the rich man's extravagant wealth and lack of compassion on earth has resulted in spiritual poverty and absence of mercy eternally'. The rich man 'failed to respond to the suffering and need of others around him'.¹⁴

As most exegetes note, the reference to 'Moses and the prophets' in Luke 16:29 concerns helping the poor.¹⁵ If the need to help the poor materially were practised now, as per Hendricksen's interpretation, property ownership would become more widespread. Nolland holds that 'the parable suggests that there is a profound challenge to the social status quo to be found in the law and the prophets, that there is a desperate need for the privileged to search out their stipulations and to act upon them'.¹⁶

The third of Jesus' sayings is Luke 12:16-21, the Parable of the Rich

¹² Darrell Bock, *The Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Luke 9:51-24:53* Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), 1521, 1524.

¹³ Sharon Ringe, *Westminster Bible Companion: Luke* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1995), 232; Eugene LaVerdiere, *Luke*

(Dublin, IR: Veritas Press, 1980), 235.

¹⁴ Bock, *Luke*, 1372.

¹⁵ Bock, *Luke*, 1375; William Hendriksen, *Gospel of Luke* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1981), 787; John Nolland, *Luke 9:21-18:34* (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1993), 833.

¹⁶ Hendriksen, *Gospel*, 785; Nolland, *Luke*, 833.

Fool. Exegetes interpret this parable to mean that the rich man 'has morally mismanaged his wealth, giving no thought to the needs of others or thanking God'. The man's omission, according to Bock, is that he 'mistakenly thinks he is only responsible for himself', exhibiting a 'selfish prosperity'; 'he did not fulfill his moral responsibility before God to care for the needs of others.'¹⁷ To Evans, the man 'does not see his abundance as an opportunity to help those needing food'. He should have given 'away his surplus'.¹⁸

Arthur Just Jr goes a step further: 'the remedy for worry and anxiety over wealth is *to give away one's surplus... freely give away what God has freely given*'.¹⁹ For Johnson, the conclusion of the parable, 'rich toward God' has two meanings: 'the first is the response of faith, the second is the disposition of possessions in accordance with faith, which means to share them with others rather than accumulating them for one's self'.²⁰ All these interpretations involve the rich man transferring wealth from himself to the poor, consistent with the thesis of this paper.

Even the disciples were instructed by Jesus to 'sell your possessions, and give alms' (Lk 12:33). Perhaps Jesus is not saying sell *all* your possessions.²¹ This meaning is possible for the disci-

ples were not rich men, except perhaps for Matthew. Nonetheless, whatever possessions might have been sold and the proceeds directed to the poor by charity, the effect of Jesus' teaching would be for property to be spread more widely. The motive in all this is, as Bock notes, that 'pursuing the kingdom means caring for others, rather than for self'.²²

The common purse of Jesus and the disciples was supported by the private offerings of certain well-off women (Lk 8:3). Again, property ownership was being widened. In Luke 9:3-5, and 10:4-7 Jesus instructs the disciples to take little private property with them for their missions. They are to be supported by the hospitality of others. Property is extended from the host to those without possessions, the disciples. The mission of Jesus and the disciples functions on this basis (as in Lk 11:37).

Jesus has a similar teaching for the rich ruler in Luke 18:22; 'sell all that you own and distribute the money to the poor'. The idea is that 'Jesus' request is designed to turn him into someone who actively cares for others'.²³ The poor are to be the recipients because 'the poor, of course, are those repudiated by the powerful but special recipients of the good news about the kingdom'.²⁴ Had the ruler followed Jesus' command, the wide disparity in ownership between the rich ruler and the poor would have been diminished.

Being rich, both in the time of Jesus and at the present time, is identified by

17 Bock, *Luke*, 1152, 1153.

18 Craig Evans, *Luke* (Peabody, MS: Hendrickson, 1990), 196.

19 Arthur Just Jr., *Concordia Commentary Luke 9:51-24:53* (St Louis, MO: Concordia, 1997), 507; original emphasis.

20 Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991), 199.

21 Hendriksen, *Gospel*, 670.

22 Bock, *Luke*, 1166.

23 Bock, *Luke*, 1482.

24 Johnson, *The Gospel*, 277.

having private property vastly above that possessed by most people. Riches greatly exceed norms prevailing in the society in question; disparities are wide. Jesus' judgment that it is 'easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God' (Lk 18:25), reinforces his teachings in the previous paragraph, that the rich are to direct some or all of their property towards assisting the poor. If they do this, they stand a much better chance of entering the kingdom of God. This is because 'the self-professed security of the wealthy is a padlock against kingdom entry'.²⁵ Nevertheless, it is still possible for the righteous rich, those who do the will of God, to enter the kingdom. Notwithstanding its other more important inferences, Jesus' teaching again implies the desirability of the rich becoming less rich through spreading their property more widely.

A mix of Jesus' further sayings, besides all their other richness, contains the implication that property ownership should be spread more widely than it was in his time. Jesus' first healing in Luke 4:31-35, and all his subsequent healings, have property ownership consequences. The healings have subsequent diverse meanings, but one is that only if people are well can they participate in obtaining sufficient means and private possessions to provide for their livelihood. It is reasonable to suggest that those whom Jesus healed were, before their healing, in parlous circumstances. To the extent that they were able to return to normal life after healing, a more widespread

distribution of property would eventually as they eased themselves into, or back into, work.

A variant of the property ownership effects from healing occurs in the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:29-37). The parable has many connotations, but one is that the Samaritan transferred oil and wine to the injured traveller, and money to the innkeeper. On the reasonable supposition that the Samaritan was better-off than the injured traveller, private property is transferred from the better-off to the less well-off. As with Jesus' healings, the injured traveller is to be restored to health so that he can resume his normal occupation. Hospitality involving the transfer of property to those low on the ladder is revealed also in Luke 14:12-14, Jesus instructing the well-off to invite the poor and crippled to a banquet, rather than family or rich neighbours.

All Jesus' sayings above relate to the present age. For the future age, Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Lk 6:17-49) suggests that on his second coming property ownership will become widespread, extreme disparities reduced. As with the reversal of the fortunes of diverse groups — the poor, the hungry, those who weep, the rich, the well-fed — so will the pattern of property ownership be reversed. Ringe²⁶ suggests that the poor in Luke 6:20 refers

to people who are economically destitute, who can claim no power in the existing system, and who reap no benefits from it... It is to such

²⁵ Bock, *Luke*, 1486.

²⁶ Sharon Ringe, *Westminster Bible Companion: Luke* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1995), 92.

people that God's reign belongs. The blessing is part of the reversal of fortunes that characterizes God's project.

In so far as the poor are hungry, Luke 6:21 'affirms that the basic human need for food is both a specific example and a symbol of all the human needs that are met in the establishment of God's reign'. Contrarily, in Luke 6:24-25, 'people who are rich, well fed... will also experience the alternative'. This is part of the good news Jesus announces to the world (Lk 4:18).

Tiede interprets Luke 6:20-21 as a declaration of the priority of those in need in the policy of his reign... The poor, hungry, and grieving may already be said to be blessed because the promises of God are being conferred on them now with the authority of the Messiah. The future of those who appear to have no future is already assured, and the rest of the world would be advised to discern that this is the way the reign of God works.²⁷

The paradox of Jesus' reign is and will be a contrast between this age and the age to come. Those who adopt a God-undirected path to making wealth will receive a shock at the Second Coming. Luke 6:24-25 indicates that 'those who are wealthy and too concerned with worldly affairs to be bothered about the kingdom of God' will find their fortunes reversed upon Jesus' return.²⁸

The reversal involves a more wide-

spread property ownership than has occurred throughout history. Craddock notes that 'Luke stated as early as the Magnificat (1:46-55) that the arrival of God's reign will be marked by a complete reversal of fortunes for the rich and the poor, the powerful and the powerless, the full and the empty'.²⁹ Not only in the eschatological future, but with Jesus' presence, this movement has already begun, 'an agenda for the followers of Jesus'. Since 'material, economic poverty is an outrage', and 'a perversion of the divine will',³⁰ Jesus proclaims that this situation will be turned on its head. Whereas the current pattern of wealth distribution is marked by extreme disparities, and greatly skewed to the rich and against the poor, this situation will be reversed at the Second Coming.

2. Counter Examples

Now consider counter texts by Jesus that might appear to tell against his favouring a more widespread configuration of private property. One might appear to be the Parable of the Pounds (Lk 19:11-27), with Jesus concluding that 'to all those who have, more will be given; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away'. Exegetes do not interpret the parable as contradicting the thesis of this paper. Bock³¹ understands the pounds to 'represent responsibilities undertaken by the servants because of association with Jesus. They are to carry out their responsibilities effec-

²⁷ David Tiede, *Luke* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988), 141.

²⁸ Evans, *Luke*, 108.

²⁹ Fred Craddock, *Luke* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1990), 87.

³⁰ Hoppe, *There*, 171, 172.

³¹ Bock, *Luke*, 1534, 1543.

tively and profitably until he returns.’ They are to be faithful to the master’s wishes during his absence. The servants and ‘citizens of his country’ (Lk 19:14) ‘will be dealt with and rewarded accordingly when Jesus returns to exercise judgment as part of his authority’.

A similar view is expressed by Hendriksen, that Jesus ‘at his glorious return will praise his faithful servants and will reward them in proportion to the degree of faithfulness they have shown’.³² To focus on the pounds as property is mistaken, for ‘the possessions motif is here a subsidiary to a political one... the parable is therefore “about” the successful establishment of a kingdom’.³³ Jesus’ parables contain their message in a vehicle in which the literal descriptions stand for something else.

A second counter might be the way in which Jesus deals with selected rich persons. He does not always promote with them the widening of property ownership. The example of Zacchaeus notwithstanding, few conversations of Jesus with rich people are recorded. With Joseph of Arimathea (Lk 23:50-54), the only record of his actions is after Jesus’ death. We do not know what advice Jesus would have given to him if alive.

The only other mention of an (assumedly) rich man talking to Jesus is Nicodemus who came to Jesus by night (Jn 3:1-15). The other references to Nicodemus are John 7:50-53 where he defends Jesus to the Sanhedrin, and John 19:39-42, where he brings spices

to anoint Jesus’ body. Every time Jesus talked to a rich man he would not necessarily stress the need to reduce extremities in property distribution. Jesus teaches Nicodemus what he must do to gain eternal life, without mentioning property ownership. Indeed, the prerequisites for eternal life trump property ownership every time. The one conversation Jesus had with a rich man without mentioning property ownership cannot be used to contradict Jesus’ sayings above where he does infer the necessity for widening property ownership.

We can conclude from Jesus’ teaching, including his espousal and interpretation of the essence of the Mosaic Law, that he advocated diminishing excesses in property ownership, with ownership moving toward a more even distribution than existed in the society where he taught. Jesus never said that reducing extremes or wider property ownership was a good thing, but his examined teachings point in this direction. A judicious inference from them is that he was advocating a more equitable spread of private property.

This means that each family should have adequate property to support a lifestyle meeting acceptable norms (such as nutrition) applicable to the society in question. Everybody should have enough to lead lifestyles meeting these social norms. If there are extreme disparities around these norms, it is likely that some people will not be able to attain acceptable social standards.

In this sense, such a situation contradicts Jesus’ teaching and the Mosaic Law. Pushing upwards those low on the property ladder is one way in which property distribution can be

³² Hendriksen, *Gospel*, 861.

³³ Johnson, *The Gospel*, 292.

come more extensive, inclusive and expansive. A reasonable implication is that this is to be a guideline for our societies. Wide, widespread, fair share, equitable, adequate norms etc have no absolute meaning. Like measures of the rich and the poor, they can be assessed via value judgments only in relation to norms prevailing in societies of the time.

III Widening Property Ownership

1. Private property

A pre-requisite to examining ways of widening private property ownership is to assess how it is presently distributed. In the US, the largest exemplar of functioning capitalist, private ownership society, some forms of private property ownership are widespread. For example, ownership of consumer durables is extensive. Richards points out that around three-quarters of officially-classified poor households have air conditioning, and a car. 97% have colour television, 78% a VCR or DVD player, while 62% have cable or satellite TV.³⁴ Of course, these figures take no account of differences in quality between the items. If those low on the property ladder drive old cars, they require more maintenance and may be less safe than new cars.

In all probability, these high rates of consumer durable ownership have been assisted by high credit card use. That the average US household credit card debt was \$15,216 in 2013 does

not leave much leeway for using credit cards to tide over household emergencies. We are not casting a judgment on whether individuals should have incurred such high levels of consumer debt. To meet household emergencies, ownership of more substantial and tangible assets is required. Their spread is restricted. One estimate is that 44% of American households lack sufficient assets to provide for three months living at a basic level if they became unemployed, or experience a severe illness or other crisis forcing them to give up work.³⁵

Another measure of property ownership is marketable wealth or net worth, defined as the gross value of owner-occupied housing, plus other investments owned by the household, such as the cash surrender value of insurance and pension plans, minus mortgage and consumer debt, including car loans, and other debt. In 2007, 27% of households had net worth of zero, negative or less than \$5,000. Indeed, the 60% of households with least net worth in 2007 owned only 4.2% of the total. Conversely, the richest 20% of households owned 85% of net worth.³⁶

Stocks and shares are one component of net worth. Although half of US households own some forms of stocks directly or indirectly, they are also re-

³⁵ Jennifer Brooks and Kasey Wiedrich, *Assets and Opportunity Scorecard* (Washington DC: Corporation for Enterprise Development, 2013).

³⁶ Edward Wolff, 'Recent Trends in Household Wealth in the United States: Rising Debt and the Middle-Class Squeeze — an Update to 2007', *Working Paper No. 589* (Annandale-on-Hudson, NY: Levy Economics Institute, March 2010), 43, 44.

³⁴ Jay Richards, *Money, Greed and God* (New York: Harper One, 2009), 87.

stricted in ownership. Wolff estimates for 2007 that the richest 10% of households owned 81% of the total value of stocks and shares held directly, and indirectly through mutual funds, trusts, and pension accounts. The remaining 90% of households owned 19% of the value of these assets.³⁷ As might be anticipated, African-Americans and Hispanics fared appreciably worse on all these indicators. These extreme disparities do not tally well with the requirements God and Jesus have for a wide or extensive distribution of property. Aside from consumer durables (disregarding quality), a severe imbalance characterizes property ownership.

2. Housing

How can those low on the property ladder be assisted upwards without losing the initiative to take care of themselves? Various projects exist in this direction. One exercise in which Christians are involved in the US is to increase the home ownership rate from its present overall 65% level, or 46% for those officially classed as poor households.³⁸ Some critics think these are not sensible undertakings for they inhibit people's labour mobility. On the other hand, people may prefer locational stability as long as they can get work. How Christians are helping achieve both home and work security via widening property ownership is canvassed below. The main source of information on these enterprises is their Ts, given that most have not been described in the academic literature.

An important Christian undertaking in the housing direction is Habitat for Humanity, perhaps better known for its international mission. According to its website, Habitat has assisted over 30,000 US families since 1978, constructing houses on a sweat-equity basis for low property ownership people.³⁹ Another valuable Christian-initiated housing program is run by the Nehemiah Corporation, originally funded by a Baptist church in Sacramento, that since 1994 has assisted 375,000 low to moderate income families into home ownership by renovating/building housing for lower income people, and by providing gifted-down payment funds.

Other examples are Esperanza USA, and the St Joseph's Carpenter Society (SJCS), concentrating activities around Camden, NJ. SJCS's website explains that it 'redevelops abandoned properties and sells new or rehabilitated houses to community residents, who are often looking to transition from renting to owning'.⁴⁰ These are also the aims of the broader church coalition, Camden Churches Organized for People, in which SJCS is involved. More indirect is the work of Christian Church Homes, providing owner-occupied housing for low income seniors.

All these housing initiatives fall within the advocacy gambit of the Christian organization, Housing Justice, and they also conform to HUD's Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, although the latter is more about advice and information

³⁷ Wolff, 'Recent', 20.

³⁸ Richards, *Money*, 87.

³⁹ www.habitat.org Accessed 14 Oct 2014.

⁴⁰ www.sjcs Camden.org Accessed 12 July 2014.

provision. One quality they all have in common is to prevent their homeowners from overextending themselves beyond what is economically feasible for their clientele.

Some Christian exercises in these directions, like those of the Nehemiah Corporation, are part of their broader strategies. Their initiatives to widen property ownership extend further than just increasing low income housing supply and accessibility. One example is the Abyssinian Development Corporation (ADC), started by the Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem, whose strategy is to prevent the displacement of Harlem residents. Since its founding in 1989, the organization has leveraged more than \$600 million in investments. It was one of the first community development corporations to help develop a retail supermarket in a community that lacked adequate access to healthy food. This is another by-product from widening property ownership in Harlem.

Another Christian-founded Community Development Corporation (CDC) is the New Community Corporation (NCC), Newark, NJ, started in 1968, and instigated by a local Catholic priest.⁴¹ It was born out of the civil unrest that spread through inner cities like Newark during the late 1960s. On its website, a range of programs is listed, including a transitional housing facility for the homeless, provided with on-site support services like child care, job search and workshops.

NCC also owns and manages more than 2,000 units of housing for seniors

and families in Newark, Orange and Jersey City, ranging from high-rises for the elderly to family townhouses. It owns a shopping centre, anchored by a major supermarket, aiming at building a local economic base and keeping jobs and profits in the community. New Community's Federal Credit Union specializes in serving low-income wage earners, recent immigrants and people with disabilities, without the fees charged by mainstream banking institutions. Its School of Practical Nursing, and Automotive Training Program provide job placement assistance on graduation.

A final example of a Christian-based CDC is Bethel New Life, Chicago, IL. It began in 1979 as a housing ministry of Bethel Lutheran Church to rebuild neighbourhoods left in ruins during the riots of the 1960s. Bethel has constructed nearly 1,000 units of housing, placed more than 7,000 residents in living wage jobs, and generated more than \$110 million in investments for Chicago's Westside. These four examples of Christian-instigated CDCs are among over 4,600 non-profit CDCs in the US, providing over 86,000 units of affordable housing yearly.⁴²

Another form of organization in which Christians are involved to increase property ownership for those low on the ladder is the Community Land Trust (CLT). CLTs buy and hold land permanently, removing it from the real estate market, and preventing market influences from causing prices to rise. CLTs build and sell affordable houses to people with limited

⁴¹ <http://www.newcommunity.org> Accessed 5 April 2014.

⁴² www.community-wealth.org Accessed 4 April 2014.

incomes. Currently with over 250 US CLTs organized into a National Community Land Trust Network, they keep home prices affordable by separating the price of the house from the cost of the land.

A Christian-based example is the Community Land Cooperative of Cincinnati, founded in 1981 by an ecumenical alliance of churches and ministries to prevent the displacement of low income, African-Americans from their neighbourhood. The Cincinnati coop receives no government funding. A newer Christian example is Share CLT, a program of Upper Valley MEND, Washington, started in 1998. Its aim is to provide affordable housing for people who would otherwise be unable to live and contribute to the community where they work, such as school teachers, nurses, mill, forestry, and orchard workers, and motel and restaurant workers.

The important work underway by non-Christian organizations to assist low income people into owner-occupied housing requires mention. Examples are Pioneer Human Services, while another is Enterprise Community Partners that supports over 1200 community-based non-profits to improve access to housing for low income people. Its assistance via equity, grants and loans has helped build or preserve 300,000 affordable rental and for-sale homes in the US.

The Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) is another important project, that since 1980 has been responsible for the creation of 303,500 affordable homes and apartments, plus its affiliates, like the National Equity Fund. Financial support is derived both from private benefactors, and the fed-

eral government's Low Income Housing Tax Credit, and the New Markets Tax Credit.

3. Small-scale employment

Effort to increase access to owner-occupied housing and enhance the human capital skills of those low on the property ladder—both widening property ownership—is a well-canvassed area in which Christians play a valuable role. Less well-known are exercises in which Christians participate to increase ownership in the sphere of employment. At first glance, this might seem to have little to do with property ownership, but the argument below is otherwise.

One way in which Christians are doing this currently is through Intentional Christian Communities (ICCs), of which hundreds exist in the US. These bridge the gap between home ownership or residential domicile, and employment/work activity. They are usually small and rural, some affiliated with the Fellowship for Intentional Community. Work is often with collectively-owned property, and a communal home and work-style is practised. They are not, therefore, unambiguous contributors to extending private property ownership.

Outside ICCs, workers are not usually owners or part-owners of the property with which they work, human capital aside. Because of this, most workers do not own their jobs. Nevertheless, Christians have been involved in encouraging types of jobs in which workers do own their jobs, and therefore the property with which they work. These include self-employment, partnerships, very small business, and

even larger firms of a non-joint stock company or corporation-type, such as employee share ownership plans (ES-OPS), and worker cooperatives.

Partnerships, for example, can range in size up to thousands of partners, with around 3 million US firms returning a partnership tax return. These types of employment organization are amenable to increase, for only around half of American workers work in large corporations with more than 500 employees, with 99 percent of all firms employing fewer than 500 people.

According to the website of the US Small Business Administration (SBA), small businesses (fewer than 500 employees) provide 55% of all jobs currently, and 66% of all net new jobs since the 1970s. Indeed, while corporate America has been 'downsizing', the rate of small business 'start-ups' has grown, and the rate of small business failures has declined. In 2009, 1 in 9 US workers was either incorporated or unincorporated self-employed.⁴³

Self-employment, therefore, currently plays an important role in employment provision, perhaps accounting for around 11% of the US labour force, a proportion that has remained steady since 1990. Self-employment is everywhere, from carpenters, carpet layers, and painters, to household goods repair/maintenance, and beauty salons, to doctors, dentists, and lawyers. Most of these have few employees. 80% of the unincorporated self-employed, for example, have from 1 to 4 employees, and the typical number of employees is declining.⁴⁴

Not many US Christian initiatives exist to foster property ownership via self-employment. Opportunity Fund is a Christian non-profit, lending micro-credit to small businesses in California, especially to women. Loans of \$280m have been made since 1995, to a wider need than just micro-enterprise. According to its website:⁴⁵

California is home to more than 3.4 million small businesses—employing half of the state's private sector workers. But 45% of small businesses fail because they are unable to get the loan they need. Many businesses are unable to access loans from traditional financial institutions because they are too young or too small. Opportunity Fund works to expand access to financial services. Our borrowers enter the financial mainstream with microloans that build a positive credit history and provides the working capital needed to expand operations and hire or retain employees.

Lending is not necessarily the answer to small business start-up. Debt can make businesses fragile, whereas private equity like partnerships, align interests, as well as bringing in necessary business expertise. Private equity with a buyout option by the entrepreneur may align incentive better. Other Christian-instigated exercises, such as Goodwill Industries, and Esperanza Unida encourage job training, employment placement services, and programs for people with disabilities, lack

United States', *Monthly Labor Review* Sept 2010, 17-32.

⁴⁵ <http://www.opportunityfund.org/learn/microloans/> accessed 14 April 2015.

⁴³ www.sba.gov Accessed 3 Feb 2014.

⁴⁴ Steve Hipple, 'Self-employment in the

of education or job experience, or who face employment challenges.

Esperanza, for example, free of charge trains mechanics, forklift operators and welders, making use of donated materials, such as cars, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Indirectly, these activities foster greater property ownership by those who participate in the programs, even though they are not confined to placing people in the job types above.

Again, non-Christian efforts to help those low on the employment property ownership ladder require mention. One that does focus on encouraging self-employment and micro-firms is the non-profit Accion U.S. Network that has made over 46,000 loans totalling over \$360 million since its inception in 1994, according to its website.⁴⁶ These loans have helped numerous entrepreneurs, from restaurateurs to brewers to soap makers. According to Accion, there are 10.8 million US small business owners who cannot obtain capital to grow their businesses. Although the SBA reports that 30% of companies collapse within two years, all of Accion USA's businesses older than two years are thriving.

Other micro-credit lenders play a part in extending employment property ownership in the US, such as Project Enterprise, Justine Petersen Housing, Women's Initiative for Self-Employment, Business Center for New Americans, ACE, Grameen America, Roberts Enterprise Development Fund, and Capital Good Fund, with about half of their loans going to business start-ups. Other social entrepreneurship firms,

like Pioneer Human Services, and Chrysalis, provide low-income people with transitional jobs, training workers in its own firms so that they can acquire skills enabling them to seek outside jobs.

By the work of these organizations, more people are assisted into private employment property ownership than would occur without the schemes. Although the aforementioned exercises use favourable government supports, this is probably not the major reason for the success of the employment ventures. The schemes, instead, conform more to a biblical guideline advocating voluntary redistribution, by which the rich engage in philanthropic giving.

This is not necessarily the answer to increasing property ownership for those low on the scale, however, for charity (and welfare) can be toxic.⁴⁷ It may do little to encourage the poor into employment or entrepreneurial effort, by which property ownership patterns stand a chance of being widened. However, charity could be directed more in these ways. Just assisting the poor into jobs as employees may not make much of a dent in patterns of private property ownership. Their wages are likely to be so low that they may not be able to afford property.

More effective would be greater encouragement to forms of business in which recipients of aid retain ownership of assets to facilitate their own employment. In this matter, rich Christians could play an important role. Among the richest 1% of households who own 43% of non-home worth,

⁴⁶ www.accion.org Accessed 18 April 2013.

⁴⁷ Robert Lupton, *Toxic Charity* (New York: Harper Collins, 2011).

Wolff reports that 74% owned their own businesses.⁴⁸ Christians among this group would be well placed to generate employee-owned businesses.

4. Larger-scale employment

The firm types above assisted by Christians and non-Christians have been mainly at the small end of the employment structure spectrum. Is it possible for Christians to envisage assisting the formation of larger size firm types in which employees own the capital with which they work? The US example of Employee Share Ownership Plans (ESOPs) suggests the opportunity. The website of the US National Center for Employee Ownership estimates that 36% of the work force, or 28 million workers, own stock in the companies in which they work, although only 40% of ESOPs own 100% of the company.⁴⁹

That ESOPs contribute to widening property ownership is shown in that ESOP participants have about three times the retirement assets of comparable employees in non-ESOP companies. Partly, this is because workers acquire stock in their company from company contributions, and rarely from their own purchases. One stimulus contributing to the formation of employee-owned firms has been where owners sell their businesses to their employees, say because they want to retire and cannot entice a family member to take over the business.⁵⁰

This occurs mainly in the direction of ESOPs than other types of employee-owned firms. Partly, this is because tax advantages have been created for owners wishing to sell their businesses to employees as ESOPs.

Another employee-owned firm type is the worker cooperative, favoured by a range of Christians on the political spectrum, including the present Tory Prime Minister of Great Britain, David Cameron, but extending back to Christians like Pope John Paul II, G. K. Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc. Here workers invest their own savings or borrowed property into a business enterprise in collaboration with fellow workers. Unlike the corporation, those who work in the co-op are owners, managers, and workers. This state of affairs approaches more the self-employment/partnership ethos than the corporation for 'when an individual truly owns a particular item... then that person has an incentive to treat the item well and to manage it effectively'. This situation 'empower[s] individuals to act responsibly with resources'.⁵¹

Worker cooperatives are not numerous, with the US Federation of Worker Cooperatives' website estimating 100 co-ops, over 3,500 worker-owners, and \$400 million annual revenues.⁵² Thirty of these co-ops trade as the San Francisco Bay Area Network, such as the Arizmendi Bakeries with their own organizational connection, employing around 15 worker-owners per store. Another example of a US worker co-op

48 Wolff, 'Recent,' 18.

49 www.nceo.org Accessed 11 May 2014.

50 Gar Alperovitz, *What Then Must We Do?* (White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2013), 41-44.

51 Austin Hill and Scott Rae, *The Virtues of Capitalism* (Chicago: Northfield Publishing, 2010), 112.

52 www.usworker.coop Accessed 11 May 2014.

is the Union Cab of Madison Cooperative, Wisconsin, operating since 1979, with over two hundred worker-owners.

The potential for institutional encouragement of worker cooperatives is illustrated by the Ohio Employment Ownership Centre at Kent State University. Since its inception in 2009, the Centre has facilitated the creation of three co-ops, including the Evergreen Cooperative Laundry, specializing in health care laundering. There is no incontrovertible evidence that employee owned and managed firms function less efficiently than conventional capital managed firms.⁵³ One area where their applicability could be extended is where governments decide to privatize formerly government-administered services, such as recreation centres, schools and universities.

However, barriers do exist against the formation of worker cooperatives. Workers may be reluctant to invest their savings in a business, although being made redundant can change this motivation. Most households own few assets, and may not be prepared to invest their meagre savings in a business. The bottom 40% of US households on average owned only \$2,200 net worth in 2007. If housing is excluded from

the calculation to yield non-home wealth, the average of the 40% bottom was a negative \$10,500—this is by how much they were in debt.⁵⁴ Nothing is available to invest in a business. On the other hand, cooperatives are more likely to be formed and function well where an institutional umbrella organization oversees their operation (including bringing interested workers together), and where an historical tradition favours their ethos.

Outside the US, Christians have been, and are, involved in the creation and operation of worker cooperatives. Historically, the Roman Catholic Church has played a leading role in this enterprise. Most well-known is the work of the Catholic priest, Father Jose Arizmendi, who from 1943-1976 was the pivotal figure in the development of the now-thriving Mondragon network of 132 worker cooperatives in Spain. In the northern province of Italy, Emilia-Romagna, 8,000 worker cooperatives exist, started by a mixture of Catholic and socialist supporters who now cooperate readily.

In Italy overall, 43,000 cooperative businesses operate, employing over 1 million people, with the Catholic Church assisting their creation since the 1880s through its own federation of coops, Confcoop, a recent development fostered by both Catholics and socialists, has been the formation of social cooperatives, in which physically and mentally disadvantaged people work with the able-bodied.

Christian and non-Christian provision of housing for those down the property ladder in the US encompass-

⁵³ Gregory Dow, *Governing the Firm: Workers' Control in Theory and Practice* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Georgeanne Artz and Younjun Kim, 'Business Ownership by Workers: Are Worker Cooperatives a Viable Option?' unpublished paper, Department of Economics, Iowa State University, April 2011; Saioa Arando, Monica Gago, Derek Jones, and Takao Kato, 'Efficiency in Employee-Owned Enterprises: an Econometric Case Study of Mondragon', Institute for the Study of Labor, Bonn, Discussion Paper, May 16, 2011.

⁵⁴ Wolff, 'Recent', 46.

es, in part, the renovation of deserted buildings, that may be provided at low cost by owners or municipal authorities. Analogous undertakings are underway affecting failing businesses, and deserted, bankrupt factories in Italy, Latin America, and Greece in which worker cooperatives are formed by redundant workers who formerly worked in the factories. An example of this process is in Argentina, known as the recovered factory movement. Estimates of these occupations of bankrupt factories range up to 250 coops with 15,000 workers, out of a total of 8,000 worker cooperatives in Argentina.

These small and larger employment-based examples have had the effect of increasing private property ownership for those low on the scale. For fostering greater property ownership among these strata, the corporation or joint stock company is probably not as effective a vehicle as the firm types specified above. Corporations are not as amenable to adjustment inside their employment structures to increase property ownership. In corporations, stock options or profit-sharing plans may not be realistic routes to increasing property ownership for those owning little property. Where they work in corporations, these workers are usually at the low end of the wage spectrum, to which stock options rarely apply, and for which profit-shares may be modest.

However, forms of 'shared capitalism' in total play an important role in the US economy, partly studied by the US National Bureau of Economic Research, finding between one-third and one-half workers so engaged. Although corporations provide most jobs, wealth generated by the company probably flows more to those at the higher

end of the ownership spectrum than to those at the lower.

In another way, corporations act to consolidate the relative greater accumulation of wealth by those high on the property ladder. High wealth people are in a much better position to buy shares than are those on the low side. Accordingly, as noted above, they own the preponderant share of the value of shares and stocks. This is so even though half of US households owned stock in 2007. The imbalance in property ownership is thereby consolidated, restricted ownership is maintained.⁵⁵

IV Conclusion

A normative biblical guideline has been deduced here—that wide private property ownership is necessary within society concomitant with a reduction in extreme disparities. This was derived by examining aspects of Jesus' teachings, even though his or biblical reasons for its necessity were not explored. It is interesting to note recent secular studies that advocate wider property ownership than occurs currently in the US.

For example, Wilkinson and Pickett show that greater disparity in income (a surrogate for property ownership) within twenty-three developed nations correlates with greater social ill-health. Stiglitz argues that high disparity makes for a less efficient and productive economy, and undermines

⁵⁵ The relation of the corporation to biblical thought is dealt with in Clive Beed and Cara Beed, 'A Christian Perspective on the Joint Stock Company', *Journal of Markets and Morality* 13, 1 (2010), 101-122.

democratic political processes.⁵⁶ Unlike these studies, this paper has suggested that private initiative plays an important part in encouraging private ownership, even though government may be required to provide the institutional framework for this to happen.

Ways were reviewed by which Christians could promote change inside the US more completely to attain the biblical guideline explored. Some of these changes are already underway, involving both Christians and non-Christians. The examples cited of all these processes described have depended on private initiative for their inception and

operation, even though government provides the institutional framework for their development—the elders at the gate, as it were.

In our times, the rule of law is essential to allow Christian and non-Christian ventures into promoting private property ownership. As private property ownership broadens, it is likely that democratic processes will extend. Analogously, all the residents of Israel were to be involved in interpreting and practising the Mosaic Law. To the extent that democratic procedures are facilitated by private property ownership, this notion fits with the biblical guideline scrutinized here. The more people have sufficient private property, the more they are able to exercise their democratic rights. This paper has discussed how this end might be achieved more readily than it is in the sphere of home ownership and of employment.

⁵⁶ Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, *The Spirit Level: Why More Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better* (London: Allen Lane, 2009); Joseph Stiglitz, *The Price of Inequality* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2012).

PATERNOSTER BIBLICAL MONOGRAPHS

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William Ames and his Contribution to Evangelical Theology

Billy Kristanto

I Introduction

This article examines the uniqueness of the thought of the Puritan theologian William Ames (1576–1633) in the context of Reformed evangelical theology. Ames has been regarded as an authoritative voice of this tradition by none other than Cotton Mather, John Norton, and Samuel Morison; Jonathan Edwards also admired Ames' idea of Christian virtues.

Even in today's context, Ames' theology can offer significant insights. In our post-enlightenment era, where a mere rational theology is found inadequate, Ames' point of theological departure remains attractive. Another relevant topic is his concept of happiness, considering we are now living in an age full of entertainment that can lead inescapably to a hedonistic view of life. His anthropology is not a discipline that stands alone in the modern sense, but one that is beautifully integrated with other doctrines such as soteriology and Christology. There is also ecumenical potential in Ames' doctrine

of sin when it is compared to that of Thomas Aquinas. With regard to the 'order of salvation', Ames can offer a broader understanding of evangelical soteriology so that unnecessary polemics could be avoided. The most original contribution in evangelical theology is perhaps his idea of conscience that helps shape the development of evangelical theological ethics.

Aspects that will be noted in this article include the point of departure in theology, the concept of humanity as created in God's image, the order of salvation, and the notion of happiness in human life. The study shows that despite much in common between Ames and his predecessors as well as his successors in the Reformed evangelical tradition, there are significant features of his system that are unique and relevant for our contemporary context.

II Point of Theological Departure

The Puritan divine Cotton Mather

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described William Ames as 'incomparable'.¹ John Norton turned to Ames as the chief authoritative voice regarding church polity.² Harvard historian Samuel Morison has noted that the books of Ames '... are found in almost every recorded New England library' and that they belong to the 'first furniture' of the library of Harvard College.³

The influence of Ames in later Puritanism is undeniable. Ames was a student of Augustine and Calvin. As a student of these giants, Ames started his book, *The Marrow of Theology*, with the treatment of faith as one of the two parts of theology.⁴ As well, Ames' Augustinian theological voluntarism is generally known by many scholars.⁵ However, Joel R. Beeke does not agree

with the term *voluntarism* to represent the key of Ames's theology. He writes, 'Within the parameters of orthodox Reformed theology, Ames stressed that Christianity is a Spirit-worked, vital, heartfelt faith that produces a genuine Christian walk.'⁶ It is clear that Beeke uses the term *voluntarism* with different understanding.

With regard to theological approaches however, Ames did not follow Calvin. Rather, by starting with the knowledge of God, Ames, with his emphasis on human will, wanted to secure theology as the doctrine of living for God according to God's will instead of a non-practical, speculative discipline that characterized cold orthodoxy. Sprunger has remarked that Ames's emphasis on the will was a response to 'the chill of orthodoxy that leaves men too comfortable'.⁷

Voetius, Ames's contemporary, already judged Ames's theological emphasis on the will to be a minority position in the Reformed tradition of the seventeenth century. Petrus van Mstricht, however, followed Ames's argument that faith receives agreement in the will:

a theoretical knowledge and consent is not sufficient; a practical act is required whereby men are convinced, and the will moved, to reach for the proffered God and Mediator (Rom. 7:18).... In the will saving

1 Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, Book I (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), 124.

2 Douglas Horton (ed.) and John Norton (trans.), *The Answer to the Whole Set of Questions of the Celebrated Mr. William Apollonius* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), xvi-xvii.

3 Samuel Morison, *The Intellectual Life of Colonial New England* (Ithaca: Great Seal Books, 1960), 11, 160; Morison, *The Founding of Harvard College* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1935), 267; quoted in J. Gregory Behle, 'The Marrow of Theology' in *Master's Seminary Journal* 9.1 (1998), 97.

4 William Ames, *The Marrow of Theology* I.iii, ed. John D. Eusden (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997), 80-83.

5 See Douglas Horton (trans.), *William Ames by Matthew Nethenus, Hugo Visscher, and Karl Reuter* (Cambridge: Harvard Divinity School Library, 1965), 185, 202; John D. Eusden, 'Introduction to Ames' in *Marrow*, 49; Martin Schmidt, Art. 'Ames, William' in *TRE* Vol. 2 (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1978), 452.

6 Joel R. Beeke, *Puritan Reformed Spirituality: A Practical Theological Study from Our Reformed and Puritan Heritage* (Darlington: Evangelical Press, 2004), 125.

7 Keith L. Sprunger, *The Learned Doctor William Ames: Dutch Backgrounds of English and American Puritanism* (Chicago: University of Illinois, 1972), 147.

faith receives concurrence by which we earnestly desire God and the mediator who offered themselves to us in the gospel and whom we accept and receive (John 1:12).⁸

Thus, as a voluntarist, Ames considered the will as ‘the first and proper subject of theology’,⁹ and started his discussion on ‘The Division and Parts of Theology’ with faith. Faith as receiving may be called an act of the will. That true theology should derive from above, i.e. from divine revelation rather than from human inquiry, was not an issue for Ames.

His theology was not without criticism however. Bavinck, for example, criticizes the concept of living for God as the content of dogmatics as an increasing acceptance of the subjective practical notion in theology—a tendency taken up and promoted by Immanuel Kant and Friedrich Schleiermacher—and, thereby, moving theology away from scientific objectivity of divine knowledge.¹⁰ Bavinck’s reading proves to be anachronistic for in Ames’ time there were no knowing/believing, reason/faith, or science/religion dichotomies promoted by Enlightenment philosophy. Defining theology as the doctrine of living for God has a high degree of compatibility with Calvin’s or

Zwingli’s prolegomena concerning the knowledge of God and knowledge of self.¹¹ Ames’ teacher, William Perkins, had related these two issues in his definition of theology:

Theologie is the science of living blessedly forever. Blessed life ariseth from the knowledge of God. Ioh. 17.3. *This is life eternal, that they know thee to be the only very God, and a Sonne thou has sent, Christ Jesus.* Isa. 53:11. *By his knowledge shall my righteous servant (viz. Christ) justify many.* And therefore it ariseth likewise from the knowledge of ourselves, because we know God by looking into ourselves.¹²

Years later, Peter van Mastricht, who was influenced by Perkins and Ames, related the definition of living for God with piety, a key term in Calvin’s prolegomena.¹³ Thus, the definition of theology as living to God is just another way of defining theology as knowing God and knowing self, which in practice teaches us piety, the source of religion.¹⁴ Following Perkins, Maccovius defined theology as ‘a discipline, in part theoretical, in part practical, teaching the way of living well and

⁸ Petrus van Mastricht, *Praktikale Godgeleerdheit* II.i.129 (Rotterdam and Utrecht, 1749-1753); cf. Gisbertus Voetius, *Disput.* V, 289, cited in Jan van Vliet, *The Rise of Reformed System: The Intellectual Heritage of William Ames* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2013), 64-65.

⁹ Ames, *Marrow*, I.i.9, 78.

¹⁰ Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics* Vol. 1: Prolegomena, ed. John Bolt (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 35.

¹¹ Cf. Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics* Vol. 1: Prolegomena to Theology (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 155.

¹² William Perkins, *Golden Chaine*, p. 11, col. 1 in *Works* (Cambridge, 1612-19) Vol. 1.

¹³ ‘This theoretical-practical Christian theology is nothing other than the teaching of living to God through Christ (*doctrina vivendi Deo per Christum*); or, the teaching that follows the way of piety (*doctrina, quae est secundum pietatem*).’ (Peter van Mastricht, *Theoretico-practica theologia* I.i.36).

¹⁴ Cf. Calvin, *Institutes* I.i.1.

blessedly in eternity'.¹⁵

Perkins and Maccovius represent the Ramist school of thought that defines theology as the teaching of both living well and living blessedly/happily.¹⁶ Ames however, created another school of thought in the Reformed evangelical tradition that one-sidedly emphasizes theology as living well/rightly, not as living blessedly/happily. Ames' scepticism towards the notion of living happily requires certain attention that we are going to deal with in the last section of this article.

III The Doctrine of Humanity

The doctrine of humanity is treated in the *Marrow* somewhat as part of or subsidiary to the doctrine of divine providence.¹⁷ Divine providence consists in the ordinary and the extraordinary government by God of the world.¹⁸ The latter is also called special government of intelligent creatures (1.9). One part of this special government deals with prescribing a law; another part relates to the ordering of events, which are the fall and the restoration of human being.¹⁹

Under the restoration section are included the doctrine of Christ (1.18 -23), the order of salvation (1.25 -30), the doctrine of the Church (1.31 -37), and the doctrine of the last things (1.38 -41). The doctrine of humanity and sin is especially considered under

the fall (1.12 -17). This structure is comparable to Calvin's treatment of the knowledge of man that is partly placed in the beginning of the second book in the last edition of his *Institutes*.²⁰ By placing the doctrine of humanity in close relation with the doctrine of sin, evangelical anthropological tradition has functioned as an anticipation to the doctrine of salvation.

In the chapter on creation (1.8), the human being is said to be the summary of all creation. Unlike other creatures, the human being was not brought forth by the Word only (let there be ...), but especially with 'greater counsel and deliberation' (let us make man).²¹ The dichotomy of body and soul with the priority of the latter was advocated by Ames: in his soul the human being is absolutely perfect; in his body contingently perfect.²²

On the other side, Ames also stated that the inward image of God is the perfection of soul *and* body, whose perfection is seen in its beauty and its usefulness conforming to the will of God.²³ In the Augustinian tradition and like Vermigli, Ames saw the body belonging to the inward image of God as long as it functioned as an instrument of a higher goal (*telos*) which is the righteousness of God.²⁴ The righteousness is however

¹⁵ Maccovius, *Loci communes theologici* (Amsterdam, 1658), I.

¹⁶ Cf. Peter Ramus, *Commentariorum de religion christiana* (Frankfurt, 1576), I.i.

¹⁷ Ames, *Marrow*, 72-73.

¹⁸ Ames, *Marrow*, I.ix.8.

¹⁹ Ames, *Marrow*, I.xi.

²⁰ Calvin, *Institutes* II.i-v; the other part was placed by Calvin in I.xv; cf. Ford Lewis Battles, *Analysis of the Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), 15.

²¹ Ames, *Marrow*, I.viii.63.

²² Ames, *Marrow*, I.viii.61.

²³ Gen 2:25 and Rom 6:13; see Ames, *Marrow*, I.viii.71-72.

²⁴ See Rom 6:13; cf. Peter Martyr Vermigli, *The Common Places of the Most Famous and*

one of the three aspects (the other two being wisdom and holiness) in which the human being is fit to live well. Here, Ames echoed Calvin's teaching on the three aspects included in human renewal.²⁵

In these three aspects, and in human faculties of understanding and will, the perfection of the soul consisted, while their external perfection consisted in human beings' dominion over lower creatures.²⁶ A certain image of God resulted from both the external and internal perfection of human being. Even though human being bore the true basis for the image of God, the perfect image of God is reserved for Christ.²⁷ Ames used the term *imperfection* of God's image in human beings as a denial (not deprivation) intended by God himself even before the fall.

This notion has the consequence that in Ames' thought, true anthropology cannot be considered apart from Christology. Christ was not sent to the world in order to meet God's soteriological agenda only but also the anthropological.

Of the relation between man and woman, Ames interpreted the creation of woman 'out of the man and for the man' as man's own good: nothing was 'missing for his well-being'.²⁸ Thus, the relation between man and woman is not a hierarchical one but complementary.

Renowned Divine Doctor Peter Martyr I.xiii.28 (S.I.: In Pater Noster Rovve, 1583), 124-125.

²⁵ See Calvin, *Institutes*, I.xv.4.

²⁶ Ames, *Marrow*, I.viii.73.

²⁷ Col 1:15 and Heb 1:3; see Ames, *Marrow* I.viii.68.

²⁸ Ames, *Marrow*, I.viii.79.

IV Sin and Punishment

Quoting Genesis 2: 17 and Romans 5: 12 Ames understood death as the punishment for sin.²⁹ It is the deprivation of life, which is 'both the joining of the soul with the body and all the perfection which belonged to man in that state'.³⁰ In another chapter on bodily death, mortality is called 'a dissolving or loosening of that bond by which the soul was joined with the body'.³¹

The perfect integrity between body and soul is thus extremely important in Ames' conception of a true life. Ames divided death into two parts: the punishment of loss [*damnum*] or defacement of God's image and the punishment of a matter of consciousness [*sensus*] or the spiritual bondage.³²

Ames believed that after the fall, freedom of the will still remains since it is essential to human nature. That freedom was however destroyed or left remote and dead by spiritual bondage to the devil, to the world, and to sin. Not only physical death, but also the multiplication of sin in our present life itself is a punishment for the first sin. Sinning suppresses the human nature and in sinning the human being is also subjected to inward suffering.

The first sin is called the original sin. Ames defined it as 'a habitual deviation of the whole nature of man or a turning aside from the law of God'.³³ Ames advocated the doctrine of total depravity: the corruption is attributed to the intellect, to the conscience, to

²⁹ Ames, *Marrow*, I.xii.28.

³⁰ Ames, *Marrow*, I.xii.30.

³¹ Ames, *Marrow*, I.xv.4.

³² Ames, *Marrow*, I.xii.34-43.

³³ Ames, *Marrow*, I.xiii.2.

the will, to every kind of affections, and lastly to the body as well. Sin is especially understood as the habitual lack of obedience to God's law. This understanding also applies to the definition of actual sin (1.14).

Ames' strong emphasis on the juridical aspect of sin may lead to the implication that being and becoming human means habitual obedience to God's law. There are two parts of sin: the formal which is an aversion to good, and also the material which is a turning and inclining towards evil.³⁴ Ames' concept of original sin as habit (*habitus*) brought him closer to Thomas Aquinas who understood original sin as habit in the sense of a disposition of a complex nature.³⁵ Actual sin as an act follows from original sin as a habit.

After the anthropological issue of God's image in the chapter on actual sin (1.14), its next logical placement is to be found in the story of its restoration, i.e. in the chapter on sanctification (1.29). Sanctification is defined as 'the real change in man from the sordidness of sin to the purity of God's image'.³⁶ As already mentioned above, the renewal of God's image in humanity includes the aspects of true righteousness and true holiness. For Ames, the anthropological understanding of God's image should be viewed within the soteriological perspective from sin to sanctification.

V Conscience and Theological Voluntarism

Another important aspect of eternal damnation is the terror of conscience, which the Bible describes as the perpetually gnawing worm.³⁷ Conscience plays a significant role in Ames' anthropological understanding. It is 'a practical judgment whereby that which a man knows is particularly applied to his good or evil so that it becomes a rule to direct his will'.³⁸ Like his teacher William Perkins who assigned the conscience to knowledge, Ames assigned it to the understanding; unlike Perkins however, Ames defined conscience as an *act* of practical judgment.³⁹ For Schmidt such conception of conscience which is characterized by certain autonomy was a development towards modern conceptions of this topic.⁴⁰ Ames's concept of conscience gives a strong impulse to his theological voluntarism. However, this is not to say that the role of conscience in Ames's thought is merely subjective for Ames related the believer's conscience to God's given commandments.

As a follower of Calvin, Ames too emphasized the motif of obedience as attested in his definition of theology with the concepts of faith and observance.⁴¹ Yet, his strong relation between conscience and the will has given a different colour to evangelical spirituality: instead of an introspec-

³⁴ Ames, *Marrow*, I.xiii.7-9.

³⁵ 'The second kind of habit is the disposition of a complex nature, whereby that nature is well or ill disposed to something, chiefly when such a disposition has become like a second nature, as in the case of sickness or health. In this sense original sin is a habit.' (cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* II.lxxxii.1).

³⁶ Ames, *Marrow*, I.xxix.4.

³⁷ Mk 9:4; Is 66:24.

³⁸ Ames, *Conscience, with the Power and Cases Thereof* I.i.3, English ed. (London, 1639), 89.

³⁹ Ames, *Conscience*, I.i.1; I.i.6.

⁴⁰ Schmidt, 'Ames', 452.

⁴¹ Ames, *Marrow*, I.ii.1; compare Schmidt, 'Ames', 452.

tive conscience as the measure of true knowledge, it is the power of freedom of a clear conscience—very much at home in the Ramist dialectic—that wills and does things voluntarily.⁴²

Ames gave a Christological foundation for his understanding of voluntarism: Christ's self-sacrifice for the sheep not compelled but voluntary.⁴³ Is such a conception inconsistent with his (Calvinistic) emphasis on the legal aspect of obedience? In the *Institutes* 1.15.2 Calvin used the testimony of conscience to support the idea of the immortality of the soul. Through its response to the divine judgment, the conscience is proved to have knowledge of God. The emphasis on the knowledge of God shows Calvin's concern to combat superstitious Roman Catholic religion in his time. Calvin opined that without theological edification, the church will be left in confusion and superstitious belief that finally will lead to idolatry instead of worship of the true God.

In contrast, Ames who lived until the first half of the seventeenth century, did not see himself in a polemical position against the Roman Catholic deficiency on the importance of knowledge or understanding. Though faith must be understood as an act of the understanding, it may rightly signify the act of the will too; it is an affair of the heart.⁴⁴

Ames even criticized the understanding of faith as a mere act of the intellect.⁴⁵ In the age of Reformed Orthodoxy, Ames saw greater danger in mere intellectual faith than in a superstitious belief that is characterized by lack of theological knowledge. In the age of 'rationalisation', 'moralisation' and 'confessionalisation', there was a natural need and tendency towards a stronger emphasis on the will than the intellect.⁴⁶ On the relation between faith, understanding and the will, Ames wrote:

True Christian faith which has a place in the understanding always leans upon divine testimony, as far as it is divine. But it cannot be received without a genuine turning of the will towards God.⁴⁷

In the same tenor Ames also criticized those who understood Christian faith as partly placed in the understanding (or knowledge) and partly in the will (or affections).⁴⁸ Placing faith partly (instead of wholly) in the affections will discourage a high regard for the essential role of affections in religion. The second part of theology according to Ames is observance. In observance, the role of the inward affections in the true religious worship is emphasized.⁴⁹ In the same tone, Ames

⁴² See the relation between Ames' conception of conscience and the thought of the Reformed philosopher Peter Ramus in Eusden's introduction to Ames, *Marrow*, 42-47.

⁴³ Jn 10:11,18; see Ames, *Marrow* I.xxii.2; I.xxii.27.

⁴⁴ Ames, *Marrow*, I.iii.2; 'Faith is the resting of the heart on God, the author of life and eternal salvation ...' (I.iii.1).

⁴⁵ Jn 6:35.

⁴⁶ Christoph Strohm, 'Methodology in Discussion of "Calvin and Calvinism"' in H.J. Selderhuis (ed.), *Calvinus Praeceptor Ecclesiae: Papers of the International Congress on Calvin Research*. Princeton, August 20-24, 2002 (*Travaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance* Vol. 388; Geneva: Droz, 2004), 81.

⁴⁷ Ames, *Marrow*, I.iii.5.

⁴⁸ Ames, *Marrow*, I.iii.22.

⁴⁹ Ames, *Marrow*, II.iv.17-25.

also emphasized the importance of hiddenness in Christian (inward) observance since it is a sign of sincerity.

If he be obedient in the absence, as well as in the presence of lookers on, in secret as well, yea and more, then in publike, phil.2.12. Mat.6.6.⁵⁰

If Vermigli had promoted a strong intellectual impulse in later Reformed Orthodoxy (without neglecting the importance of Christian virtues) Ames might rightly be called the opposite who counterbalanced the emphasis on the faculties of the heart and the will. That does not deny him the right to be a true Calvinist; on the contrary, Ames' division of theology into two parts of faith and observance echoed very much Calvin's rhetorical interrelation of doctrine and application in his theology.⁵¹

VI The Order of Salvation

Ames' order of salvation shows both similarities and uniqueness within the Reformed evangelical tradition. Following Calvin, Ames also stressed that the application of Christ's redemption begins with the work of the Holy Spirit. By quoting 1 Corinthians 12:13, Ames, along with Calvin, also understands the application of redemption as mystic union with and into the body of Christ.⁵² The discussion of the application of redemption follows after the exposition of Christ's person, office,

satisfaction, life, death, and exaltation.

This corresponds with the application of redemption consisting in the order of salvation: predestination, calling, justification, adoption, sanctification, and glorification. Calvin placed the chapter of predestination almost at the end of the third book in his *Institutes*. Ames, however, places predestination at the onset of his discussion on the order of salvation.

As noted by Muller, Ames' 'order of the various aspects of union with Christ is not primarily chronological but causal, given the priority of the divine over the human act'.⁵³ Thus, Ames' quotation from Ephesians 1:4 used to confirm the placement of predestination at the beginning of the order appears natural and is understandable.⁵⁴ Calvin understood predestination from the perspective of the believer's subjective experience of salvation, that is, *a posteriori*, while Ames sees it as the causal basis of redemption. Ames' supralapsarianism is attested in the statement that 'predestination does not necessarily presuppose that either its end or object exists; rather it causes it to exist'.⁵⁵ Despite the strong link with God's decree, predestination does not have the symmetrical dimension of double predestination; rather, it is foremostly a predestination to salvation.

As already noted by Eusden, in Ames' thought predestination is not a doctrine for inquiring into the divine mind or reason, thus primarily a theory

⁵⁰ Ames, *Conscience* III.v.1; III.v.7; This is the passage quoted by Jonathan Edwards in his *Religious Affections*, ed. John E. Smith (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 374 n.

⁵¹ See the observation of Calvin's use of rhetorical structure in Christoph Strohm, 'Methodology', 72.

⁵² Ames, *Marrow*, I.xxiv.2.

⁵³ Richard A. Muller, *Calvin and the Reformed Tradition: On the Work of Christ and the Order of Salvation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 235.

⁵⁴ Ames, *Marrow*, I.xxv.2.

⁵⁵ Ames, *Marrow*, I.xxv.8.

about divine foreordination, but ultimately a statement of a divine gracious act.⁵⁶ This is confirmed also by including this doctrine within soteriological *loci* instead of within the doctrine of God. However, such placement cannot be taken for granted in Reformed evangelical tradition. According to Boughton, Vermigli, Zanchi, and Beza, for instance, had betrayed the more humanistic experimental method of the Reformers by venturing metaphysically into the priority of divine decree as a form of Reformed Aristotelian scholastic metaphysics, while Perkins who followed Beza also discussed predestination under the doctrine of God.⁵⁷

Predestination is followed by calling, by which union with Christ is accomplished. At the beginning of the chapter Ames describes union with Christ as one of the two parts of application (the other being the partaking of the benefits flowing from the union). This twofold division echoes precisely Calvin's teaching.⁵⁸ Furthermore, there are two parts of calling: the (objective) offering of Christ and its personal

(subjective) reception.⁵⁹ If the objective presentation of Christ is the sufficient and necessary means of salvation, the subjective reception of Christ can be termed conversion or regeneration.⁶⁰

Thus, regeneration here is not understood as the objective operation of the Holy Spirit creating faith in the heart of a believer; rather, it emphasizes the subjective side of the believer in receiving Christ's offer of salvation. This (passive) reception of Christ's offer is generated especially in the will since the enlightening of mind only is not sufficient.⁶¹ The turning of will to do good and to shun evil is called repentance.⁶² Thus, repentance might be viewed as the fruit of conversion or regeneration.

In his *Institutes*, Calvin also understood repentance as 'our regeneration by faith',⁶³ even identifying it with regeneration:

Therefore, in a word, I interpret repentance as regeneration, whose sole end is to restore in us the image of God that had been disfigured and all but obliterated through Adam's transgression.⁶⁴

Repentance consists in two parts: mortification (of the flesh) and vivification (by the Holy Spirit). Note that in Calvin's order, repentance comes after faith for it is the fruit of faith. Ames however, perceives repentance as prior to faith.⁶⁵

56 Eusden, 'Introduction to Ames' in *Marrow*, 27-28.

57 Cf. Lynne Courter Boughton, 'Supralapsarianism and the Role of Metaphysics in Sixteenth-Century Reformed Theology' in *WTJ* 48 (1986), 65; William Perkins, *A Golden Chain: Or the Description of Theology* I.105-12, in *Works* (London, 1616); see Jan van Vliet, 'Decretal Theology and the Development of Covenant Thought: An Assessment of Cornelis Graafland's Thesis with a Particular View to Federal Architects William Ames and Johannes Cocceius' in *WTJ* 63 (2001) 401n33.

58 Calvin, *Institute,s* III.i.1 and IV.i.1; see also Billy Kristanto, *Sola Dei Gloria: The Glory of God in the Thought of John Calvin* (Frankfurt am Main et al.: Peter Lang, 2011), 140-141.

59 Ames, *Marrow*, I.xxvi.7.

60 Ames, *Marrow*, I.xxvi.19.

61 Ames, *Marrow*, I.xxvi.21-24.

62 Ames, *Marrow*, I.xxvi.29.

63 Calvin, *Institutes*, III.iii.

64 Calvin, *Institutes*, III.iii.9.

65 Ames, *Marrow*, I.xxvi.31.

How does the relation of repentance to faith in Ames' thought distinguish him from Calvin? First, Ames states that repentance and faith have the same cause and principles as both are God's free gifts; secondly, both are in the will; thirdly, they are begotten at the same time.⁶⁶ Though begotten at the same time, repentance can be said to precede faith because from the perspective of a sinner the belief in being reconciled to God in Christ (faith) follows the feeling of having left one's sins behind (repentance).⁶⁷

The similar order is also attested in Calvin's *Institutes*, using a different vocabulary, namely the relation between repentance and forgiveness of sins. In the same tenor Calvin notes that in a sense repentance is the prior condition of forgiveness, yet, at the same time it is not the basis of our deserving pardon.⁶⁸ What is called forgiveness of sins by Calvin, is termed faith by Ames.

Therefore, Kendall's representation of Ames' *ordo salutis*, describing repentance as the prerequisite to faith, is a one-sided statement.⁶⁹ It is true that 'repentance, so far as it comprises the care, anxiety, and terror connected with the law, precedes faith in order of nature, as a preparing and disposing cause'; however, as already noted above, repentance and faith are 'begotten at the same time'. On the other hand, 'insofar as it turns man away effectively and genuinely from sin, by which God is offended', repent-

ance even 'follows faith and depends upon it as an effect upon its cause'.⁷⁰ Thus, Ames can say both that repentance precedes faith *and* faith precedes repentance, depending upon in what sense they are interrelated.

In his *Commentary on John* written before the fourth and the fifth edition of the *Institutes*, Calvin also holds the view that we should not feel obliged to choose between the order of faith—regeneration or regeneration—faith.

It may be thought that the Evangelist reverses the natural order by making regeneration to precede faith, whereas, on the contrary, it is an effect of faith, and therefore ought to be placed later. I reply, that both statements perfectly agree; because by faith we receive the *incorruptible seed* (1 Peter 1:23), by which we are born again to a new and divine life. And yet faith itself is a work of the Holy Spirit, who dwells in none but the children of God. So then, in various respects, faith is a part of our regeneration, and an entrance into the kingdom of God, that he may reckon us among his children. The illumination of our minds by the Holy Spirit belongs to our renewal, and thus faith flows from regeneration as from its source; but since it is by the same faith that we receive Christ, who sanctifies us by his Spirit, on that account it is said to be the beginning of our adoption.⁷¹

Thus, Ames follows Calvin when he perceives regeneration as prior to faith in order to emphasize the initiative

66 Ames, *Marrow*, I.xxvi.30.

67 Ames, *Marrow*, I.xxvi.30.

68 Calvin, *Institutes*, III.iii.20.

69 R.T. Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press), 159-160.

70 Ames, *Marrow*, I.xxvi.30.

71 Calvin, *Commentary on John* 1:13.

character of divine work as the cause of human response.

The Reformed evangelical tradition that one-sidedly speaks of regeneration before faith comes from the writings of Peter Martyr Vermigli. Not only so, Vermigli even understands regeneration as ‘the initial point at which God begins to bring about redemption in the life of an individual’.⁷² Vermigli’s concept finds strong reception in later Reformed Orthodoxy. By accommodating both the order of faith–regeneration and of regeneration–faith, the broader Reformed evangelical tradition as in Calvin and Ames has successfully maintained the twofold perspective from the causal divine act as well as from the subjective human experience. It has thereby managed to accommodate the broader evangelical soteriological concepts which commonly begin with faith.

VII Happiness

The notion of happiness is mentioned by Ames at the end of his ‘ordo salutis’, on the topic of glorification. He describes glorification as ‘the real change in man from misery, or the punishment of sin to eternal happiness’.⁷³ In his *Marrow of Theology*, happiness appears

seven times: in the discussion on the nature of theology, on special government of intelligent creatures, on the consequences of sin, on the difference between the new and the old covenant, and finally on glorification.

Ames seems to distinguish between goodness and happiness, or between human pleasure and divine glory. Living well is considered more excellent than living happily, because happiness, which has to do rather with human pleasure, should not be the chief end of human striving; it is rather ‘goodness which looks to God’s glory’ that has to be striven for.⁷⁴

In his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle already wrote that living happily could be identified with living well although there had been disagreement on what kind of life could be regarded as living well:

Verbally there is a very general agreement; for both the general run of men and people of superior refinement say that it is [*eudaimonia*], and identify living well and faring well with being happy; but with regard to what [*eudaimonia*] is they differ, and the many do not give the same account as the wise. For the former think it is some plain and obvious thing like pleasure, wealth or honour ...⁷⁵

Aristotle then mentioned the possibilities such as a life of pleasure (associated with Epicurus), a life of political activity, and a philosophical life. For Aristotle, *eudaimonia* is a life

⁷² Frank A. James III, ‘Peter Martyr Vermigli (1499–1562)’, in Carter Lindberg (ed.), *The Reformation Theologians: An Introduction to Theology in the Early Modern Period* (Oxford et al.: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 203; in Vermigli’s own words: ‘This is the righteousness which first clings and adheres to our minds by the blessing of God through Christ.’ (Peter Martyr Vermigli, *In Epistolam S. Pauli Apostoli ad Romanos commentarij doctissimi ...* [Basel: P. Perna, 1558], 517).

⁷³ Ames, *Marrow*, I.xxx.1.

⁷⁴ Ames, *Marrow*, I.i.8.

⁷⁵ Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics* §21; 1095a17, trans. David Ross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

of 'virtuous activity in accordance with reason'.⁷⁶ It is obvious that Ames carefully avoided the Epicurean hedonistic philosophy in his definition of theology through his exclusion of living happily.

Ames also took up the Aristotelian philosophy on the close tie between *eudaimonia* and *arête* by emphasizing the glory of God as the highest Christian virtue to be pursued. Furthermore, the eternal state of happiness or unhappiness is the *telos* of humanity as intelligent creatures created after the image of God.⁷⁷ In the same manner, the elected angels are endowed with full happiness in the fullness of glory.⁷⁸

However, the fall into sin brings punishment as its consequence. This punishment deprives the good of happiness.⁷⁹ God then renewed the broken old covenant through the new covenant that led humanity to happiness once lost.⁸⁰ Finally, eternal happiness is the final state brought by the real change of glorification and felt in intimate participation in the chief good.⁸¹ There is an inseparability between true happiness and divine glory.

Thus, Ames differentiated between true happiness and false happiness resulting from human beings striving for their own pleasure. The notion of the inseparable connection between human happiness and divine glory is then taken up by Jonathan Edwards. For him, God's glory consists in humanity's love to God for his excellence

and rejoicing in this excellence.⁸² At the same time, the true happiness and joy of humanity consist in rejoicing in God and in God's excellence. Through Ames, Edwards strongly relates the vision of divine glory to the idea of human happiness. On this point, Edwards has modified American Puritanism via his predecessor.

Conclusion

The significance of Ames in the evangelical tradition is indubitable. However, significant departure and development of thought in Ames within the tradition cannot be underestimated. Ames started his *Marrow* with the issue of faith as an act of human will, thereby emphasizing the practical dimension of his theology.

His theological voluntarism certainly cannot be interpreted as a boasting of the human will against the work of the Holy Spirit that precedes faith. Rather, it is a development in the rise of Reformed Orthodoxy no longer in combat with the medieval Roman Catholicism. While it has its root in Augustine, Ames' theological voluntarism was a significant development in the evangelical tradition. It might help to correct the modern theological rationalism that has proved insufficient in the project of Enlightenment.

On the relation between religion and affections, Ames placed inward affections particularly in relation with true

76 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1097b22-1098a20.

77 Ames, *Marrow*, I.x.2.

78 Ames, *Marrow*, I.x.18.

79 Ames, *Marrow*, I.xii.11.

80 Ames, *Marrow*, I.xxiv.16.

81 Ames, *Marrow*, I.xxx.1.

82 Jonathan Edwards, 'The End for Which God Created the World', in John Piper (ed.), *God's Passion for His Glory* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1998) 245. For various Amesian echoes in the thought of Jonathan Edwards see the study in Vliet, *The Rise*, 233-263.

religious worship, while religion itself is the first part of observance (the other part being justice or righteousness), which is the second part of theology (the first part being faith). A typical product of Reformed Orthodoxy, Ames was critical of the sufficiency of mere theoretical knowledge while heavily emphasizing the role of will in the context of his theological voluntarism. Consequently, affections are not part of Christian faith but its integral whole. The problem with today's Christianity is that on the one side some knowledgeable Christians are not affectionate while on the other side some other affectionate or enthusiast Christians do not have sufficient theological concepts. For Ames, theological knowledge and religious affections go hand in hand.

Ames was an advocate of the concept of a twofold divine image. He placed the treatment of the *imago Dei* in the context of the doctrine of sin and sanctification in Christ, thus in a strong soteriological dimension. In this respect, Ames' anthropology was in full continuity with the evangelical tradition.

Although using different vocabularies and definitions, Ames is in line with Calvin in his broader understanding of his '*ordo salutis*' regarding regeneration and faith. Unlike the one-sided statement that Reformed evangelical theol-

ogy always teaches that regeneration precedes faith, both Ames and Calvin could also say to a certain extent that faith precedes regeneration (as in the broader evangelical tradition). Such broader understanding might help minimize the polemic tension between Calvinist and non-Calvinist evangelicals, thus offering an ecumenical potential.

Finally, though Ames could also speak positively of human happiness when related to obedience and divine glory, he had a certain reservation for defining theology as living happily/blessedly. Ames successfully created a school in the evangelical tradition that is basically critical towards the idea of happiness. Drawing traditionally from Perkins, Ramus, and Aristotle, Ames emphasized the search for God's glory as the highest Christian virtue.

This in turn is the foundation of living well that finally leads to true and eternal happiness. Originating in Calvin's theology, the centrality of *gloria dei* was taken up and developed as a central motivation in evangelical ethics by Ames. It is not that happiness does not have a place in evangelical spirituality; rather, the search for human happiness tends to move towards a self-centred direction that finally results in a sinful hedonistic living. Here, Ames' theology can help safeguard the integrity of a godly evangelical spirituality.

'Discerning the Obedience of Faith'

A history of the Theological Commission of the World Evangelical Alliance 2nd edition

Part II

David Parker

Introduction

This article contains the second part of the final two chapters of the second edition of the history of the WEA Theological Commission, 'Discerning the Obedience of Faith' published in 2014 to mark 40 years of activity by the Commission.¹ The first part was published in our previous issue, *ERT* (2015) 39-3, 271-279. These chapters cover the ten year period since the first edition was issued. The text of the earlier part is unchanged. It was originally published in book form and also in the pages of this journal (2004, 28:2, 100-118; 2004, 28:3, 196-219, 2004, 28:4, 292-314). The period covered by this extract involved many changes for the Theological Commission which continues its vital, although new, role within the World Evangelical Alliance, which

is also undergoing a transformation as it comes under new leadership in 2015.

*Dr Thomas Schirmacher,
Executive Chair, TC of WEA.*

IX Bangkok 2008

The annual gathering for 2008 was planned for Bangkok to be followed by the GA at Pattaya. There was high expectation that this event would see further consolidation and progress. The usual multi-pronged program had to be modified because of the WEA GA being held immediately after the TC meeting. There would only be opportunity for a modest consultation involving local theologians and some informal fellowship.

The consultation was held at the Baptist Seminary on 24 October on the theme, 'The Holistic Gospel in a Developing Society'. There was a wide range of local theologians and guests in attendance to hear papers by James Nkansah (Kenya) and Justin Thacker

¹ A PDF version of the full text is available on-line without charge at <http://www.bucer.de/ressource/details/discerning-the-obedience-of-faith.html>

(UK), to join in small group discussions of several key aspects of the theme, and for fellowship over a shared meal. A statement was prepared for publication.² The consultation was held in conjunction with the inaugural meeting of the Fellowship of Theological Institutes of Thailand

Business was dominated by a sudden change in TC leadership. It was expected that Dr Brian Edgar would take over the role of chairman as planned in 2007. However, the concerns that he had expressed at that time about the organisational relationship between the TC and the WEA had escalated. In June 2008, WEA International Director, Geoff Tunnicliffe, had visited Australia and there had been intensive discussion between him and Dr Edgar on the issue. Dr Edgar had not been convinced and, being unwilling to commit himself to working as chairman of a commission in such an arrangement, he withdrew his agreement to become chair and also withdrew from membership in the Commission.

Therefore, when the TC met in Bangkok, it was necessary to re-think its leadership planning. Dr Hille was no longer available to continue as chair so Dr Thacker of UK was appointed acting-chair with Dr James Nkansah as vice-chair. Dr Justin Thacker, who had joined the TC in 2007, was a medical doctor with specialisation in paediatrics and had served for some time in Africa. He studied at London School of Theology and gained a PhD from King's College London. He was currently head of theology at EA UK, having succeed-

ed David Hilborn in that post. Dr David Parker's appointment as Executive Director was extended to 2009, but if no replacement had been found by then, it would be extended again for another year.

The membership of the TC core group was extended with the appointment of Rev. David Roldan as a representative of Spanish speaking Latin America. He already had a fine record of scholarship, pastoral concern and administrative leadership as Dean of Facultad Internacional de Educacion Teologica (FIET), Buenos Aires, Argentina, editor of a theological journal and a former National Secretary of the Accreditation Association of Seminaries. His appointment brought the representation from Latin America up to full strength. There was also discussion on the possibility of appointing a suitably qualified theologian from the WEA Women's Commission to redress the gender balance of the TC.

The Berlin statement on Jewish evangelism was endorsed and consideration was given to possible new projects now that the existing ones were coming to their successful conclusion.

After the end of the TC meeting, several members attended the WEA 12th GA at Pattaya. There was little formal involvement by the commissions at this event, but the TC display stand attracted favourable attention. It was supplemented by a range of material from Oden's Early Christianity project.

The sudden change in leadership prospects at Bangkok was disappointing, but there were other positive developments so the TC ended the year planning on forging ahead with its program, especially the much anticipated consultation in Brazil in 2009.

² The papers are accessible at [http://www.worldangelicals.org/commissions/tc/PDF%20\(TC\).pdf](http://www.worldangelicals.org/commissions/tc/PDF%20(TC).pdf).

In 2009 Dr Rolf Hille was appointed as ecumenical relations spokesperson for the WEA, which meant that responsibility for the dialogues would officially pass from the TC to the WEA itself, but the TC resolved to maintain good informal relations with Dr Hille in this important area of work. Meanwhile, Dr Hille was making preparation for the first session of the new round of the talks with the Roman Catholic Church scheduled to be held in association with the TC gathering in Brazil later in the year.

With new younger leadership hopefully in place soon, together with the filling of the remaining vacancies, it was hoped that there could be considerable growth in the next few years even though the budget was likely to be affected by gloomy world financial situation. After Latin America, there were possibilities of holding consultations with annual gatherings in southern Europe or the Middle East in 2010 and in West Africa in 2011. There would also be the finale of the TWG conferences and active participation in Lausanne III. There was talk also of linking up with other theological societies and expanding the publications more widely by electronic means, and the possibility of a new relationship with the Lausanne TWG.

X Publications

Meanwhile, publications continued to be a significant part of the TC program. Books from the contextual theology and the Jewish evangelism projects were under way, but would take some time to appear. The quarterly *Theological News* was still produced regularly, with more the 700 copies being posted

to seminaries, individuals, and the WEA family in all parts of the world; the entire run of back issues from 1969 to 2004 was available for purchase on a CD. There was also an electronic version emailed twice each quarter and a regular update for Global Members, all of which helped promote the TC activities and invite helpful responses. The CD of *ERT* and other TC publications was due to be updated with more recent material.³ However, a sudden steep increase in cost while this move was being actioned meant that the update did not go ahead.

There was considerable concern about the journal, *Evangelical Review of Theology*. There was a regular supply of articles and reviews which were the responsibility of the TC, but difficulties were beginning to develop with the production of the journal.

From the beginning of the journal in 1977, the generosity and vision of Jeremy Mudditt, Managing Director of Paternoster Press had been a significant factor in its success, but his health problems in the late 1980s meant that Paternoster Press became part of Send the Light (STL), a large Christian literature distribution agency, which had originally been associated with Operation Mobilisation; it later merged with the International Bible Society (now Biblica) to create a huge global business. Paternoster periodicals, includ-

³ Additional material included the extra volumes of *ERT* up to 2005 (Vol 29), and 3 books, *Responsible Stewardship of God's Creation* by Ken Gnanakan, *Hope does not Disappoint — textbook on eschatology* edited by Jochen Eber, and *Discerning the Obedience of Faith: A short history of the WEA Theological Commission* by David Parker.

ing *ERT*, were part of the Authentic Media division of STL with Jeremy Mudditt as Publishing Manager. From 1995, further health problems meant that Jeremy Mudditt became a consultant to STL, but was still heavily involved, and remained highly supportive of *ERT*.

However, in 2008 the global financial crisis and difficulties with a new computer system combined to cause severe difficulties for STL's operations in the UK. One of many steps that it wanted to take was to cease production of its journals. Not wanting to see this happen, Jeremy Mudditt succeeded in arranging for AlphaGraphics, a company in Nottingham which had already been producing a lot of Paternoster materials, to take over the management; *ERT* was one of only four journals that AG considered viable.

So from January 2009, *ERT* was produced by AlphaGraphics with the TC continuing to provide content as before. However, there were considerable logistical difficulties in making the transfer, and the first two issues of 2009 were delayed considerably. This was an embarrassment to the TC because one of those was a special TWG issue which was needed for the continuing series of conferences; problems with this issue were also aggravated by difficulties in TWG supplying art work. One positive development from the transfer to new production arrangements was the availability of on-line subscriptions; electronic versions of *ERT* were also available but not at any discounted pricing.

There were more difficulties for *ERT* when Jeremy Mudditt's wife, Mag, became seriously ill thus curtailing Jeremy's involvement; she died late in

2009, only to be followed by his own illness, and then his death a short time later on 21 April 2010. Meanwhile, the business prospects of STL deteriorated even further, going into administration in December 2009 and being liquidated a year later. Parts of the company were sold off in December 2009 with Authentic Media (including Paternoster) being acquired by the Australian book distributor, Koorong which purchased its intellectual property, contracts and other parts of the business. However, these developments had no direct impact on *ERT* because the 'Paternoster periodicals' continued to be produced by AlphaGraphics in Nottingham as a virtually separate operation.⁴

In the early part of 2009, the TC was involved with some other conferences. The TWG took place in Panama City, in late January with the theme, 'The whole church', again involving about 25 participants from 12 countries, including Dr Rolf Hille, Dr Justin Thacker and Dr Daniel Salinas (Paraguay) for the TC.

In Africa, Matt Cook was the TC representative at a conference on 'The future of Evangelical theology in Francophone Africa' held in Bangui, Central African Republic, May 17-21, 2009. At this event, funded by the Overseas Council and others, the need for contextual theology along the same lines as the TC's own project was fully recognized. Further information about Lausanne III in Cape Town was expected mid-year after a conference of leaders in Seoul, South Korea.

⁴ AlphaGraphics Nottingham was sold in 2014 to AlphaGraphics Stockton on Tees but no changes in day to day operations were anticipated.

However, the major event for 2009 was the long awaited consultation in Brazil, but before this a major change took place.

XI Change in Leadership

Soon after the 2008 meeting in Bangkok, following discussion with UK EA, it was confirmed that Justin Thacker would be able to take over as chairman of the TC. He would have no trouble maintaining his regular work as head of theology for EA UK as well as fulfilling his role with the TC because the TC chairmanship was an honorary position which was mainly concerned with the annual meeting and the general operation of the TC as a committee and not the day to day work of the TC or its contacts with the WEA. This contrasted with the position of Executive Director, however, which was normally full time, appointed by and answerable to the WEA ID; also unlike the chairmanship, the position of Executive Director was officially recognised in the WEA organisational structure.

However a few weeks later, early in the following year, Dr Thacker began to seek ways in which he could secure funding to enable him to work part-time as both Chairman and Executive Director. In anticipation of this development, he started to take active control and to involve himself in the day to day affairs of the TC.

This meant that the activities of the current Executive Director were restricted and so in April 2009, Dr David Parker indicated to the WEA ID that he would be concluding his work and would hand over all operations to Dr Thacker. Dr Parker's involvement with the TC, which first began in 1986,

ended on 30 June 2009. Old records were sent to the Billy Graham Centre Archives which housed other TC and WEA material, while current records were sent to London.

Dr Thacker now took over all the normal administrative activities, editorial work on *ERT*, *TN* and the website, the Global membership scheme, relationships with the WEA and other outside bodies; in particular, he was responsible for planning of the annual gathering and consultation in Brazil.

One of the new developments was the immediate cessation of the production of *Theological News* as a printed publication because it was considered to be expensive and outmoded as a form of communication. It was planned instead to commence a website with varied content with which theologians around the world could interact.

XII Sao Paulo, Brazil 2009

The 2009 annual gathering was held as planned in Sao Paulo, Brazil, 22-25 July, consisting of the annual business meeting and a symposium for theologians of the region. Attendance by global members was smaller than usual.

A major concern for the business session was Dr Thacker's role in the TC. He was still officially the chairman only, but after discussion it was agreed that the TC would recommend to the WEA that he be appointed Executive Director for a period of 5 years. Under this scheme, the TC would provide funding to the EA UK to cover 30% of his time, while EA UK would provide additional funding, so that he could devote 50% of his time to TC work; Thacker would remain as an employee of the British body rather than the TC or WEA.

Another important part of the business session was to reassess the vision and purpose of the TC in the light of the recent changes to its leadership and to plan for the future. The representation of various parts of the world on the TC core group was also a matter for discussion. The meeting was told that there were now many networks of theologians and institutions which had not existed in earlier times, and that there was now no longer any need for the TC to focus on developing these kinds of groups. Instead it should be more focused on the global situation and in providing theological insights relevant to the serious issues facing the church in the world. One way of expressing this new direction, it was decided, was to have *ERT* concentrate more on thematic issues in the future.

In what the chairman said was a 'turning point' for the TC⁵ the meeting developed a new vision statement to state what was unique about the TC, deciding on the slogan: 'Providing theological reflection from a global perspective'. In other words,

In faithfulness to Christ and in order to serve the Church, the Theological Commission of the World Evangelical Alliance exists to provide international theological reflection on issues of importance affecting the church and society everywhere.

Therefore the TC would aim 'to be a prophetic evangelical voice that is globally representative, faithful to Scripture, theologically informed and which speaks with clarity and relevance to both the church and the world.'

These new goals would be carried

out by representative teams of expert theologians addressing major issues, working in partnership with other groups as appropriate and disseminating their findings as widely and effectively as possible. It would also encourage others groups and individuals to do the same.

The consultation was attended by about 80 participants, mostly from Brazil, and dealt with the state and nature of contemporary evangelical theology in Latin America. Main addresses were given by Ricardo Barbosa, Daniel Salinas and Marcelo Vargas, while other significant contributions came from TC members Claus Schwambach, David Roldan and James Nkansah with Valdir Steuernagel and Norbeto Saracco also presenting addresses.⁶

A wide range of issues was raised by the papers and discussion, such as fragmentation of evangelicalism, the visibility of public witness, and a lack of an explicit systematic theology. There was also concern expressed about the responsibility for keeping alive an evangelical spirit faithful to the 1974 Lausanne tradition, and the way in which the evangelical movement should relate to neo-pentecostalism. Overall there was a major focus on maintaining the legacy of the evangelical tradition, especially as linked to the pioneers of Latin American evangelical theology.

XIII Chairman's Resignation

There was little follow up to implement the new 'vision' for TC adopted at this meeting in the remainder of the

⁶ Some of the papers were published in *ERT* 34:4 (Oct 2010).

year, and even the regular activities declined; there was little involvement by the core or global members. *ERT* continued to be produced but *TN* did not appear in either print or electronic form. However, the TC was represented by Dr Thomas Schirrmacher and Dr Rolf Hille at a conference held in Bad Urach, Germany in September 2009 on the theology of suffering jointly sponsored with the WEA Religious Liberty and Missions Commissions and the Lausanne Theology Working Group; the statement and papers from this consultation were published in *Suffering, Persecution and Martyrdom - Theological Reflections* edited by Christof Sauer and Richard Howell.⁷ The final Lausanne TWG conference took place in Beirut, Lebanon 14-19 February 2010 with the topic, 'The whole world', although without formal TC representation; the papers were published in the July 2010 issue of *Evangelical Review of Theology*.

There was unexpected and serious development when in February 2010, when overnight, Dr Thacker resigned from his position with EA UK for personal and family reasons; as a consequence, he was also obliged to resign from his role with the TC. None of the arrangements which had been made at the last annual TC meeting in Brazil for Dr Thacker to share his time between the EA UK and the TC had ever been formalised and he had not been formally appointed as Executive Director.

Part 2 Re-Building – An Integrated Unit 2010-2014

I Restoration and New Leadership

To deal with the emergency created by the sudden vacancy in the leadership and administration of the TC, the International Council, with the full recommendation of the International Director, appointed Dr Thomas Schirrmacher of Bonn, Germany, at very short notice as Executive Chairman. Dr Schirrmacher, a prominent German evangelical scholar and religious liberty activist, was well known in WEA circles through his involvement in the IIRF, as spokesman for Human Rights and in ecumenical discussions. He had also been active in regional and national theological associations including FEET and ATA, as well as lecturing at various seminaries and conferences around the world. Since 1996, he was the Rector of the multi-campus international Martin Bucer Seminary, based in Bonn.

Even though Dr Schirrmacher had not been a member of the TC before, he was quite familiar with its earlier ethos and aims, and with the wider WEA family. After quick consideration, Dr Schirrmacher agreed to accept the appointment, with the determination to do what he could to restore the TC, although, by necessity, it would be a rather different kind of operation for the immediate future at least. His immediate brief was to make the TC a part of the day to day operation of the WEA.

He faced a daunting task – not only did he already have many existing responsibilities, but the suddenness of

⁷ Bonn: VKW, 2010 (Religious Freedom Series Vol 2); see also *Bad Urach Statement* edited by Christof Sauer (WEA Global Issues Series Vol 9 Bonn: 2012).

the transition meant that there was no opportunity for the normal smooth transfer of information and records. In addition, many contacts had been lost, much of the activity that had been built up over the previous few years had been wound down in the previous months and the proposed website for *Theological News* had not functioned. These difficulties were exacerbated because Dr Thacker had concentrated all of the main functions of the TC into his own office, but he also had extensive responsibility for his role with the EA UK which severely limited the time he was able to give to the TC.

One of the most pressing issues was the production of *ERT*. An issue of *ERT* featuring papers from the recent final session of the TWG conference was due to be finalised very soon after Dr Thacker's resignation. Dr Schirmmacher turned to Dr David Parker and asked him to assist with the role of 'Executive Editor' working with Dr Schirmmacher as General Editor. Due to a misunderstanding, Chris Wright and the paper writers from the TWG were not aware that their material was required so quickly. However, with the failure of the recent change of *ERT* editorial policy to attract contributions for a highly focused thematic series, there was no other material available. So some quick work by contributors and the new Executive Editor, together with a short postponement of the copy deadline, saw the issue to the press in good time.

There was a similar problem with *TN* which had been suspended as a printed publication for almost a year. Dr Schirmmacher decided that it should be restarted as a valuable means of reporting and promoting the activities

of the TC. Dr Parker was invited to take on responsibility for this project as well. Over the next few months, all the missing back issues were made up (although one was a combined number) and regular publication resumed. However, it was distributed as an electronic version, emailed and downloadable from the website, rather than in printed form posted to the large number of recipients as previously.

One of the first issues of *TN*, dated July 2010, carried a statement by Dr Schirmmacher outlining the current situation and future plans for the TC. He pointed out that there had been many changes in the people involved in the TC, but that with the publications in hand, efforts could continue to re-build. The existing TC web site had been updated with information about these developments.

Dr Schirmmacher's announcement also stated that one of his main responsibilities as chair had been 'to visit high ranking leaders of non-Evangelical churches [and] to give them a fair presentation of our views over a lot of prejudices around and to assure friendship for times of common need'. Another major aim had been 'to ensure that whenever theological consultations take place on an international level, we take part and present our case. We have been involved in some of these events recently, and we are now building up a list and network of people who can represent us.' One such occasion was the World Mission Conference in Edinburgh, Scotland 2010, and another would be the Third Lausanne Congress in Cape Town later in the year.

Taking the evangelical voice to other groups and presenting the evangelical case at conferences constituted

a new mode of operation for the TC which contrasted with its traditional role as a network of theologians. Another important function also received greater emphasis - assisting the WEA in the preparation of statements which required theological insight. Dr Schirmmacher was much in demand as a speaker and travelled widely, often dovetailing his new TC role with his other commitments in religious freedom and as an evangelical spokesman in his own region.

The core membership of the TC had been reduced significantly in the previous year with the departure of several of its key leaders, although Vice-Chair, Dr James Nkansah, Kenya, remained in his position. However, it was still anticipated that a regular meeting could be held in 2010, as planned, at the Lausanne Cape Town conference. Dr Schirmmacher contacted the remaining members in the hope that many of them would be at the conference and it would be a simple matter to conduct at least a short meeting. While many were expected to be at the conference in some capacity, it was soon found that it would be virtually impossible to organise a meeting due to the difficult logistics and security considerations. Plans for the meeting were therefore abandoned, and it was hoped that there could be one held sometime in early 2011. However, this never eventuated and the membership dispersed. The Global Membership scheme was not maintained either.

II The Theological Commission at Cape Town 2010

Many of TC members were at the Cape

Town conference, including Dr Rolf Hille; Dr Carver Yu was one of the featured speakers⁸ who made a presentation on the truth of the gospel. Dr Schirmmacher spoke at some ancillary gatherings, met many friends of the TC and distributed quantities of TC literature and CDs from a large display booth. He also conducted a workshop on the code of ethics for mission and spoke at the assembly of the WEA Mission Commission. Dr Rosalee Velloso Ewell of Brazil, who had strong links with TWG and Langham ministries, was on the statement committee. The TC acted as theological consultant to the WEA in its role as a co-sponsor of the conference, advising on the drafting and endorsement of the documents. A meeting of the WEA International Leadership Team was also held, involving the TC.

A major anticipated outcome of the Cape Town event was a much closer relationship between the WEA and the Lausanne Movement. There was a feeling that there ought not to be two global evangelical bodies vying for the attention and support of the evangelical constituency. The two groups had worked together closely in the lead up to Cape Town with WEA being recognized as working in 'collaboration' with the LCWE for this event—although the lead was always taken strongly by the LCWE. The cooperation between the theological groups of WEA and LCWE was stronger, so there was much anticipation that the groups might merge or at least continue to work closely together after Cape Town.

All this meant that plans for the

⁸ See report *TN* 39:4 (November 2010), 2.

growth and re-development of the TC would need to take into account the possibility of an entirely new set of arrangements in which the TC would be joined by LCWE personnel. Therefore there was some hesitation in restoring the activities and organisation of TC to their former states, with the expectation that further changes would soon be necessary.

III Executive Director Appointed

However, towards the end of the 2010, it was becoming clear that without an active membership and staff, the burden of maintaining the work of the TC in its current form, let alone restoring it to its earlier method of operation or planning for a new context, was a heavy responsibility for the chairman alone. So attention was turned to securing assistance. The efforts which had taken place so far to keep the core of the TC functional had provided assurance of continued financial support which meant that appointing a new Executive Director was the best way to go; filling this position was one of the priorities that the WEA International Director had assigned Dr Schirmmacher at the beginning. By December, Dr Schirmmacher had written to the members stating that he was recommending Dr Rosalee Velloso Ewell for the post;

Dr Velloso Ewell, a daughter of pastor, was a Baptist theologian from Brazil, who gained her PhD at Duke University (USA) and for the previous 7 years had been Professor of New Testament Theology and Ethics at the South American Theological Seminary in Londrina, Brazil. She currently served as New Testament editor for the *Latin*

American Bible Commentary project, and was a member of the Lausanne Theology Working Group. She was expecting to move to UK early in 2011 where her husband would be engaged in doctoral studies. If approved, Dr Velloso Ewell's appointment, as a theologian from the Global South, would be a good balance for Dr Schirmmacher.

TC members gave their tacit approval and the appointment was made by the WEA International Council in November 2010; however, an announcement was delayed until April 2011 to allow time for re-settlement in UK. Dr Schirmmacher said, 'I have already had the chance to work together with Rosalee on WEA projects as well as in discussions with the Vatican in Rome, the World Council of Churches in Geneva and other international conferences. I am convinced that we have made a good choice. Rosalee is deeply convinced of Evangelical values, but open to learn from others. She has a clear stand point where needed, but is open to work together with the wide range of the Evangelical family.'

In a further winding back of the changes discussed in 2009, he advised that the new Executive Director's 'first task will be to connect to as many as possible of the theological commissions of national and regional alliances, or to the alliances themselves, where there is no network of theologians as of yet'.

By now it was also clear that the mooted changes to the TC work due to a merger with LCWE would not materialise because, during further discussions, it became apparent that there was little, if any chance, of progress on this plan. It soon became bogged down in uncertainty about the role and distinctive ethos of the two parent or-

ganisations and the practicalities of how such a relationship could be made to work organisationally. At the level of the theological groups themselves, there was even less prospect because the TWG lacked strong leadership after Chris Wright, who had so expertly guided its activities in the build-up to Cape Town, withdrew from any further involvement so that he could give his attention to his work with Langham Ministries.

The future for the TC was also becoming more assured because of developments within the WEA. During the latter part of 2010, the WEA organisation was clarifying the role of commissions and their chairs, a process that affected all commissions but particularly TC because of Dr Schirmmacher's dual role as Executive Chairman.

IV Progress for the New-look TC

So although there was considerable clarification of the context in which the TC would operate in the immediate future, hopes of further meetings of the core membership receded. Carver Yu resigned his membership in November 2010 because of dissatisfaction with the process by which the Executive Director was appointed, due in large part to difficulties in communication at the time.

Dr Velloso Ewell took up her new role as Executive Director more fully and worked with the Chairman by writing and publishing papers. The two leaders participated extensively in conferences and meeting with key leaders, which was an important means by which the TC took up the 2009 vision of dealing with the big global issues.

Their activities covered a wide range of topics. They participated for example in the development of a code of ethics for mission which involved both the Vatican and the World Council of Churches; this was launched in June 2011 at the WCC headquarters as 'Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct'. In 2012 Dr Velloso Ewell presented this code to the Baptist World Alliance in her role on the Baptist-Muslim relations task force of the Freedom and Justice Commission; this role also saw her in Nigeria giving lectures and workshops.

Another important project was the statement, 'Evangelism: The Hallmark of Evangelical Faith' which was incorporated in the address by the WEA Secretary General, Dr Geoff Tunnicliffe, at the Vatican Synod of Bishops in October 2012. Dr Schirmmacher attended this Synod and was also present at the inauguration of the new pope in 2013.

Both Dr Schirmmacher and Dr Velloso Ewell participated in the Global Christian Forum, Manado, Indonesia in October 2011. They were together again for the WCC General Assembly in Busan, South Korea in October 2013. The two TC leaders were regular visitors to consultations of the groups like ICETE, FEET, ATA and the Micah Challenge, as well as meetings of other WEA commissions. They participated in the Evangelical-Orthodox dialogue which took place in 2013 in Tirana. Dr Velloso Ewell gave many lectures to theological associations including the Scottish Evangelical Theological Society, while Dr Schirmmacher made presentations at the 2011 gathering on Theological Education by Extension in Kathmandu, Nepal.

Nearly two years after his appoint-

ment as Chair, following a WEA Leadership meeting, Dr Schirmmacher was able to report that he and Dr Velloso Ewell had made considerable progress in restoring the work of TC, despite the wind down in membership and older activities. There had been many discussions with former TC personnel and with leaders of seminaries and associations which had links with the TC in the past, while visits to conferences and the regular meetings of some of these groups opened the way for further cooperation and interest.

The regular publications, *ERT* and *TN* continued to appear and the two books from the task forces finally appeared.⁹ There were also plans for further development including a new website with weekly commentary and a news blog, a series of small publications on 'Global Issues' to be circulated electronically, and the re-establishment of the Global Membership scheme. It was also anticipated that there would be plans for consultations, and for working together with other WEA commissions.

The three key personnel, Dr Schirmmacher, Dr Velloso Ewell and Dr Parker met in mid-2011 and again in 2013 to discuss publication and other plans. Some 'Senior Advisors' were also appointed, including Dr Chris Wright, Dr Bruce Nicholls, Dr Thomas Johnson and Dr Ken Gnanakan.

So while the TC was operative during this period, the earlier pattern of a

core membership facilitating the development of a global network of evangelical theologians and institutions had not been restored. Instead, the new mode was more like the pattern that had been called for much earlier—the TC was a small unit operating within the WEA structure representing it on various platforms, and providing advice on theological matters. The sudden changes of 2010 had provided the opportunity for this pattern to be implemented although it had been rejected by the TC at the time. The other alternative presented then, for the TC to become virtually an independent international theological society only loosely connected to the WEA, had never been totally dismissed.

Although the new form of the TC was gradually consolidating, there was still much more that could be done. There was an addition to the 'Global Issues' series¹⁰ and in 2013 the 'World of Theology' series was launched. The TC had also successfully cooperated with the Missions Commission and the Religious Liberty Commission in another publication, *Sorrow & Blood: Christian Mission in Contexts of Suffering, Persecution, and Martyrdom*, with chapters by 62 authors from 23 countries. This book was launched on 27 September 2012 by WEA Secretary General, Dr Geoff Tunnicliffe, at the Religious Freedom Roundtable in Washington

⁹ *Local Theology for the Global Church* (William Carey Library) was published in 2010; *Jesus, Salvation and the Jewish People* was published in 2011 by Paternoster despite its parent company undergoing many financial and corporate issues.

¹⁰ *Racism* by Thomas Schirmmacher with an essay on 'Caste in India' by Richard Howell was published in 2012 as volume 8 of the 'Global Issues Series'; this series had commenced in 2008 under the general umbrella of the World Evangelical Alliance and the International Institute for Religious Freedom (IIRF).

D.C. and the first copy was given to Scott Felipe, Deputy Director for Policy and Research at the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF).¹¹

The new web site was still not operative, and there were issues confronting the TC's flagship publication, *ERT*. Rapid changes in print publishing of academic journals meant higher subscription costs and lower circulation, leading the publisher, AlphaGraphics to consider a much improved web-site for their journals. However, this would involve considerable amounts of extra work by the TC which it was not well placed to supply and for which there would be little return; the TC continued to supply all the material for *ERT* without any charge, but it was the publisher who received the financial returns! Furthermore, there was a smaller contact pool, due to the loss of the previously extensive mailing lists and diminished relationships with theologians and societies across the world, which meant that the supply of material for both *ERT* and *TN* was sometimes critical.

Another of the TC's success stories had also been impacted due to changes in technology and the fortunes of the TC. With the change in leadership and staffing of the TC, it was no longer possible to manage retail sales of the *Theological Resource Library* CD which had produced good revenue for the organisation over several years. So from 2010 it became a wholesale operation only. Then in June 2011 Logos Bible Software who produced the CD an-

nounced that, in response to general trends in the industry, it would change to on-line delivery only; the TC would continue to receive the royalties on sales, but these proved to be much lower than under the previous arrangement.

In the wider evangelical world, there were many developments and activities such as the 40th anniversary of ATA (which was an original project of TC), the appointment of a theological leader in Africa, Langham ministries moved into Francophone Africa, and the regular conferences of ICETE. The TC kept in touch with many of these bodies and was often invited to be present at and participate in many of their activities.

Preparations were being made for another round of dialogues with the Roman Catholic Church, led by Dr Rolf Hille. After the initial preparatory meeting at the Vatican in 2008, the first discussion session was held in Sao Paulo, Brazil from 26 July to 1 August, 2009. The focus was on convergences between Catholics and Evangelicals on doctrinal matters and contemporary ethical issues. The second meeting was held 12-17 September, 2011 at the Vatican, with close attention paid to scripture and tradition in the life and mission of the church, with attention to the particular ways in which each side understood these authorities. Wheaton, Illinois, was the venue for the third round the next year where soteriology was the central topic; many of the differences had been already overcome by the 'Joint Declaration on Justification', which was worked out between the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the Lutheran World Federation. However, the

¹¹ It has its own website: <http://www.sor-rowandblood.com/>

role of the Church was not discussed in this context, and therefore this question was still open in the ecumenical context.

The next round of discussions was held in Guatemala City 1-7 September 2013, where surveys conducted by both Catholics and Evangelicals were used to examine how religious minorities were treated. The aim was to encourage a more mature expression of religious freedom on the part of the leadership of the two groups in areas where tension had often been apparent; the question of collaboration was also under discussion. The final session in this series is due in September 2014 in Bad Blankenburg, Germany where the papers and statements will be finalised for publication.

WEA participants included Dr Rolf Hille (Germany) as convenor, Dr Leonardo de Chirico (Italy), Rev José de Segovia Barrón (Spain), Dr Joel C. Elowsky (USA), Dr Timoteo D. Gener (Philippines), Dr James Nkansah-Obrempong (Kenya) and Dr Claus Schwambach (Brazil), with Dr Solomo Strauss (Germany) as a regular guest.

Conclusion: Forty Years of Witness

Since its official formation in 1974 (with a pre-history going back to 1968), the TC has been through many phases. It has established a good record in sponsoring conferences, encouraging TCs and associations, creating a fellowship of theologians, operating a scholar-

ship fund, publishing books, journals and newsletters. Over the years it has been able to voice evangelical concerns and be a bellwether on crucial issues, speaking on its own behalf or in co-operation with others. During all this time, it kept firmly in mind the aims of its founders – developing national theological commissions and regional associations and strengthening evangelical theological education.

At its peak, it involved 50 or more members from all parts of the world, and at other times, it was effectively linked with many national and regional theological groups, seminars and individuals, all contributing to its goal of 'promoting biblical truth by networking theologians'. However, recent changes have seen the organisation transformed into a small working unit integrated into the structure of the WEA, providing theological insights and presenting the evangelical perspective on a wide range of issues in many different forums on behalf of its mother organisation.

As it marks 40 years of witness, the context is vastly different from the days of its origins, and many problems remain. However, there is still a need for a unit such as the TC to be, as the proposed Vision Statement of 2009 put it, 'a prophetic evangelical voice that is globally representative, faithful to Scripture, theologically informed and which speaks with clarity and relevance to both the church and the world'.

Books Reviewed

Reviewed by Steve Bryan
Lamin Sanneh

*Summoned from the Margin:
Homecoming of an African*

Reviewed by David Parker
Gary Tyra
Pursuing Moral Faithfulness

Reviewed by David Parker
Daniel A. Westberg
*Renewing Moral Theology: Christian
Ethics as Action, Character and Grace*

Reviewed by Raymond J. Laird
Nicolas Thomas Wright
*The Challenge of Jesus: rediscovering
who Jesus was and is*

Reviewed by Raymond J. Laird
Brian K. Morley
*Mapping Apologetics: Comparing
Contemporary Approaches*

Reviewed by Dr Thomas Schirrmacher
Jeffrey Haynes (Ed.)
*Routledge Handbook of Religion and
Politics*

Reviewed by Dr Thomas Schirrmacher
Silvio Ferrari, Sabrina Pastorelli (eds.)
*Religion in Public Spaces: A European
Perspectives*

Reviewed by Rev. Dr. Samuel
Jayakumar
Frampton F. Fox (Ed.)
*Edinburgh 1910 Revisited: Give Us
Friends!'— An India Perspective On 100
Years Of Mission*

Book Reviews

ERT (2015) 39:4, 370-371

**Summoned from the Margin:
Homecoming of an African**
Lamin Sanneh

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012
ISBN 978-0-8028-6742-1
Pb, pp 301 index, glossary

*Reviewed by Steve Bryan, Addis Ababa,
Ethiopia*

Reprinted with permission from the review journal *BookNotes for Africa*
The accomplished African Christian scholar Lamin Sanneh begins his memoir with a brief account of a visit in 2008 to the village of Georgetown on an island in the River Gambia in West Africa. This is where he was raised within an improv-

erished polygamous Muslim Africa family in a community wholly circumscribed by Islam. The beginning of the book creates the suspicion that the 'homecoming' in the sub-title alludes to this return journey to Georgetown. But, in fact, the homecoming refers to his reception into the Roman Catholic Church some decades after his unlikely conversion from Islam to Christianity while still a young man in Gambia in 1961.

Though the book opens selected windows onto Sanneh's life, there is a sense in which Sanneh's memoir is less personal than it is personal intellectual history. Those familiar with Sanneh's writings will profit from seeing the way in which the ideas for which he has become justly well-known in his

professional life emerge out of the extraordinary trajectory of his personal life. Those new to Sanneh will value the summaries of the major strands of his thought which have helped establish him as a major intellectual force in the study both of Islam and of what he prefers to call 'world' (as opposed to 'global') Christianity.

Sanneh's early academic focus on Islam, together with his early life in Islam, helped make possible his later insights into the nature of world Christianity, Christian expansion and mission. Thus, for instance, did Sanneh intuitively resist the still common belief that Christian expansion in Africa advanced within conditions made conducive by colonialism. Instead, in contrast to the Islam of his early years, Sanneh was struck by Christianity's inherent embrace of the vernacular, and made this the explanation for Christian expansion. Thus did he then come to vest the significance of the western missionary movement primarily in vernacular Bible translation. This insight also helped him to see how, in contrast to the often destructive impact of Islamic expansion on local cultures, the rooting of Christian faith in vernacular languages has served the cause of cultural renewal.

Students of comparative religion are not generally disposed to speak of false religion or false teachers, and Sanneh is no different. Alongside the ambivalence he often experienced from the church, perhaps that scholarly disposition helps explain those seasons of his life in which he was more an observer than a participant in the church. And perhaps these things, too, explain why there is very little indication that proclamation and persuasion play much of a role in his own sense of mission. But when he speaks, as he does in this book, of his own profound experience in leaving the

religion of his birth to follow the resurrected Jesus, he is at times a powerful witness to the truth.

ERT (2015) 39:4, 371-373

Pursuing Moral Faithfulness

Gary Tyra

Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2015

ISBN 978-0-8308-2465-6

Pb, pp304, indices

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

This textbook for Christian liberal arts students in the United States is driven by two related concerns—the state of ethical awareness amongst youth in that country, and the failings of churches, families, schools and seminaries to train these young people more adequately and enthuse them with the need for responsible ethical decision-making as disciples of Jesus Christ.

According to the Introduction (where these features are clearly outlined) the author, a preacher for 30 years and professor at Vanguard University, CA, is worried that his students are not only unable to 'engage in ... ethical reflection' but more seriously, they find it difficult to realise that it is possible and 'necessary for Christians' to do so (14). The result of this low 'moral faithfulness quotient' (127) is that ethical decision-making is typically 'irresponsible and unbalanced' (27), and often made on the basis of peer pressure or personal inclination.

To counter this situation, the author offers 'not your typical Christian Ethics text' (18) to train his readers in 'moral faithfulness' (as the title indicates). The constructive aspect of his work occupies the second half of the book. The first

half is foundational, mainly concerned with the usual issues and concerns of the traditional study of Ethics—with a chapter devoted to each of results- and rules-oriented systems as well one to introductory matters.

There are some interesting aspects to this section, including its use of ‘not overly theoretical’ (19) language, and a complete chapter on the attitudes and values of US youth as revealed in the comprehensive ‘National Study of Youth and Religion’ survey. This survey provides considerable data to quantify the author’s initial concerns, and is summed up with the conclusion that American teens (and those who have mentored them!) subscribe to a religious view which may be called ‘Moralistic Therapeutic Deism’ (MTD) (132ff). While helpful for understanding American youth culture, it is questionable how useful the extensive detail provided in this section would be for other countries, even English-speaking ones, where the level of awareness of and commitment to biblical faith, or even traditional Christian values, by young people would be quite different.

The second part of the book focuses on Tyra’s positive alternate to MTD, ie, moral faithfulness, which calls for ‘integrating balance and responsibility into our ethical lives’ and consists of ‘a Christ-centered, biblically informed and Spirit-empowered approach to making ethical decisions’ (28). Over seven chapters, the author discusses ‘moral and pneumatological realism ... how Jesus himself seemed to model this ethical approach, some important reasons why such an ethic should be embraced ... and the process’ required to ‘become an ethically responsible Christian disciple’ (29). The exposition draws on a wide range of biblical and other sources, and argues that the approach which is called

‘prophetic contextualism’ (162), has a healthy mix of rules, results and virtue ethics.

The book is pitched at an audience which needs to be introduced carefully and gradually to the necessity, substance and process of ethical formation. Therefore the author employs ‘reader friendly’ (28) language but with an annoying use of abbreviations like ‘there’s’, ‘it’s’ and the like. Although the exposition of ethical issues is set at an introductory level, there are plenty of references to sources and classical authorities which the interested reader may pursue—in fact, in places there are so many footnotes, often lengthy ones with additional explanations and examples, that it is distracting; there is even an eleven page excursus inserted into chapter 9. There are frequent assurances that the author is ‘not alone’ in his views, with some sections, like chapter 8, being heavily dependent on the ideas of previous writers.

Yet a strong point of the book, given its target audience, is its reliance on references to actual examples and situations which are natural parts of the world of the would-be readers, not just the usual arcane examples and theoretical issues found in standard ethical textbooks.

Like any text book, this volume aims to inform, but, the author is concerned that ‘all too often the ethics courses offered [at Christian schools] are not successful at inspiring students toward a morally faithful lifestyle’ (16). So he tries to remedy that situation first by his engaging form of presentation, and then, more importantly, he provides the theoretical basis which explains that Christian discipleship involves both ‘command and promise’ (22) – there is an obligation upon those who follow Christ to be ethically responsible, but there is also

the leading of the Spirit to be so. As such this book veers much more in the direction of spirituality than does the normal Ethics primer. This is not simply the result of the author's extensive pastoral background coming to the fore, but a deliberate strategy and theological orientation.

In practice, the book may not develop as much eagerness in its readers as the author hopes (35, 54, 161), but it is a useful volume with an important theme which is effectively communicated to its intended readership. It should go a long way to helping readers give proper consideration to the ethical decisions they make and how to do so in a balanced and comprehensive way that will lead to 'responsible Christian discipleship' (28).

ERT (2015) 39:4, 373-374

**Renewing Moral Theology:
Christian Ethics as Action,
Character and Grace**
Daniel A. Westberg

Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2015
ISBN-13: 978-0830824601
Pb, pp 281 indices

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

The author, who teaches at Nashotah House, Wisconsin, USA, has produced a contemporary text book of Anglican moral theology based on the traditional Thomist model but updated, renewed and clarified in the light of today's context. Moving on from the now outmoded works of Kirk, Mortimer and Dewar, Westberg's intention is to 'breathe new life into the Anglican tradition' (9). This volume also aims to 'provide for the general Christian public a blending of the strengths of the Catholic tradition

with evangelical emphases and convictions' (10).

Characterised by clear exposition, a concise and succinct style, and down to earth illustrations, the book consists of two equal parts. The first deals with general principles of moral reasoning, including the basis of ethical practice, evaluating actions, purpose, reason, action, character and grace, and the centre piece, the process of practical reasoning. The conclusion of this part consists of a heart-warming chapter on conversion, set in the context of sin and God's will/law. The second part consists of an introduction and then separate chapters on the virtues, once again featuring clear and relevant explanations and perceptive applications.

Each of the 16 chapters can be read almost as a stand-alone essay expounding the particular topic, but the volume ends abruptly after the exposition of the final virtue (hope) with no overall conclusion or summing up. Even though the flow of the overall argument is limited, due to its nature as a re-presentation of an existing tradition (rather than an original vision), as a whole it does make a strong case for this form of moral theology which, as the subtitle indicates, focuses on 'action, character and grace'.

However, it is no slavish reproduction of the Thomist system, but is a refined, enriched, and in places corrected, interpretation. Even so, the author does not hesitate to support strongly what others might regard as 'questionable' (235), a good example being the Thomist interpretation of love (*caritas or agape*) as 'friendship or union with God' instead of the popular 'self-sacrificial love' (235). The author, who is well read in ethical literature, refers approvingly to a whole range of other ethical teachers, including evangelicals such as Wright,

Packer, Grenz and Bloesch. There is an unaffected recognition of the place of Scripture in ethics, the need to avoid unhealthy legalism and attention to personal as well as church related aspects of moral life.

This is a volume which requires serious study, but readers who persist with it will find that it is a thought-provoking and helpful presentation of a 'renewed moral theology' worth every consideration.

ERT (2015) 39:4, 374

**The Challenge of Jesus:
Rediscovering who Jesus was and is**
Nicolas Thomas Wright

Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity Press,
1999, 2015 2nd ed.

ISBN 978-0-8308-3696

Pb., pp 204, notes, bibliog, index

*Reviewed by Raymond J. Laird, Australian
Catholic University Centre for Early
Christian Studies, Brisbane.*

Although this second edition of this book, first published in 1999, adds nothing of significance to the original, it is a timely reminder that the issues raised then by Wright are still pertinent today. The pundits of contextualisation tell us that we must communicate the gospel in terms that are comprehensible to the target culture. Accordingly, Wright reminds us that we must labour to understand the person, work, and message of Jesus in terms of the cultural ethos of first century or second temple Judaism, including the various protest groups that existed at the time. He has a point. It is essential that we have the correct message to take to our world. Is it possible that we have interpreted Jesus against the wrong background? That our under-

standing of the kingdom of God misses the reality? That the symbols of Jewish life and belief such as Temple, Sabbath, land, and family, have not been understood from the appropriate viewpoint?

These, and more of like ilk, are the questions that Wright asks and attempts to answer. One may or may not agree with his conclusions, but with his fine mind he makes astute arguments that are worth consideration. In the last two chapters, the last especially, Wright leaves off his academic garb to don the kit of the preacher, complete with poems, to apply what has been discussed to every Christian's prime vocation: each in their own callings in life being the bearer of the light of the world. For some, this will be the best part of the book: as Charles Spurgeon taught his students, the sermon begins when the application begins. One could benefit greatly by heeding some of Wright's advice. In fact, like the Lord himself, Wright is a disturber. He deserves to be read the second time around.

ERT (2015) 39:4, 374-376

**Mapping Apologetics: Comparing
Contemporary Approaches**

Brian K. Morley

Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity Press,
2015

ISBN 978-8308-4067-0 (print), ISBN
978-8309704-9 (digital)

Pb., pp 378, bibliogs, indices, review
questions.

*Reviewed by Raymond J. Laird Th.D.,
Australian Catholic University, Centre for
Early Christian Studies.*

Brian Morley PhD, Professor of philosophy and apologetics at The Master's College, Santa Clarita, California, has presented a very careful and knowledgeable

survey of a range of apologetic models that are currently employed in defending the Christian faith in a world that rejects it on various rational grounds. He endeavours to discuss each model fairly, even where possible contacting the authors to ensure that he had correctly understood the position of each proponent. One of the beauties of his approach is that he not only describes and critiques each methodology, but also compares it with others by indicating critical points of difference.

In the Introduction, Morley gives an overview in the form of a very useful two-page chart that identifies ten models ranging from Fideism through to Rationalism, based on the principle of 'increasing emphasis on objective, independently existing evidence'. The chart includes Defining characteristics, Adherents, Criticisms, Epistemological starting point, and Summary. This bird's eye view is a brief outline of the chapters of Part 2 of the book which discusses critically each of the ten apologetic methodologies in detail. It is one of those charts to keep at hand for quick checks when something is met that needs clarification.

Before launching into his analysis of the models, Morley provides something of a legitimisation of apologetics by discussing its presence in the Bible. This is followed by an overview of the place of apologetics in history – two millennia of it. Needfully, this is brief, but, as with the biblical section, it provides solid evidence of the value of apologetics in the life of the people of God in their encounter with the world in whatever phase of scepticism or opposition it may be.

The main part of the book groups the methodologies under five main groups: Presuppositionalism, Reformed Epistemology, Combinationalism, Classical

Apologetics, and Evidentialism, with the main proponents of each including the variations classed under them. Thus the reader encounters a who's who of contemporary apologetics: Cornelius Van Til, John Frame, Alvin Platinga, E.J. Carnell, Gordon Lewis, Francis Schaeffer, Richard Swinburne, William Lane Craig, Norman Geisler, John Warwick Montgomery, and Gary Habermas. Morley has brought together their wealth of focused thought, placed the proponents side by side, explained their positions, and noted their strengths and weaknesses.

There are three features of each chapter that add to the usefulness of this book. There is a glossary of key terms pertinent to the chapter; then an excellent help to the memory is the list of questions under the title 'Thinking it Over'; and for the studious, a bibliography, 'Going Further'.

Morley is quite objective in his analyses and whilst there are hints along the way, the further one gets into his book the hunger grows to know just where he lands in the schema of the apologetic grid, and what advice he might have to share. Thus the final chapter arrives where Morley gives his thoughts on what he sees are the four crucial areas of disagreement.

Apart from one of them, I will not let the cat out of the bag; you may read of them for yourself. He deals with these issues using simple comparisons and a lot of acumen that leave us to argue for the faith with confidence but without arrogance. The one that I promised? What about the question of the capacity of the fallen human mind to absorb an apologetic argument? Well, says Morley, 'it is our job to offer reasons, and the Spirit cuts through our blindness'. I like it.

Here is a book for every pastor, teacher, and all those concerned for reaching out

to the lost, especially to our sophisticated world where argument is the order of the day.

ERT (2015) 39:4, 376-377

Routledge Handbook of Religion and Politics

Edited by Jeffrey Haynes

London: Routledge, 2010

ISBN 978-0415414555

Hb, pp 448

*Reviewed by Dr Thomas Schirrmacher,
Chairman, WEA Theological Commission*

Jeff Haynes is Professor of Politics and Director of the Centre for the Study of Religion, Conflict and Cooperation at London Metropolitan University and has written several books on religion and third world politics. In the editor's words, this collection of essays 'examines the recent "return" of religion to politics and international relations' (cover). Beside the introduction there are 25 essays from a total of 27 experts. 12 come from Great Britain, 7 from the rest of the Anglo-Saxon world (including Australia and Canada), 3 from Japan, 2 from Singapore, 2 from Israel, and 1 from Sweden. Each essay would be worth its own review. All essays touch on the relationship between specific religions, society and the state, even though the freedom of religion and belief in itself is seldom in the topic.

The essays are grouped into four parts. In the first, writers take a general view of eight specific major religions and their relation to politics, both in principle and in their existing states. The religions include Buddhism, Protestantism, Catholicism, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, Shiism and Judaism. In the second part follow seven articles with more detailed investigations into religion and

governance: secularisation, fundamentalism, the tensions between religion and the state, democratisation, political parties, civil society and finally 'different patterns of compartmentalisation among Christians and Mohammedans'. The third part has four more general articles looking at the relationship between religion and international relations. The fourth part, with another five essays, discusses the relationship of 'Religion, security and development', especially religious terrorism, preventing conflict, religion and women, international development and evangelical responses to global warming and human suffering.

Overall this is a good handbook and an excellent introduction for people involved in politics who wish to understand the global role of religions, as well as the other way round—for people studying religions who need a starting point for their search for the political role of belief systems in theory and reality.

However, the essays are uneven. Some are superb and give a solid overview of the political landscape and research, e.g. most of the essays in the first part, including the article, 'Religion and political parties', by Payam Mohseni and Clyde Wilcox; 'Religion and democratisation' (subtitle) by John Anderson (my favourite essay); or 'Religion and the state' by John Madeley, discussing the different types of relationship between state and 'church' globally.

A few articles are really weak, and in an academic review it is my task to evaluate and offer criticism for further discussion. One weak article is, 'On the nature of religious terrorism', which neither gives a historic or global overview of religious terrorism nor discusses the problem in specific religions, but gives only a very generalised opinion that

religious terrorists are not much different from other terrorists. Or why does Giorgio Shani, 'Transnational religious actors and international relations', only go into details concerning the Roman Catholic Church and the United Sikhs and leave out the Muslim world, especially the Organisation of Islamic Coordination (OIC)?

Very surprising is the last essay, 'Changing the climate of religious internationalism: Evangelical responses to global warming and human suffering'. The article in itself is good, but it does not fit in any way into the volume. An essay, 'Evangelicals and politics' would have been acceptable, but it would have to present all branches of evangelicalism and this on a global scale. But to single out the topic of climate-change (and even not the political agenda going with it) and to speak about US-evangelicals only, something not done with any other religious group in the volume, is arbitrary. And then to state, that newer evangelicals are good, as they fight climate change, while older ones are bad, because they ignored environmental issues as a cause of human suffering, is both historically simplistic and on the level of personal opinion incompatible with the academic standard of the rest of the book.

The term 'fundamentalism' (see index, 423) is used inconsistently throughout the volume. The editor sees fundamentalism only where you have a holy book (162). Why is this? In Catholicism you can have fundamentalism, even though the Pope is above 'the book', and in India and Sri Lanka fundamentalism is alive without a single religious book, but with just the same characteristics. In his article, 'religious fundamentalism', the editor discusses only Christianity, Islam and Judaism and does not even discuss why he leaves out all other religions.

I would like to come back to the first part on the eight major religions. As there are no biographies of the authors provided, it is hard to know for sure, but from what I can see, in all cases except Confucianism, the authors follow the religion they write about. It is not by chance that the critical distance to their religion differs a lot. The Christian authors are quite critical about certain developments in Christianity, the Protestant author more than the Catholic one. The least critical is the article on Islam, which sometime comes close to a defence of Islam. Islamism is seen as 'primarily' a 'political phenomena' which 'cannot be said to stem from some "essence" of Islam' (102). I agree: 'Islam is not Islamism'. But to turn the complicated relation between the two into the exact opposite—'Islamism is not Islam'—does not agree with the whole book, which discusses the relationship of religious actors to international politics. If the authors were right, non-religious Islamism should not have been discussed in the book at all. One would have expected in a book like this that the eight articles on the major religions would have been more consistent and provide an even combination of distance and understanding.

ERT (2015) 39:4, 377-380

Religion in Public Spaces: A European Perspectives

Silvio Ferrari, Sabrina Pastorelli,
Editors
ISBN 978-1-4-4094-5058-0
Hb, pp 391

*Reviewed by Dr Thomas Schirrmacher,
Chairman, WEA Theological Commission*

This book is part of the Religare-project (www.religareproject.eu), which de-

scribes itself as follows: 'The RELIG-ARE project is a three-year European research project funded by the European Commission Directorate General Research-Unit L Science, Economy and Society. It comprises 13 universities and research centres from across the European Union and Turkey.' Furthermore, 'The RELIGARE project is about religions, belonging, beliefs and secularism in Europe. It examines the legal rules protecting or limiting (constraining) the experiences of religious or other belief-based communities.' The Series, 'Cultural Diversity and Law in Association with RELIGARE' already contains several volumes but the books are very expensive and thus of interest only to libraries and researchers.

The new book rightfully claims to discuss 'the much debated and controversial subject of the presence of religion in the public sphere. Covering a range of very different European countries including Turkey, the UK, Italy and Bulgaria, this book uses comparative case studies to illustrate how practice varies significantly even within Europe.' It is edited by Silvio Ferrari and Sabrina Pastorelli. Ferrari is Professor of Canon Law, University of Milan and President, International Consortium for Law and Religion Studies, Italy and is widely published in the areas of church and state in Europe and comparative law of religions. He is an elder statesman in the area of religious freedom research. His younger colleague Sabrina Pastorelli is research fellow at the Institute of International Law—section of Ecclesiastical and Canon Law—University of Milan. She is also a member of the Groupe Sociétés, Religions, Laïcités at École Pratique des Hautes Études-Sorbonne and teaching assistant at the Catholic University of Paris—Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences. She has similar interests to

those of Ferrari, but views them more from the point of view of the sociology of religion. The authors of the articles come from universities of various European countries, including Belgium, the Netherlands, Bulgaria, Sweden, Turkey, Great Britain, Denmark, and France. Three come from Canada and the USA.

The book is divided into three parts; the first is more theoretical with contributions by lawyers, philosophers and sociologists on the question of 'Religions and Public/Private Divide'. The second and third parts discuss two concrete topics: religious dress codes in public and in places of worship, which are some of the most controversial recent cases from around Europe.

It would be too lengthy to list and discuss all contributions, but taking all contributions together, I agree with German law professor Gerhard Robbers, University of Trier, who writes: 'This is a highly important book in a remarkable controversy. Silvio Ferrari and Sabrina Pastorelli present a rich volume full of information, thought, and insight—presenting masterpieces of interdisciplinary research and political guidance. The book is a most valuable contribution to freedom and equality throughout Europe.'

Here are my two favourite articles. First, Alessandro Ferrari presents a brilliant essay, called 'Religious Freedom and the Public-Private Divide: A Broken Promise in Europe?' (71-91). Ferrari is right in criticising those who define religious freedom according to a majority/minority scheme and views based on 'social cohesion risks', as these approaches do not recognise how diverse the problems really are, and they tend to establish problems for the future. The other is a well-researched article, "Stopp Minarett"? The Controversy over the Building

of Minarets in Switzerland: Religious Freedom versus Collective Identity', which is written by Vincenzo Pacillo.

Now to critical remarks on some articles. In 'Religion in the European Public Spaces: A Legal Overview' (139-156), the editor, Silvio Ferrari, sees 'Three European Patterns of relation between States and Religions' – first, where the traditional majority religion still plays a central role (especially in some Catholic and Orthodox countries); then, the opposite approach, where politics is in the main clearly divided from the former majority religion, and finally, multi-cultural and multi-religious situations, where the second and third largest religions tend to dominate. Even though Ferrari states that there are no pure forms (143), there are major countries which do not fit these patterns or where there are two approaches in the same country. Germany does not really fit here, because it mixes all three approaches, France follows the second group, but the former German area of Alsace-Lorraine still has one of the strictest examples of the first category; Greece follows group 1, but in the areas of Thracia following the treaty of Lausanne of 1923, Muslim leaders are paid out of the general taxes.

In the introduction (1-23), Marie-Claire Foblets states that you find in the book 'two principal scientific approaches drawn upon for the project: legal enquiry and sociological survey' (4). This approach should be the standard in religious freedom research. However, even though all authors have their professional emphases, I have to say that I found some articles mixing the two approaches and at the same time not distinguishing them clearly from the author's personal opinion. Sometimes the legal situation is not described as adequately as it should be by making proper reference to original documents and court decisions;

instead, it uses only press releases and opinion pieces—probably because they were readily available in English. But those reports often mix legal description with public opinion.

As an example, 'Comparing Burqa Debates in Europe: Sartorial Styles, Religious Prescriptions and Political Ideologies' (275-294) by Sara Silvestri is not as convincing as Pacillo's contribution. It studies the burqa and headscarf bans in France and the United Kingdom, with only brief reference to 'other European countries'. Too much information stems from media reports or English reports about non-English-speaking countries; thus the author speaks about a 'headscarf ban' in 'certain länder (states)' of Germany (286). However, there is no headscarf ban in Germany, only some regulations concerning teachers in state schools. Private companies in Germany have to employ woman with headscarfs, as several courts have decided. The complicated situation in Germany, diverse in the different states ('Länder'), and subject to decisions by the constitutional court, is not adequately described. There seems to be no original research.

On page 288 Sara Silvestri gives a very personal opinion in favour of the burqa and against any ban, and makes the generalisation that people who are against the burqa have not met Muslim women and do not see them as persons (288), without giving any proof for this judgement. She reports that there are Muslim organisations and representatives in Germany that are against Muslims fighting for veils and burquas in public service. That is true of other countries too, and proves that this is not just a black and white matter. On the contrary, it is often very complicated with a wide range of opinions among people and legislators; many people see no compromise in sight. I would like to

add: in a hearing in the German federal parliament I proposed that we never should fine the victims, e.g., the women forced to wear veils or burqas, but those who force them, i.e., the husbands. This question was not mentioned in the discussion in this book at all.

Overall this is a useful volume, but not without its limitations.

ERT (2015) 39:4, 380

Edinburgh 1910 Revisited: Give Us Friends!— An India Perspective On 100 Years Of Mission

Edited by Frampton F. Fox

Papers from the 16th annual Centre for Mission Studies Consultation, Union Biblical Seminary, Pune

Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2010

ISBN 9798170865543

Pb, pp 348

Reviewed by Rev. Dr. Samuel Jayakumar, Professor of Missions and Ministry and Director, Evangelical Theological Academy, Chennai.

Reprinted with permission from *Dharma Deepika*, July-December 2013, 95

As missiologists have observed, Edinburgh 1910 was both culmination and a beginning, for it represented the climax of a century of Protestant mission in the traditional sense of world evangelization, and also began a process with other emphases and goals which eventually led to a different conception of mission. The traditional conception was questioned in the decades after Edinburgh.

Even so since Edinburgh, there have been many shifts in Protestant thinking

about the relationship between church and mission. For an understanding of these shifts, we have to examine the contributions of the world missionary conferences. It is important to understand that conferences conducted since Edinburgh 1910 have played a vital role in the history of Christian mission during the last century. In other words, the impact of the conferences was felt in the spread of the gospel more vigorously than ever before. The relation between global mission conferences and world evangelization has a concrete connection to the theology of mission.

The essays in this collection help us understand that we live and work in a post— Christendom situation. Western culture has lost the veneer of Christian values that it used to keep. The uneven economic growth that has widened the gap between rich and poor may well be a proof that western culture is no longer rooted in gospel values. Today the influence of Christianity has declined in the West. Not even lip service is paid to factors such as compassion and fairness in national or international policies of the affluent and developed nations where Christianity still exists as an established religion. In such a situation we keep asking, “give us friends”.

This impressive volume is critically important to understanding the meaning of mission since Edinburgh 1910. Essay writers are concerned with friendship between Christians of different faith traditions, and especially among those Christians who understand mission in different ways. However, the volume failed to adequately address the causes for decline of the missionary movement in the West since Edinburgh 1910, but perhaps that is not its purpose.

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GENERAL EDITOR: THOMAS SCHIRRMACHER

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