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J. David Hester 1993-95

George G. Hunter III 1995-97

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T. V. Thomas 2001-03

Scott J. Jones 2003-2004

In This Issue

This is a forward looking issue. First, Ron Crandall reflects on the thinking of participants at the October 2004 Lausanne gathering on renewing the church for evangelization in the 21st century. Using 1 Thessalonians 2:12's "walk worthy of God" as a backdrop, he describes five essential steps for churches that want to grow up into Christ and reach out to the world.

Evangelist, Myron Augsburger's "futuristic evangelism" focuses on engaging our pluralistic, post-modern, global community through embracing the Incarnation as our model. Recognizing that reconciliation doesn't happen at a distance, he describes the need to meet people where they are with love, acceptance, and sensitivity. While not minimizing the role of proclamation, Augsburger insists that it be rooted in a holy life, loving service, and reliance on the Spirit. In concert with the emphasis of Crandall's Lausanne group, he affirms that evangelism must always be "an expression of an active faith."

Using a Los Angeles freeway metaphor, Matt Elofson's suggests that we spend too much time looking at our side and rearview mirrors, that we need to "integrate the horizon of the future" into our thinking on evangelism. To facilitate such thinking, he employs the "future-pull" concept of George Land and Beth Jarman. We are not so-much pushed toward the future, he says, as pulled. Thus, we need to begin with the end in mind. The Holy Spirit does not come to us out of the past but out of the future, into which the Spirit wishes to draw us in a continuation of Christ's evangelistic errand to the world.

Though William Payne's approach is historical, it is for the sake of the future that he reminds us of the genius of early Methodism's use of local preachers, lay leaders, and circuit riders. Other factors were important in Methodists' astonishing growth, but none rivaled their dependence on the lay apostolate. Because lay leaders nurtured, encouraged, and held accountable new believers, as they had themselves been nurtured, circuit riders were freed to work at extending the church. Payne suggests that implementing contemporary equivalents would produce the same kind of results today.

In our final piece, a young West Texas pastor contemplates how we might employ the catechumenate model of the post-New Testament church in a contextually appropriate and beneficial way today–specifically in small church evangelism and discipleship. The heart of Brooks Morton's article is his example of how this model might look when contextualized for a rural Texas community.

Editorial: A Reminder via McLuhan

Back in seminary days—for me that was the early 1970s—I studied missions under Professor George W. Peters. Among other helpful emphases, he underscored the distinction between the evangel and evangelism. Our message remains constant, he insisted, but our methods must be flexible.

At about the same time, I was reading Marshall McLuhan, the Canadian philosopher of communication who, in his quirky way, was attempting to shift our attention from message and methods to another component of communication. Do you remember, "the medium is the massage?"

At the time, I read McLuhan with interest, but I tended to dismiss him because of his eclectic method and eccentric style—perhaps, also, because his writings were a challenge to unravel. But now, these many years later, I find many of his ideas worth revisiting. For example, his identification of the shift from "precept" to "percept," helps me understand why postmoderns are attracted to a faith grounded in experience more than one grounded in doctrine. Equally thought-provoking is his insistence that the medium of delivery greatly affects the sender's message, facilitating or frustrating clarity—he thought mainly the latter of radio and television, which, though extensions of ourselves, he considered impersonal. "We shape our tools and, thereafter, our tools shape us," he wrote.

Was he right? For example, has an overdependence on gospel radio, evangelistic tracts, and other depersonalized means actually weakened our evangelism? Many think it has and point to the fact that McLuhan's prediction of the eclipse of Western Christianity in the midst of a rise of religiosity is tracking as he predicted.

If, as McLuhan claimed, impersonal media are overtaking and overwhelming the message, let it be a reminder that God's chosen medium is not impersonal-technological. To recall the Bell Labs model, the Encoder (God) has chosen, of all possibilities, *a Son* as the medium for bringing the gospel to humanity. If we choose to follow that lead, we must recover an emphasis on the Incarnation and the primacy of persons and relationships in our errand to the world. Methodologies and technologies have their important place, but the Messenger (God), the Message (the Son), God's contemporary medium (the apostolate–i.e. those who know the Son and are led by the Spirit) and the means (humbly sharing the Good News in the context of redemptive, reconciling relationships) rule.

Lausanne III and Renewing the Local Church for World Evangelization

Ron Crandall

From September 29 to October 5, 2004 the third plenary gathering of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization met in Pattaya, Thailand. As a participant in Issue Group Number 10A, "The Local Church and the Great Commission" I worked alongside 30 other delegates from around the world to explore what needed to be heard and what needed to be said in this new century about this critical facet of world evangelization.

The final compilation of our prayer and thinking emerged as Lausanne Occasional Paper No. 39—"The Local Church in Mission: Becoming a Missional Congregation in the Twenty-First Century Global Context and the Opportunities Offered through Tentmaking Ministry." This and 60 other papers emerging from the conference can be found on the Internet at www.lausanne.org.

Compiling the paper was not an easy task. Several editors from various subgroups worked on the final copy seeking to integrate concise expressions of both practical and prophetic ingredients emerging from our work together. Four major areas of concern related to enhancing the incarnational witness of our faith communities were addressed: (1) congregational renewal and holistic discipleship, (2) organizational structures and the nature of leadership, (3) evangelistic patterns for full participation in the cultures we serve, and (4) action plans that enable congregational mobilization for witness.

The particular task our subgroup addressed was related to item #1 above. Eleven pastors, professors and key lay leaders from Ethiopia, Korea, New Zealand, Australia, Argentina, the United States and the United Kingdom labored joyfully to share our experiences and best insights related to the identity of the church, its need for renewal, the nature of Christian discipleship, and the role of worldwide partnership in this task. What follows is an attempt to summarize that conversation.

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The Identity of the Local Church

Almost everyone has an image created by the words "local church." The image may be a building on a stretch of rural hi-way or on a busy corner in the heart of a great city. It may be an image of smiling faces, friends, and warm greetings as people gather at that building or outside in the open air. It may be a small group engaged in Bible study or prayer, or perhaps a larger group of dozens or even thousands of people meeting for worship. Whatever the image, one of the greatest challenges for local churches today is to discern and be faithful to their special identity as incarnational manifestations of Christ's body designed and equipped by the Holy Spirit for God's mission in the world.

The biblical message from cover to cover is about God's design to restore people from their sinful brokenness and bless them with his divine presence in order that they might pass on that blessing to others. What we refer to as the "Great Commission" is simply the summary of this mission as given by the one we Christians know as Savior and Lord, God's Son incarnate in the flesh, our Friend and Master Jesus Christ who sends us as his disciples to witness to this reality and invite others from among all of the earth's peoples to "taste and see that the Lord is good" and join with us as we together follow him.

In 1974 the *Lausanne Covenant* declared "We affirm that Christ sends his redeemed people into the world as the Father sent him, and that this calls for a similar deep and costly penetration of the world. We need to break out of our ecclesiastical ghettos and permeate non-Christian society"[1] (Article 6, *The Church and Evangelism*). How does Christ send us? Primarily we are sent as his Church, and the only incarnate manifestation of that missionary body announcing and revealing the gospel of God's kingdom come is the local church. Article 8 (*The Local Church*) of the 1989 Lausanne *Manila Manifesto* adds:

> Every Christian congregation is a local expression of the Body of Christ and has the same responsibilities. . . . We believe that the local church bears a primary responsibility for the spread of the gospel. Scripture suggests this in the progression that 'our gospel came to you and then 'rang out from you'. In this way, the gospel creates the church, which spreads the gospel, which creates more churches in a continuous chain-reaction.[2]

The local church is the fellowship of Christ's disciples in specific locales all around the world. As such we exist to be "fruitful branches of the true vine" (John 15). We are "rooted and grounded in love" (Ephesians 4), the eternal, agape love of God. The fruit we bear is not something we manufacture on our own, but that which comes from the life flow of the triune God as we "abide" in the true vine and allow the Holy Spirit to work in us and through us for God's glory. Jesus goes so far as to claim that this fruitfulness is how we become or demonstrate that we are his disciples (John 15:8).

When we reflect on the Great Commission as found in Matthew 28, we often focus on the mandate of "making disciples." Indeed, this is our commission. But it is worth remembering that this task only makes sense and is possible because the risen Lord Jesus declares, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations."

C. Rene Padilla reminds us "because Jesus Christ is the Lord of the whole universe, he must be proclaimed as such among all nations, and in all nations disciples must be made who will confess his name and live in the light of that confession. . . . nothing and no one is excluded from his authority."[3] The great commission is not up for a vote. No local church can opt out of faithfulness to this task and expect to have any sense of "abiding" in Jesus. We cannot make others his disciples "teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you" if we are not doing the same ourselves. Disciples are called to "come and follow," and every congregation as a community of *Christ followers* must go where he goes and be engaged in the tasks he has assigned us.

But such faithful obedience is precisely why the last words of Jesus recorded in Matthew 28 are so critical. Our mission is his mission, and thus a co-mission; and we are always to remember, "I am with you." In fact, to know and abide in this presence is the single most important characteristic of local churches that are fruitful for the kingdom of God. The promised *power* of the Spirit to equip Christ's witnesses (Acts 1:8) was not primarily for producing the miracles we call "signs and wonders," but for producing contagious agents of transforming agape love. Henri Nouwen captured this beautifully when he wrote:

> When we no longer walk in the presence of the Lord, we cannot be living reminders of his divine presence in our lives. We then quickly become strangers in an alien land who have forgotten where we come

> from and where we are going. Then we are no longer the way to the experience of God, but rather in the way.[4]

But Christ's presence and work of love in us is never a commodity to merely be consumed. It is the oil for the flame, the sustenance for our obedience, and ultimately the message of our mission—"Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27).

Every local congregation is only a true representative of the body of Christ when this radiance is revealed. If we have squandered this treasure on ourselves, we have been disobedient. If we have failed to "go" and have instead waited for others to "come," we have been disobedient. If our witness is only within our walls and among ourselves and not outward to "Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8), we have been disobedient. Disobedience requires repentance. Repentance for prodigal children and disciples and congregations begins with a "coming to our selves" (Luke 15:17) or a recognition of our true identity as contrasted to our current poverty. It continues when we "turn around" and head homeward. It is completed in the restorative presence of him who calls us to follow and sends us to obey.

Renewal of the Local Church for its Witness

Our working group identified several major challenges for the effective witness of local congregations. These included a need for: repentance, prayer, trained leadership, inspiring mission-minded pastors, mobilized laity, adequate resources, partnering networks, bridging generational differences, faith in the power of God's intervention, functional structures for growth in discipleship, recognition of changes in society, sensitivity to cultural distinctives, acceptance of new models of the emerging church, and a vision for participation in global evangelization.

Such challenges are not new, and the particular array of challenges varies from context to context. Yet, from every land and leader came a call for renewing local churches for their witness and mission. We are called to "live lives (*walk*) worthy of God who calls you into his kingdom and glory" (1 Thessalonians 2:12). *Walking* is one step at a time, and each step—especially in the early days of learning to walk—involves us in a short season of risk and

imbalance as we move to next moment of stability. Renewal for the local church involves a similar process as we take *steps* toward our destination of faithfulness in God's kingdom and for God's glory.

Step One: Stepping FORWARD—Inspired, Visionary Leadership

We have few if any stories of local churches being renewed for their witness in the world without the presence of one or more visionary and inspired leaders. More often than not this requires a pastoral leader who prayerfully seeks God and God's design for being the church and then steps forward *leading* the church. Leaders, by definition, lead.

Often local churches have settled for and even preferred pastoral leaders who simply worked to make things comfortable and who functioned at best from a model of nurture and fellowship and at worst from some form of isolation and retreat. Transformational Great Commission leaders find it almost impossible to settle for the status quo. They are captured by Christ's call and vision of a functional body "walking worthy" of the one who gave it life and designed it for a mission. This is not to say that such leaders can be effective by neglecting relationships. Leaders that renew local churches love the Lord, love the gospel, love to learn, love their people, love the lost, love to see others come alive in the Holy Spirit, and love to humbly honor Christ's name. Peter admonishes early Christian leaders to:

> Tend the flock of God that is in your charge, exercising the oversight, not under compulsion but willingly, as God would have you do it—not for sordid gain but eagerly. Do not lord it over those in your charge, but be examples . . . . And all of you must clothe yourselves with humility in your dealings with one another, for "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." (1 Peter 5:2, 4-5)[5]

And Paul reminds the Thessalonians of how leaders serve.

> As God is our witness, we never came with words of flattery or with a pretext for greed; nor did we seek praise from mortals, whether from you or from others, though we might have made demands as apostles

> of Christ. But we were gentle among you, like a nurse tenderly caring for her own children. So deeply do we care for you that we are determined to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you have become very dear to us. (1 Thessalonians 2:5-8)

Where do such leaders come from? They are called and sent by God. Our task is to recognize them, provide the necessary structures and personnel to properly equip and train them for mission and evangelism, and faithfully join them in our common witness to the world.

Often those who have been trained and are serving local churches find themselves isolated from others who share their passion and vision for Christ's work. Efforts are needed by both denominational leaders and parachurch organizations to network pastoral and lay leaders for encouragement and support and provide models and resources for congregational renewal and effective outreach into their communities. More and more these partnerships and networks are taking place across traditional denominational boundaries. The Spirit who desires to lead us into places of ministry like the house of Cornelius and to the "ends of the earth" is also the one who unites us, gifts us, and makes us fit for kingdom work. The Lausanne movement has been one of God's wonderful tools to remind us of this larger unity and to equip multitudes of local pastors and churches with new vision and resources for the task.

The leaders we need cannot be distinguished merely by categories traditionally labeled "lay" or "clergy." We must continue to declare boldly that we are a body composed of the "priesthood of all believers." Every Christian is not gifted for the same tasks or ministries; but as Paul reminds us, all of our gifts—teaching or pastoring, prophesying or healing, administration or general helpfulness—are for building up the body of Christ as each member contributes his or her part in love (Ephesians 4). Every congregation, no matter its size, when it submits to the headship of Christ and the giftings of the Holy Spirit has adequate resources to faithfully carry out its mission of contagious witness. Leaders discern God's giftings in others and seek to stir them up to love and good works. Leaders are not only "out in front," but they are also "underneath" coaching others into their own ministries that contribute to the well being of the body and the extension of the kingdom.

Step Two: Stepping INTO the Spirit—Renewal and Transformation

Renewal of the local church for its transformative work in the world begins when we hear the Holy Spirit call us back to our identity and our source. Our identity is found in God's Word, and especially in the Word made flesh in Jesus. Our source for action is the Spirit himself, promised and poured out at Pentecost in order to birth the Church and lead us through every age. Local church renewal is about the Spirit's work in us changing us into the likeness of Christ "from one degree of glory to another" (2 Corinthians 3:17-18). Only as the local church steps into life in the Spirit can it be empowered for faithfulness to the task of being Christ's witnesses.

Stepping into the Spirit is closely aligned with prayer and attentiveness to God's Word. The Spirit, who hovered over chaos to bring order, beauty and goodness to the creation, is now present to bring the same qualities to God's new creation. This is not merely something to affirm theologically and believe as doctrine, but it is something to be experienced as we move forward obediently in mission, "for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline" (2 Timothy 1:7). This vibrant freshness of life is the freedom that the whole created order is standing on tiptoe to obtain—"the freedom of the glory of the children of God" (Romans 8:21).

This renewing of spiritual power and focus comes in different ways, but the heart of it is most often found in worship that we approach in "spirit and in truth." Here we recognize the presence of the triune God, Father-Son-and-Spirit and acknowledge in humility and often repentance that we are desperately in need of being clothed in Christ's righteousness and power not just for heaven but for earth. It is the awareness of God's glory and our design and destiny as God's children to be carriers of that glory to the ends of the earth that allows the Spirit of God to free us from all pettiness and fear and equip us for boldly living as "Christ-people." We rediscover our own creativity and how God can speak to us through indigenous music and multiple forms of celebrative art. We hear testimony and are deeply touched by the stories of others as they have known the touch of God and remind us what we are about is the most important partnership ever designed. Worship of the living God is at the center of our being, and therefore the starting point for all of our doing.

For many, however, this only becomes a life changing reality instead of a thought or wish as they become engaged directly in mission. We need to step out of the boat to walk where Jesus walks and not fear the storms. We do it best together. Taking the trip into that part of the city that we fear, traveling to that distant place in need, offering our presence and the gospel in that jail or prison or hospital aligns us with the way of our Lord (Matthew 25). Another part of this journey for many comes through the discovery and investment of their spiritual gifts, or through special renewal retreats or programs like the Cursillo movement and Walk to Emmaus or Experiencing God or various in-depth discipleship studies.

But the goal is never merely study or retreat. The goal is not only personal renewal; it is also congregational renewal, and conceptual renewal, and structural renewal, and ultimately missional renewal. All of this is the work of the Holy Spirit who glorifies Christ and continually is at work to empower, equip, and lead every gathering of Christ's body—large or small—into the business of being a blessing to others for the glory of God and the salvation of the world.

Step Three: Stepping OVER—The Obstacles

Nothing makes more of a difference in the renewal of a local church than the joy experienced when they know they are faithfully following a vision from the Lord and see his hand at work among them for the transformation of others. Without a vision people and churches perish. Vision is not so much something that drives us from behind, as it is something that draws us from the beyond. Much research has demonstrated the benefit of clarifying a strong vision and mission statement for a congregation, and the great commission of Matthew 28 offers one of the most helpful formulations of our task: worshiping, remembering, and making disciples of all peoples by going, baptizing, and teaching to them obey. How simple. How straight forward. How hard to miss. Nevertheless, the New Testament itself bears witness that this path is not free of obstacles and even dangers.

One of the dangers is forgetfulness. We become distracted by small things and forget that nothing is more important for us as Christ's body than the transforming power of gospel itself being delivered in word and deed to those in desperate need. A constant reminder of the primary task is paramount. Also,

even great visions need concrete executable strategies. Nearly every story we hear of successful and effective evangelism by local churches begins with a clear call of God placed on the hearts of key leaders, and moves forward step by step as the details of "What? Who? Where? When? and How?" become spelled out. This process is one filled with the mystery of God's guidance and God's silence. We are indeed co-laborers with the Holy Spirit in this undertaking, and continual prayer and fasting is perhaps the only way to keep from rushing ahead or lagging behind the Spirit's leading.

Other obstacles include lack of adequate funding for carrying out the vision. Even in the New Testament there were those who came alongside Jesus and his disciples (Luke 8:1-3) as well as Paul and his team (Romans 16:1-2). Partnerships are important not only in the work itself, but also in the support of such efforts. The formula is simple.

> God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work. As it is written, "He scatters abroad, he gives to the poor; his righteousness endures forever." . . . Through the testing of this ministry you glorify God by your obedience to the confession of the gospel of Christ and by the generosity of your sharing with them and with all others, while they long for you and pray for you because of the surpassing grace of God. (2 Corinthians 9:7-15 selected)

Local churches serving in difficult places need other congregations and agencies partnering with them so we together we can "test the ministry" and glorify God who "gives to the poor." Organizations, networks and individuals that help link us together in this fashion are tremendously important in today's shrinking world where we can often connect face to face through short term mission experiences and other interactions. Sometimes these partnering opportunities are as close as across the street or in the same city. Sometimes they lead us across more significant distances and boundaries of language and culture. But every local church is designed by Christ to grow stronger and be renewed from both the giving and receiving that such partnering involves.

The list of obstacles and challenges can sometimes appear long: discouraged pastors, under utilized lay persons, conflict brought by dissension

within the congregation, fear of societal and cultural changes that immobilize us, and above all else believing the lie that we are only "grasshoppers" up against giants (Numbers 13:17-14:9). God is able. Every obstacle is only an opportunity to discover afresh the meaning of "Emmanuel" and the power of the Holy Spirit promised as we faithfully engage in our work as Christ's witnesses.

Step Four: Stepping UP—Growth in Discipleship

Renewing the local church is only possible as the lives of those who make up the body are being changed from one degree of glory to another into Christ's likeness (2 Corinthians 3:17-18). The salvation brought by Jesus Christ to the world is a total and holistic salvation. It is about the light of the kingdom of God penetrating every corner of darkness not only in our individual lives, but also permeating cultures and societies as well. One of the great missionary evangelists to India, E. Stanley Jones, described this work of the kingdom as "Christlikeness universalized."

Too often Christian discipleship has been diminished to a concern only about one's eternal destiny. "Saved" was almost tantamount to "going to heaven when I die." Jesus himself makes it clear that eternal life is "knowing the only true God, and Jesus Christ" (John 17:3). What does it mean to know God? It can mean nothing less than becoming more like Christ. This is what it means to *be* Christ's disciples and what is involved in *making* disciples of our Lord.

How does it happen? What we know for sure is that it doesn't happen by accident. It happens by intent. Local churches that believe their only responsibility is to secure membership and baptismal decisions are missing the boat. Even churches that emphasize discipleship courses, Bible study, prayer, Christian fellowship, stewardship and worship are missing the boat. Disciples who are taught to obey everything Jesus commanded (Matthew 28:20) are not made merely by informative instruction. How did Jesus teach his disciples to perform what he taught them? He walked with them and coached them from one degree of glory to another. Ultimately this transformation is accomplished only by the power of the Holy Spirit, but Christian discipleship is more about "walking worthy of him that calls us" than it is about instruction. True,

disciples are learners, but they are more like apprentices who are learning how to live and work alongside their teachers than they are pupils who learn how to recite what they have memorized. After all, *disciplines* come much closer to the meaning and the goal of making disciples than much of what we have offered as *instruction*.

Although the areas needing to be addressed in this process are surely many, there is at least some benefit in outlining the basics. No coach would simply gather a group of players on a field and say, "Well, we've got lots of folks out here today who love the game, so why don't you just walk around, try all the equipment, and see what appeals to you. Then we'll meet tomorrow for the game." What is the game? How do you play it? What are the basics? Who will coach us?

Jesus offers more explicit definition of being his disciples than we sometimes have recognized. In fact there are four passages in the Gospels where he is recorded to have said something like "This is how people will know you are my disciples." There is no special order in scripture for these four marks of Christian discipleship, but logically they might fit together as follows. Two will be considered under the idea of stepping UP and are primarily concerned with how we mature in our own relationship with Christ and with each other in his Church. The other two will be categorized as stepping OUT, and lead us both individually but also as local churches into mission and witness in the world.

MARK 1—WORD "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (John 8:31-32). These were the words Jesus spoke first to those who began to believe in him. It was his reminder that having faith in him or believing was only a door that opened into a life to be lived. Disciples pay attention to their master's words. Christian disciples pay attention to Christ's words. And what might this mean? There can be no maturing in Christian discipleship without paying serious attention to what Jesus is trying to tell us and show us. This means for us serious Bible study, searching conversation with our brothers and sisters, attentiveness to excellent preaching and Christian writers, prayerful inquiry for the risen and living Jesus to show us the way to walk day by day. And note that the purpose of this "continuing" is not so we know his words, but that we know

the truth that sets us free. Free to what? That takes us to marks two, three and four.

MARK 2—LOVE "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34-35). Jesus gave this mandate to his disciples in the Upper Room after washing their feet as their "servant-master." This mark of discipleship is about servant love inside the body of Christ. How do we serve one another? In what ways are we supposed to serve one another? How do we learn to serve one another? Love is the first fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22) in our lives, but it must be "practiced." The New Testament includes about forty-five texts describing how we are to act toward "one another." Studying these "one another" passages would be a good start to know how we are to "wash feet" in the local church. And most important to remember is that we are to do this "just as I have loved you." How does Christ love his disciples and his Church? That's how we are to love one another. Where does this best happen? There is a great deal of evidence that indicates this kind of growth in love comes best in small groups—which is just one of the reasons they are so critical to renewing the local church.

Step Five: Stepping OUT—Mission and Witness

Continuing to develop the idea of growth in discipleship, the final two marks of discipleship also fit nicely into the fifth step of local church renewal—the step outward into the world.

MARK 3—CROSS "Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. . . . None of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions" (Luke 14:26, 27, 33). It might easily be argued that there are three marks of discipleship here, but perhaps with only a little effort we can see here three facets of one mark about the *cost* of discipleship. Jesus is reminding his disciples that no one choosing to be his follower should think this means business as usual with a nice religious coating. The peace he offers (John

14:27) is profoundly real, but it is not the same as worldly comfort. To summarize these three facets under the heading CROSS bearing is to remind us that like Jesus, our crosses are hard choices we make in obedience to the Father's will for the sake of others—especially for the others that respectable religious folks sometimes think are unworthy of any sacrifice, never mind the ultimate sacrifice. We cannot cling to our own possessions and prerogatives and be his disciples. In fact, it will cost us everything we might wish to clutch tight; but our gain is beyond imagination both in this life and in the life to come. How do we learn to live this way? First, it is a by-product of putting Marks 1 and 2 into practice. His truth deeply known and his love deeply shared combine to free us *from* fear and *for* sacrificial service to all. Second, it is not something we face alone. We walk together armed with grace into those places where the Spirit and the Word direct us. This often leads us into kingdom work that confronts injustice and offers mercy as we "walk humbly with our God" (Micah 6:8). Article 6 of the 1974 Lausanne Covenant states "a church which preaches the cross must itself be marked by the cross."

MARK 4—FRUIT "My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples." If bearing our cross as Christ's disciples is anything like how he bore his—making costly choices for the sake of others who are seen by the world as "unworthy" but seen by God as "loved beyond our imagination"—then bearing fruit is the end of the whole discipleship process and is about effective evangelism. Only as we abide in him can we bear his fruit, fruit that will remain (John 15:16). This is in part about the quality or tastiness of our lives as his Spirit flows in us like Holy Sap surging through the true vine. But Jesus has quantity in mind as well. He wants his disciples to bear much fruit as we witness to the gospel that will allow many to become new branches of the true vine. In fact, if we bear no fruit, we will be removed from the vine; and if we bear some fruit, we will be pruned and shaped so that we might bear much fruit and prove to be Christ's disciples (15:2, 8). This is a word for local churches and it is also word for every disciple. We are not all individually "evangelists" since it is a gift some have, not all (Ephesians 4:11-13). But we all are witnesses, and local churches are the incubators whose task it is to equip every Christian disciple to be the best witness he or she can be. This contagious presence of Christ's people in a community is what allows

local churches to plan for the use of every gift for faithfully extending the gospel to all.

Local churches, like Christian disciples, are meant to grow up into Christ and to reach out into the world. The final step OUT is to our Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and even to the ends of the earth. Local churches are great commission churches and Acts 1:8 churches. Wherever a local church is, there are all sorts and all ages of broken and sin-sick souls in need of what it alone can provide—an indigenous, incarnational announcement in word and deed that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, and an invitation to come join with us and follow the Master.

NOTES

1. The Lausanne Covenant can be found in several publications since it was originally composed in 1974, however the easiest way to access it today is on the Internet at www.lausanne.org.

2. The Manila Manifesto was drafted at the second plenary gathering of the Lausanne Committee in Manila, Philippines and can be accessed at the Lausanne website.

3. Rene Padilla, *Transforming Church and Mission* (Published exclusively for the 2004 Lausanne Forum for World Evangelization), pp 4-5.

4. Henri Nouwen, *The Living Reminder* (New York: Seabury Press, 1977), p. 29.

5. All Bible quotations are from the NRSV.

Futuristic Evangelism

Myron S. Augsburger

"Therefore if any one is in Christ , he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin (a sin-offering) for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (brought into right relation with God)." (II Corinthians 5:17-21, NIV)

The Incarnation as Model

We are not in the first century nor in the sixteenth century but in the 21st century. We describe our times as pluralistic, as post-modern and as a global community. The questions we face have to do with how we share in evangelistic witness in the world in which we participate. We are called by our Lord to be "ambassadors for Christ," those who represent Christ and his Kingdom in an alien world. The question we face is how to do evangelism in a post-modern, pluralistic and in one global world. My proposal is that we find our model in Jesus as the Incarnate Word.

As members above all in the kingdom to which Christ has called us, we are resident aliens. As E. Stanley Jones has said, "We do not build the kingdom, for God gives us the kingdom; we build the church," and that on the one foundation which is Jesus Christ. Evangelism is an extension of the church as the believing community and is the invitation to others to become believers and to join us.

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In view of the negativism which the secular world expresses against evangelism, we need to be clear on our definition of it. Both secular persons and the members of other religious groups see evangelism as seeking to make proselytes. For the secular mind, evangelism should be understood as anything and everything that makes faith in Christ an option for a person and that in full freedom and respect. For the member of another religion, our approach should be similar but with the emphasis that each of us alike must move beyond the forms of our religion to reach out to God himself. This approach is relevant for both conversation and proclamation.

In 1964, in West Pakistan, I shared in a conference at Muri with Bishop Woolmar of the Church of England. He had served there in mission for twenty-five years. I well remember his statement on missions.

> We will long want missionaries to come to Pakistan, but not those who come looking down on these poor benighted souls but those who will come and regard these people as sincerely religious and then show them what Jesus has to offer beyond their religion.

One who holds a high Christology does not simply accept one part of the work of Christ but accepts the whole Jesus, the Person who expressed the will of God in what he did, what he said and what he was. True, he died on the cross to express the depth of love in forgiving grace and that at the cost upon himself to the depth of all that humanity could do to him even to the death. This, the cross with the resurrection, expresses the unique message of the gospel of grace. But he also revealed the will of God in what he said, not only in passages like John 15 but in his sermons on discipleship (e.g., Luke 6 and Matthew 5-7). And beyond this, he expressed the will of God in what he was: the Person of love and grace. Jesus is our model for service, as Peter wrote, "God has set forth Jesus as an example that you should follow in his steps . . ." (I Peter 2:21). This example, as expressed in the larger passage, is to live in holiness, integrity, nonviolence and faith. In Jesus, we find the model for the disciple and, looking at the Person of Jesus, we have our model for evangelism, a model that will fit in the 21st century.

Regard for Where People Are

First, Jesus is our model in meeting persons just where they are–on their own ground and not on our terms. This complements the other person with respect for their intrinsic worth. Believing that each person is created in the image of God and that that image has been defaced in each of us, we call persons to the healing, regenerating grace of God. We meet each person on the same ground, knowing that we are all alike sinners even while we are not sinners alike. Our message of the gospel is that God offers both forgiving grace and transforming grace.

Examples of Jesus approach to persons are readily found in the Gospels. The well-known story of Jesus and Nicodemus (John 3) shows us that Jesus met this religious man on his own ground. He made clear to him that with all of his religion and the functions carefully performed by him, something needed to happen to him–i.e. his salvation would come from beyond something he could perform or achieve. Jesus told him, "You must be born again"–born from above, born of the Spirit–and birth is not something we do but something that happens to us. It was necessary for Nicodemus to move beyond a religion that he could perform to a genuine faith in God that would recognize what only God could perform, the grace of acceptance.

Another story comes from the next chapter of the same Gospel (John 4), where Jesus deliberately traveled through Samaria on his way from Judea to Galilee. Tired, yes, but also with purpose, he sat on the well waiting to meet the woman who would come. When she arrived, he asked her to do something for him, to give him a drink. She expressed her amazement that he transcended the cultural taboo of a Jewish man speaking to a Samaritan woman with a request for a drink. He amazed her more by his answer. Moving from her comfort zone to another level, he asserted that if she would ask of him he would give her living water. Now he had her attention, but note, he didn't simply say to her what he had said to Nicodemus: "Woman, what you need is to be born again." He was meeting her on her ground and moving her to faith in God. Upon her theological questions (telling us something about her class of insight), he called her to honest self-awareness. He instructed her, "Go call your man and come here," perhaps to keep clear his own ground of relationship with her, but, more importantly, to prod her in self understanding. She replied, "I have no man." Again Jesus surprised her in saying, "Right on! You have had five men and the

man you now have is not your man." With this, she exclaims that he is a prophet, but, in her faith, she knows of one better: the coming Messiah. His response identified himself as the Messiah. This marked the dawning of a new level of faith. The woman ran back to the city to say to those who knew her, "Come, see a man who has told me all things that ever I did, this isn't the Messiah is it?" Here, Jesus not only bridged cultural barriers but led this woman step by step in her own understandings of faith.

Another story we have come to know as the account of the "Rich Young Ruler" (Mark 10:17-23). When the rich young ruler came to Jesus, he came running, expressing his earnestness. He fell down at Jesus feet, expressing his respect if not reverence. He asked the most important question one ever asks, "Good Master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?," an expression of the depth of his thinking. We are told that Jesus beholding him loved him. But note again, Jesus did not offer a formula: he did not simply say, as he had to Nicodemus, "Young man, what you need is to be born again." No, he met the young man on his own ground, picking up on his comments. "Why do you call me good, are you seeing God at work through me, there is none good but One, that is God?" He added, in answer to the man's question, "Begin with what you know, keep the commandments." The young man responded, "All these have I kept from my youth . . . what lack I yet?" What remarkable insight: doing good itself still leaves a lack. We are not reconciled with God simply by the good deeds that we do.

Now the young man had said that he had lived by these commandments from his childhood. Perhaps to expose the limitation of this claim Jesus goes to the very first commandment, that is, to let God be God in one's life. To this Jesus called him: "Go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and come, take up your cross (of identity) and follow me." But if this was what it meant to let God be God in his life, the rich young ruler was not prepared for it, and he went away sorrowfully, at least for that occasion. Note that, at that point, Jesus did not call after him and offer some modified form of religion but left the decision with him. Turning to the disciples, he pointed out that when we are inclined to play god with our things, it is difficult for us to acknowledge God as God and surrender our role in the power of things to the Lord.

In each of these accounts, and many more, Jesus is our example in evangelism. In *The Politics of Jesus*, theologian, John Howard Yoder emphasized the model of Jesus for our lifestyle, our ethics, and our

socio/political behavior. With the same Christology, I am seeking to underscore that Jesus modeled the ministry of reconciliation to which we are called. When we view evangelism as reconciliation we must recognize that reconciliation doesn't happen at a distance. We need to move among people, be with people. Once again, evangelism is everything that makes faith in Christ an option for persons.

Respect for Culture and Gender

But, beyond that, Jesus is our model in reaching across cultural lines to engage persons on the meaning of faith in their own pattern of thinking. Jesus called persons to be accountable on the basis of what they understood. Jesus' words, "To him who is given much of him much shall be required" is one expression of this truth. His story of the prodigal sons (Luke 15), one who went away from home and one who was legalistically engaged at home, reveal the love of the Father who could reach beyond the issue to the person–the Father who cared more about the person than about what he had done.

This is illustrated in many ways in the ministry of Jesus. He was willing to go to the house of the Centurion in ministry. He deliberately made trips to the Decapolis to the east of the Jordan to minister to the Greek community. He was approached by the Syrophonecian woman, responding at first with the indifference characteristic of the Jewish leaders with whom he was in conversation–until his disciples entreated him to send her away. Then, expressing the view of the Jewish in-group, he turned to the woman and said, "It is not proper to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs." But she responded, "True Lord, but even the little puppies lick up the crumbs that fall from the table." In other words, "just give me some crumbs and I'll be satisfied." Jesus' response was to compliment her faith as greater than what he was finding among his peers in Israel. And he announced to her a grace of healing.

Among many other examples, I would like to underscore how Jesus gave to women the dignity of respect and redemptive love. Mary Magdalene stands as one of the primary examples of this, with her inclusion in so many events–for example: her meeting the risen Lord after the resurrection; and, later, her sharing in the Pentecost experience of confirmation that Jesus is where he said he would be!

Another example of the standing Jesus' afforded women is his answer to the question of the legitimacy of a man putting away his wife (Matthew 19). Jesus chose to answer in a way that exposed the perverted license for men to arbitrarily break covenant with their wife. His answer made clear that, from the beginning, the covenant with male and female in marriage respected the equality and dignity of the woman. He pointed out that her importance meant that a man severed the priority of parental ties to put the marriage covenant above all other human relationships.

A further illustration of Jesus' esteem for women was his close friendship with Martha and Mary in the home of Lazarus, which included conversations on theological matters. Take, for example, his brief discussion with Martha as they stood before the tomb of Lazarus and talked of the resurrection. It was to Martha that Jesus declared, "I am the resurrection and the life."

So, we should not find it surprising that, according to Luke 8, Jesus had a number of women among his followers, some of whom even supported him from their financial means. These accounts, in a culture which ascribed women to a lower level than men, show that Jesus regarded each person alike with dignity, male and female alike, as bearing the image of God. This, too, is a model for us in evangelism: to communicate the highest respect for persons with whom we engage faith-conversation.

Reliance on the Word and Spirit

We should not minimize the role of proclamation in Jesus' ministry, teaching the crowds, teaching daily in the temple the last week of his life, and preaching to the people who gathered to hear him. One cannot read the Gospel of John, especially chapters 10 to 15 without being impressed with his proclamation of the gospel of grace. He emphasized that it is in hearing the Word that faith is born, "The words that I speak unto you they are spirit and they are life."

Evangelism calls persons to the basic decision to respond to the conviction of the Spirit and to convert, to change direction and walk with the Lord. This experience of conversion on our part is met by the deep inner work of the Spirit in regeneration and in subsequent transformation. In converting we deal with the sin problem of estrangement from God to now enjoy reconciliation in Christ. But this in no way meets all of our need for transformation as this is the

further work of the Spirit and engages the best in our counseling and psychological insights to help a person in a holistic self-fulfillment.

Unity in Diversity

Third, in sending his disciples out, including the occasion when he sent out another seventy (Luke 10:1-20), he sent them united in compassion ministries and that regardless of the differences in their personalities. Apparently John and Peter with different personalities, Thomas and Andrew, and Judas and Phillip each with their own characteristics still shared a unity of mission with the diversity of personality traits. We are members together of one body.

Paul affirms this truth in showing that in the experience of Pentecost the body of Christ is made up of the many parts, many persons, who with our differences each function as a part of the whole. The church is not an ethnic group with a lot of "sameness" but is a community of the Spirit finding unity in our commitment to live by and for the glory of Christ even with our diversity. We are believers alike but we are not alike as believers. This understanding of diversity should help us in evangelism to extend the borders of the church without thinking that all new members should be copies of us or made after our image. Our unity is in our common commitment to our Lord and our diversity is to be seen as strength in our meeting a variety of persons.

Culture is ubiquitous, it is the skin in which we live, and it is ever changing. To idolize a given culture, to think that in the mission of the church we extend our Western culture, is to violate the universality of the kingdom of Christ. Take a look at Acts 13: 1-4, where the church at Antioch was led by the Spirit to set apart Barnabas and Saul for the work of itinerant mission. Those who commissioned them there were a cultural mix, Jews, African blacks, members of the Roman political system and evidently others. It was no surprise that Saul/Paul being sent out by this fellowship was open to include Gentiles in the new areas of church growth even though he went first to the synagogues and shared the gospel of Christ with those in his own cultural and religious tradition.

In the last chapter of the book of Acts we find Paul in Rome, and in comparing the notes from his earlier letter to the Romans chapter16, we find that the church in Rome was very cross cultural, even including members of Caesar's household. It is this flexibility in evangelism that enables us to accept

persons of great difference from our own ethnicity even while the acceptance is on the same ground that we are accepted in grace, we are each alike declaring that Jesus is Lord.

Loving Servants of All

To achieve this cross-cultural fellowship we need with Paul to be "all things to all peoples" (I Corinth.9:16-20). He reminds us that he was led by God to be a servant to all, to the Jew, to those under the law, to those without law, to the weak as well, being "made all things to all people that he might by all means save some." Evangelism is to serve Christ in the role of the servant, never to operate from a position of power but from the stance of a witness. I cannot prove everything that I believe but I have evidence to which I respond in belief, and in some small way I want the change in my life and the assurance of God's grace to be a witness providing evidence to others of the reality of faith.

As an Anabaptist I have sought to hold the Great Commission and the Great Commandment together. Jesus is the model of compassion, in relationship with people and in his self-giving love to the death even for his enemies (Romans 5:6-10). This compassion means that we will be open to others in self-giving love. In fact, with my conviction for peace and nonviolence I have reminded people that if they are genuinely evangelical they will be pacifists for one can't take the life of a person for whom Christ died when we want to win them to be our brother or sister in Christ. For those of us who read Jesus' words to love our enemies it is important to remember that loving another is more than telling them we will do them no harm, rather genuine love wants to help them to experience and share the life we know in Christ. The second commandment, "Love thy neighbor as thyself" is not fulfilled short of an evangelistic extension of compassion.

On this principle of love, from Jesus, and on Paul's principle of being all things to all persons, I have for more than fifty years conducted interdenominational evangelistic preaching missions on a citywide basis. This has involved churches from Right and Left, also including Catholics with the Protestants, and in 1963 the one citywide such meeting in Salt Lake City ever held there. I have found that when the gospel of grace is central in the presentation of Christ that a wide range of churches will share. As a Mennonite

evangelist I have been known to be a discipler. I have found that with a strong emphasis on conversion and regeneration the conservatives would support me, and with a high priority on the church as a community of the Spirit and strong emphasis on ethics and social responsibility, the more liberal would support me. This was not manipulation on my part but an expression of my theology of the Third Way, neither rightist conservative nor leftist liberal but the way of the kingdom of Christ.

The church has many persons gifted by the Spirit for his work but the greater expression of the gift for proclamation evangelism is of course Dr. Billy Graham. Without question he has been the leading evangelist of the 20th century and a special gift of God to the world. Once, in the early 1960's in a conversation with him, I asked his advice for me as a young Mennonite evangelist just beginning in citywide missions. His response was to avoid signs of denominationalism and then to encourage me to distinguish between the *kerygma* (gospel) and the *didache* (teachings for discipleship), to always keep the gospel at the fore. Knowing that he might be concerned about my emphasis on pacifism, I commented that, while this distinction sounds good, actually I couldn't preach the kerygma without preaching that at the cross Christ gave himself in love for his enemies.

On the same principle of love for all peoples, Esther and I went to Washington, D.C. and founded a church on Capital Hill in 1981, with another couple as associates. In the inner city context, as well as this partisan setting, we found here some very unique challenges in evangelism. Even so, we saw the Spirit lead us in the development of a strong congregation of people from varied backgrounds. Since it was multi-denominational in makeup, we worked out a membership covenant that was true to our own denominational heritage but also very considerate of and acceptable to persons of other denominations. We sought to balance the evangelical and the social dimensions of the gospel, to emphasize the priorities of the kingdom of Christ and the way of peace and equity in society. We emphasized being a community of the Spirit in which we held one another accountable to live as disciples of Jesus.

As to accountability, in the example of Christ it is not to the sinner that Jesus was most direct or condemnatory, but it was rather to his peers who stood within the religious tradition yet were inconsistent with their claims. Jesus sought to hold persons accountable for their profession of faith within the religious community. And we too have a ministry of revival, of calling fellow

Christians to stand with us in accountability to the Lord. Not to do so is to compromise the witness of faith that should characterize the church in any society. In fact we, as the church, do society the most good by maintaining our integrity as a people of faith.

Evangelism takes many forms in the social context among which are friendship evangelism, conversational evangelism and proclamation evangelism. Conversational or personal evangelism enables one to interact very specifically with the person and seek to meet them with understanding similarly as does a counselor. In such dialogue we need to be careful that we do not manipulate their thinking or bring pressure upon them to conform to expectations. The conversation must be in freedom. In proclamation evangelism the goal is to make the gospel intelligible and desirable, offering an invitation for persons to surrender themselves to Christ. I have found that persons can come and listen to the gospel in a crowd and maintain anonymity rather than being put on the spot but that the Spirit of God convicts and calls them to a new identity to be disciples of Christ. The preaching evangelist needs to respect this factor and beware of being manipulative in presentation and invitation.

Our witness is that we are believers, that we worship the Lord. This is more than professing Christian ideals, it is becoming a believer in Christ who responds to all of his claims. A few years ago, Esther, my wife, coordinated a conference for Eastern European Christian Artists in Bulgaria. For the music, a group from Sofia, from the Symphony, came to minister to us. Having been Communists as recently as three years before, on one occasion as they were discussing their new life I heard them commenting, "Before I was a believer . . . Now that I am a believer . . . Since I am a believer . . ." and followed by then interpreting their new life in this light. This is the new identity to which as evangelists we are calling people.

Becoming a believer may be a process or it may be a crisis experience as faith dawns. Either way it doesn't mean that as a believer one is perfect but that one has now changed direction and is walking with the Lord. The change of direction is the crisis decision to which the evangelist is motivating persons, but the areas of maturing or perfecting still need growth of comprehension and commitment. This calls for the nurture that the Christian community can provide in counsel, psychological insights and participation together in worship and in prayer.

Evangelism, in whatever form, is an expression of an active faith. We are not passive in society but we are a presence for Christ. As Archbishop William Temple said, "When we know Christ our relation is so wonderful that we can't stand it for other people to miss out on this relationship." Our witness, in whatever form, needs to be consistent with the model of Jesus, the One whom we name as Lord. We have a special ministry of reconciliation, a ministry that calls others to join in covenant with Jesus Christ. With the pluralism of our society our witness is to call persons to move beyond forms of religion to reach out and meet God himself. This is the meaning of faith, to hear the gospel of grace and to respond in a faith that will let God be himself in our lives. "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved" (Jo. 3:17).

Navigating Our Shifting Culture: A New Horizon for Evangelism in a Postmodern Context

By Matt Elofson

Living in the Los Angeles area for the past fourteen years, I have invested innumerable hours along with millions of others refining my driving capabilities while traversing the myriad of freeways that dominate our landscape. In order to navigate this concrete milieu filled with rapidly moving vehicles safely, an individual needs constantly to be aware of a number of horizons at the same time. First and foremost, a driver needs to be scouring the horizon provided by their front windshield incessantly in order to anticipate various road conditions and the flow of traffic. In addition, an occasional glance into the side and rear-view mirrors is necessary in order to monitor the current and recently past environment for any number of potential issues. Consequently, to effectively negotiate the perilous freeways of Los Angeles, an individual must be constantly focused on and anticipating the future, while being intentionally conscious of how the present and past might influence one's driving experience.

When contemplating much of our thinking and practice regarding evangelism in our contemporary context in light of this familiar experience, I would contend we invest the majority of our time and energy monitoring our past and present circumstances, as opposed to scouring the future for potential opportunities and/or impediments in order to be missio-preneurial in an ever changing cultural climate. Consequently, in much the same way that focusing one's attention on one's side and rear-view mirrors while driving the freeways of Los Angeles would be detrimental to one's health, our persistent attentiveness to the present and past has led predictably to many of our evangelistic efforts being irrelevant and ineffective in the fluid climate of postmodernity we currently inhabit.[1] Convinced of our unhealthy condition, it is imperative that Christians begin to intentionally integrate the horizon of the

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future into our contemplation concerning our theories and practices of evangelism. In order to facilitate this reorientation of our vision, it will behoove us to explore the concept of "future-pull" as discussed by George Land and Beth Jarman in their book concerning the dynamics of change entitled *Breakpoint and Beyond: Mastering the Future – Today*.[2] However, as Christians it would be insufficient to base our understanding of evangelism and the future on Land and Jarman's assertions alone. Therefore, we also need to consider Ray Anderson's concept of eschatological preference as a theological parallel to Land and Jarman's concept of future-pull. Once we have established the theological plausibility of focusing on the future for evangelism, we will consider a number of ramifications this shift in focus has for evangelism.

Land and Jarman's Understanding of Future-Pull

Jarman and Land assert that our culture has unremittingly succumbed to the idea that "Events are driven by, and are a result of, past causes; the present is determined by the past. The prevailing view is that every effect or event has a traceable material cause . . . So whatever happens has been caused by something in the past."[3] As a result of our persistent acceptance of this perception, our actions "automatically lead us into recreating the past instead of being able to fully create the future we want."[4]

In response to this prevailing mentality, Land and Jarman contrastingly assert that every living organism is actually pulled toward the future based on the blueprint imbedded in the DNA of any organism. They cite the findings of molecular biologists in regards to autopoiesis, referring to the ability of organisms to be "self-organizing" or "self-creating" in a turbulent environment. This "ability for natural systems to grow and change in extremely flexible, versatile, and creative ways occurs because no matter what the circumstance, every part of the system shares the same blueprint of the future whole."[5] This unifying design provides the organism with direction based on its intended purpose within nature. Although some may deny the notion of purpose inherent in nature, Jacques Monod suggests that "one of the fundamental characteristics common to all living beings without exception: that of being objects endowed with a purpose or project."[6] Utilizing these scientific claims regarding nature, Jarman and Land proclaim that "The most powerful forces driving change come from the future."[7]

As a result, Land and Jarman suggest the need to adopt a new set of operating rules in order to implement this future-oriented view of cause and effect. First, an individual or organization must develop a "shared and compelling vision of an ideal future."[8] They suggest the vision of the desired future provides the stimulus for an organization's or individual's everyday activities. Devoid of a "compelling purpose, we live life as a fairly haphazard experience, being easily swayed by the latest fad, temporary pressures, or the most recent advice on what others think we ought to be doing with our lives."[9] The significance of this compelling vision for everyday life, leads to the second operating rule identified by Land and Jarman. As a result of possessing a compelling vision of the future, we need to make our "day-to-day decisions based on that vision, not on the past."[10] Although we must glean from the wisdom of the past, we cannot be held hostage by its mistakes or determined by its consequences. Stephen Covey in his well-known book, The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, foreshadows Land and Jarman's assertion regarding the significance of a compelling vision for everyday life in the context of his discussion of "beginning with the end in mind."[11] According to Covey

> The most fundamental application of "begin[ning] with the end in mind: is to begin today with the image, picture, or paradigm of the end of your life as your frame of reference or the criterion by which everything else is examined. Each part of your life – today's behavior, tomorrow's behavior, next week's behavior, next month's behavior – can be examined in the context of the whole, of what really matters most to you.[12]

The final operating rule concerns the "assurance that all people have the opportunity to contribute to the vision."[13] This is not a preposterous exhortation to tolerate the uninvested or uninformed voice attempting to influence one's vision of the future.[14] However, it represents our need to expose ourselves to a plethora of views because of the interdependent nature of life on earth.[15] Accordingly, we should seek relationships with people who are invested not only in the fulfillment of one's future vision, but also in the overall well-being of our world, both universally and locally. These relationships will

undoubtedly "provide deep personal fulfillment . . . when one is fully open to connecting with those individuals, circumstances, and events that will lead to the fulfillment of one's purpose."[16]

Even though some might disagree with Land and Jarman's interpretation of the scientific evidence or their appraisal of the significance of future-pull for dealing with change, their proposition offers a viewpoint of hope based on one's potential future, as opposed to the pessimism of a present and future predetermined by one's past. In addition, the phenomenon of future-pull is exhibited in the world of business constantly. The majority of companies that are successful over the long-term are investing millions of dollars into their research and development departments in order to anticipate, understand, and capitalize on the trends of tomorrow. Those companies that focus too much attention on their current situation will typically be surprised by cultural changes and unprepared to successfully adapt to these changes. Their view serves as a reminder that "most everything you see and take for granted is an outcome of someone's idea of a possible future. Often these ideas were considered crazy or idealistic."[17] Mindful of this, we need to consider whether any theological rationale exists to provide credence to the application of Jarman and Land's concept of future-pull to Christians' reflection and practice concerning evangelism in a postmodern context.

Anderson's Eschatological Preference as a Theological Parallel for Future-Pull

At first glance, one might postulate that the concept of future-pull is not pertinent to the discipline of Christian practical theology for a number of reasons. When one considers the Christian faith, it is undeniable that the belief system of Christians is deeply-rooted in the past, primarily because the definitive salvific act of God in Christ is a recognized historical event in our world. Consequently, Christians inescapably reflect on the historic life of Christ as the model for their behavior and faith. In addition to Christ's life, death, and resurrection drawing our vision to the past, the sacred text of scripture represents a compilation of various genres of literature composed by individuals who lived thousands of years ago. Accordingly, our efforts to understand the text in its own context and exegete truth for our present situation compel Christians to contemplate the sociocultural environment in

which it was first composed. Finally, from the very inauguration of the church, Christians have yearned to maintain continuity with Christ and the early church.[18] This desire for continuity can most clearly be observed in the context of the Catholic and Orthodox branches of the Christian faith who maintain their intimate connection to the earliest church either through papal succession or liturgical practice.

Despite Christians' significant relationship with the past, Ray Anderson offers a compelling parallel for practical theology to Land and Jarman's idea of future-pull, which he identifies as eschatological preference.[19] Essential to the understanding of his concept of eschatological preference is Anderson's identification of a Trinitarian model for practical theology and his description of praxis.[20]

Anderson suggests that "practical theology is grounded in the intratrinitarian ministry of the Father to the world, the Son's ministry to the Father on behalf of the world and the Spirit's empowering of the disciples for ministry."[21] His assessment of the spiritual empowerment of the disciples for ministry occurring on Pentecost and proceeding out into the world since then is crucial to contemplate. For Anderson, Pentecost represents "the indwelling power of the Spirit of Christ as the source of the church's life and ministry."[22] Thus, just as Jesus was empowered for ministry by the Spirit at his baptism, the disciples were empowered for ministry by this same Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

Consequently, "the early church interpreted the praxis of the Holy Spirit as the continued ministry of the risen Christ, thrusting the community into the world as a mission community and preparing the church to be the church for the last century – the century when Christ returns."[23] The idea of the Holy Spirit drawing the Church to the future in order to prepare the church for the last century, as opposed to attempting to reproduce a historical facsimile of the first century church, represents an emerging horizon on which to conceptualize the journey of the Christian faith through history. As has already been mentioned, the Christian community has typically relied on their historical connection with Christ, the early church, and the biblical text to define what is normative. However, the hinge on which Anderson's view diverges from the conventional Christian perspective is his contention that the Holy Spirit comes to the church not from the past, but from the future.[24] For Anderson, "The praxis of the ministry of the Holy Spirit can be understood in light of that

which God desires to become a reality at the end, not merely to replicate that form of ministry during the first century."[25] This assertion regarding the origins of the Holy Spirit's activity on earth will serve as an important point in understanding eschatological preference, but before we explore the ramifications more thoroughly, it is necessary to consider what Anderson means by praxis.

By praxis, Anderson is referring to "a form of action that is value-directed and theory-laden," as opposed to "the simple non-reflective performance of a task in a dispassionate, value free manner."[26] For him, praxis represents "action which not only seeks to achieve particular ends, but also reflects upon the means and the ends of such action in order to assess the validity of both in the light of its guiding vision. Praxis is theory-laden because it includes theory as a vital constituent. It is not just reflective action but reflective action that is laden with belief."[27] In utilizing the thought of Aristotle, Anderson proposes that the guiding vision of any praxis is represented by its telos, or "its final purpose, meaning, or character."[28] Consequently, "the action not only produces a product but the action is accountable to the telos and, in moving toward the telos, is informed by the telos as to the kind of action required in order to produce the intended effect."[29]

Inherent in Anderson's description of a Trinitarian model of practical theology and his understanding of praxis are a number of issues that are pertinent to our discussion of future-pull. To begin with, Anderson's identification of the importance of telos in relation to praxis parallels Land and Jarman's assertion that everything in nature is pulled by a compelling vision of the future. In Anderson's terminology, this compelling vision of the future is represented by the telos, or guiding vision. As can be inferred from Anderson's discussion regarding the origins of the Holy Spirit's empowerment, the "compelling vision" of the future for Christians is provided by the eschatological location from which the Holy Spirit comes to us with the intention of transforming the church into what God wants it to be in the "last century," not return it to what it was in the first century.

Moreover, just as Covey exhorts his readers to begin with the end in mind, Anderson's location of the Holy Spirit's mission of transforming the church into its intended purposes for the last century from the future points to the eschatological vision which should inform our praxis. As a result, Christians should integrate their current understanding of telos into their thinking

regarding everyday praxis. In regards to this integration, Anderson alludes to a constant reciprocal relationship between one's telos and one's current praxis, in which the Spirit's representation of the intended purpose for the church informs and provides accountability for current praxis, while praxis simultaneously shapes and cultivates one's emergent perspective regarding the intended purposes for the church.

Consequently, the enduring presence of the Spirit of God in the body of Christ mandates that the entire body continually engages "in the hermeneutical task of interpreting the Word of Christ in the context of the work of Christ."[30] It is in the context of this hermeneutical task that Anderson proposes the concept of eschatological preference. Derived from the theological constructs discussed, Anderson claims that if the same Spirit that empowered the church on the day of Pentecost is still active in our contemporary world, then "we should expect that the Spirit will more and more prepare the church to be the church that Christ desires to see when he returns, not the one that he left in the first century."[31] To illustrate his point, Anderson points to a number of circumstances in the New Testament to illustrate the functioning of eschatological preference in real life situations, including the empowerment of women by the Holy Spirit and the inclusion of uncircumcised Gentiles into the covenant community.[32] The impetus behind Anderson's concept of eschatological preference is the recognition by the community of faith of the transforming activity of the Spirit in our world compelled by an eschatological vision of the future. The acceptance of this theological paradigm represents a divine version of future-pull towards what God wants his church to be, as opposed to what it was, which has significant implications for evangelism in a postmodern context.

Implications of Future-Pull/Eschatological Preference for Evangelism in a Postmodern Context

Drawing from Anderson's concept of eschatological preference, the most obvious implication for our contemplation and practice regarding evangelism concerns the direction of our inquiry. A number of theologians and practitioners have constructed and are continuing to construct theories and models of evangelism anchored to the past. They have either utilized the Scriptural text to abstract "biblical" principles of evangelism[33] or identified

certain movements in church history deemed to be successful and attempted to construct a contemporary model for evangelism.[34] Just as a driver needs to be conscious of his or her present and past situation, I would not subscribe to wantonly disregarding these works because I am convinced that one can glean a wealth of insight regarding the theory and practice of evangelism from them. However, if one takes Anderson's concept of eschatological preference seriously, Christians need to realize that our perspective has been focused in the wrong direction. William Abraham brings to light the importance of refocusing our vision, when he claims that "Any considered attempt to develop a coherent concept of evangelism that will be serviceable in the present must begin with eschatology."[35]

In addition to refocusing our horizon, applying Anderson's understanding of eschatological preference to our theory and practice of evangelism will prompt a number of significant shifts in the manner in which evangelism is viewed and carried out in a postmodern context. First, if we apply Anderson's concept of praxis, the eschatological vision for evangelism must inform and hold accountable our present practice of evangelism. Therefore, we need to begin our evangelistic efforts with the end result in mind. Most of our current and recently past "techniques" for evangelism were aimed at intellectual assent to a series of ideas.[36] This methodology has produced many intellectual assenters, while not holistically challenging these assenters to become fully committed followers of Christ. Consequently, we must contemplate what should be the outcome of our evangelistic efforts. William Abraham's identification of evangelism as "primary initiation of an individual into the kingdom of God,"[37] might serve as a model of taking the end result seriously.[38] Despite what one might interpret as the eschatological vision for evangelism, one must take seriously that "Jesus taught that becoming a disciple is a process that takes place in a continuous way in the worship and community life of the church."[39]

While not only prompting one to contemplate the end result of our evangelistic efforts, an eschatological vision of evangelism must hold accountably our current praxis. Accordingly, we cannot justify the mentality that we should do "whatever is rational and necessary to facilitate . . . people making the decision to follow Christ."[40] This attitude not only leads to mere intellectual assent, but it provides the justification for manipulating people emotionally, intellectually, and in any other way necessary in order that they

might "believe" in Christ. In looking back at Jesus' interaction with individuals in the context of the gospels, we do not see him attempting to manipulate people into decisions. However, he shares the truth with people and allows them the space and the time to make their own decisions regarding faith.[41] Therefore, we must always be mindful of an eschatological vision of evangelism that informs our reflection and holds our methods accountable.

Finally, our focus in evangelism will be centered on two important concepts: hope and how to live in the present. Tom Sine testifies to the importance of hope by claiming "In a world drowning in cynicism, nihilism and polarization, people are looking for a reason for hope. And I am convinced that the people of God have no higher calling than to offer hope to the world."[42] In a world undergoing tumultuous changes in every sphere of life from economics, to sociopolitical agendas, to the growing threat of terrorism throughout the world, Christians need to offer an eschatological hope that is not based on the current circumstances, but on the faithfulness of God to fulfill his promises. For Christians, it is imperative that we comprehend our hope, "as an eschatological community that looks back to God's faithfulness in the Old Testament and Christ's death and resurrection, lives in the present power and guidance of the Holy Spirit, and looks forward to Christ's Second Coming to establish the new heaven and new earth."[43] In addition to the future hope that we have to offer, an eschatological perspective provides a foundation for living in the present. In a world that lacks purpose, a compelling eschatological vision of the future, in which the Holy Spirit is actively involved in our world and in our church in order to form it for the "last century," provides purpose for our present lives as agent-subjects in this transformation. As Christians, we need to "live in the present from a future perspective."[44]

Conclusion

Therefore, in much the same way that a driver attempting to navigate the freeways of Los Angeles needs to focus her vision on the future informed by their present and the past, I believe an important shift in our thinking regarding evangelism must be motivated by the horizon of the future while being keenly aware of the past and present. We inhabit a culturally fluid environment in which most churches "do long range planning as though the future will simply be an extension of the present . . . As a result, we are chronically surprised by change."[45] The shock of change in our culture has

often left Christians resistant to renovating their thinking and/or practice regarding evangelism. Consequently, Christians need to be imaginative in communicating the message of an "eschatological reality which casts its rays into the dismal present, illuminates it and confers meaning on it."[46] In doing so, we are able to offer a hope in the current chaos that is not linked to the uncertain circumstances of our day, but to the faithfulness of a God who has continually been active in bringing about his purposes in our world.

Furthermore, the application of eschatological preference to our evangelistic efforts necessitates that we must always keep God's intended purposes for evangelism in mind as we encounter pre-Christian individuals. Ideally, this will prevent us from attempting to manipulate people and situations in order to inspire inauthentic decisions to follow Christ in attempting to "interpret the Word of Christ in the context of the [eschatological] work of Christ."[47] Ultimately, Christians must come to the realization that the same sort of ideas and thinking that have brought the church to the brink of inconsequentiality in the context of postmodernity are not going to miraculously rekindle its flames of relevance.

NOTES

1. See George Barna's *Evangelism that Works: How to Reach Changing Generations with the Unchanging Gospel* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1995), pp. 33-61.

2. George Land & Beth Jarman, *Breakpoint and Beyond: Mastering the Future – Today* (Champaign, IL: Harper Business, 1992).

3. Ibid., p. 96.

4. Ibid. p. 107.

5. Ibid. p. 174

6. Jacques Monod, *Chance and Necessity: An Essay on the Natural Philosophy of Modern Biology* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1971), p. 9.

7. George Land & Beth Jarman, *Breakpoint and Beyond*, p. 105.

8. Ibid., p. 119.

9. Ibid., p. 177.

10. Ibid., p. 119.

11. Stephen R. Covey, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People: Restoring the Character Ethic* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989), pp. 96-144.

12. Ibid., p. 98.

13. George Land & Beth Jarman, Breakpoint and Beyond, p. 119.

14. This inclusion of anyone's voice into one's vision of the future would potentially create a cacophony of voices and would represent a contradiction to Jarman and Land's previous operating rule regarding one's vision assisting in making day-to-day decisions. One's compelling vision will often determine the voices that one allows to influence that vision.

15. Another of Land and Jarman's principles in overcoming what they identify as breakpoint change is Connecting, which represents the need for people and/or organizations to build relationships with those outside of themselves because of the interconnected nature of our world.

16. George Land & Beth Jarman, Breakpoint and Beyond, p. 110.

17. Ibid., p. 110.

18. The desire to maintain continuity with the origins of the faith is even illustrated in the biblical text, when the apostles concluded they needed to choose a replacement for Judas. It could be argued their perceived need to allocate twelve apostles was an effort to maintain continuity with the ministry of Christ. In addition, the stipulations they placed on the replacement were reflective of this desire for continuity because the individual had to have been with the others from the time of Jesus' baptism to the time of his ascension.

19. See either Ray S. Anderson's The Shape of Practical Theology: Empowering Ministry with Theological Praxis (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), or The Soul of Ministry: Forming Leaders for God's People (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997).

20. See either Ray S. Anderson's The Shape of Practical Theology: Empowering Ministry with Theological Praxis (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), or The Soul of Ministry: Forming Leaders for God's People (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997).

21. Ray S. Anderson, The Shape of Practical Theology: Empowering Ministry with Theological Praxis (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2001), p.40.

22. Ibid., p. 44.

23. Ibid., p. 52.

24. Anderson supports this idea by pointing to Paul's declaration in Ephesians that the Holy Spirit is a pledge of one's inheritance. According to Anderson, this pledge represents a type of "down payment on the inheritance promised as the eschatological fulfillment of God's promise." See Anderson's discussion in The Shape of Practical Theology, pp. 105-106.

25. Ray S. Anderson, The Shape of Practical Theology, p. 106.

26. Ibid. p. 47

27. Ibid. pp. 46, 47.

28. Ibid. p. 49.

29. Ibid. pp. 49, 50.

30. Ibid. p. 52.

31. Ibid. p. 107.

32. Although Anderson recognizes the concern of some individuals that this mentality would lead to a relativism that would justify any theological perspective based on one's interpretation of the activity of the Spirit, Anderson balances his idea by stating that any innovation in ministry or theology needs to be alluded to by some form of biblical antecedent that provides a type of "foreshadowing" of the perceived innovation.

33. See Walter Brueggemann's, Biblical Perspectives on Evangelism: Living in a Three-Storied Universe (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), or Walter Klaiber's, Call & Response: Biblical Foundations of a Theology of Evangelism, tr. by Howard Perry-Trauthig and James A. Dwyer, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1997).

34. See George G. Hunter III's, *The Celtic Way of Evangelism: How Christianity Can Reach the West . . . Again* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2000) or Robert E. Webber's, Ancient-Future Evangelism: Making Your Church a Faith Forming Community (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003).

35. William Abraham, The Logic of Evangelism (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmanns Publishing Company, 1989), p. 17.

36. See John Drane's Evangelism for a New Age: Creating Churches for the Next Century (London: Marshall Pickering, 1994), pp. 51ff and pp. 101ff.

37. William Abraham, *The Logic of Evangelism*, p. 13.

38. In regards to an eschatological perspective regarding evangelism, I believe Abraham is definitely on the right track, but I am not convinced by his methodology in order to initiate someone into God's kingdom, especially in a postmodern context.

39. Robert E. Webber, Ancient-Future Evangelism: Making Your Church a Faith Forming Community (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003), p. 22.

40. George Barna, *Evangelism that Works*, p. 71.

41. See Thomas Groome's Sharing Faith: A Comprehensive Approach to Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1998), p. 262.

42. Tom Sine, *Cease Fire: Searching for Sanity in America's Cultural Wars* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), p. 244.

43. Jimmy Long, *Generating Hope: A Strategy for Reaching the Postmodern Generation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), pp. 122, 123.

44. Ibid. p. 116.

45. Tom Sine, *Wild Hope* (Crowborough, England: Monarch, 1992), p. 17.

46. David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003), p. 361.

47. Ray Anderson, *The Shape of Practical Theology*, p. 52.

The Apostolic Nature of Early American Methodism

In the preface to *Why the Marvelous (Former) Success of Methodism* (Sooy 1884:v), the Rev. J.L. Sooy recounted the glorious rise of the Methodist Episcopal Church (MEC). He wrote:

> The history of American Methodism is without a parallel in modern times. Not only is she the leading Protestant Church in numerical strength, not only do the figures show that while the population of the United States has increased during this last century about seventeen-fold, Methodism has increased her numerical strength more than five-hundred-fold but "virtue has gone out" of her to every Christian sect that has "touched the hem of her garment." Therefore, at the end of this her first century of organized ecclesiastical life, no question assumes such importance as this, What are the causes of this phenomenal progress and success.

In 1770, American Methodism was so infinitesimal that is did not compare with the American population or to other denominations. By 1790, Methodist membership equaled 1.48 percent of the total population. By 1830, that percentage increased to 2.7. By 1843, 6.5 percent of the American population belonged to a Methodist society. The percent-growth becomes more amazing when one considers that the U.S. population increased from 2,205,000 to 17,069,000 in the same time period.

Incredibly, the church's numerical influence far exceeded its membership. In 1791, Thomas Coke estimated the actual numerical strength of the MEC.

> If we number the Methodists as most people number the members of their church, viz., by the families which constantly attend the divine

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> ordinances in the places of worship, they will make a larger body than you possibly conceive. The Society, I believe may be safely multiplied by five on an average, to give us our stated congregations, which will then amount to 300,000. . . . The adults which form our congregations [members and nonmembers who attend regular preaching] in these states amount to 750,000. About one-fifth of these being black. (Asbury 1958c:96) In 1797, Francis Asbury punctuated Coke's exuberance when he estimated the numerical influence of the MEC. He wrote, "Altho [sic] we do not number yet, we may calculate upon one hundred thousand that stand in the above states in friendship and are in some degree of fellowship with us and perhaps ten hundred thousand [1,000,000] that are our regular hearers" (1958c:162).[1] At that time, the US population numbered about 5,000,000. If Coke and Asbury's estimations are accurate, approximately 20 percent of the U.S. population related to the MEC in the 1790s. These extraordinary claims highlight the influence that Methodism had on America during the 1790s.

According to one historian, from its founding in 1784 to 1812, the MEC became the largest single denomination in America. It had 20 percent more members than its nearest rival, the Baptists. It was larger than the Episcopalian, Congregationalist, and Presbyterian churches combined.

Within 50 years after Wesley sent the first Methodist missionary to America (1769), more than one quarter of all the professing Christians in America, both Protestants and Roman Catholics, claimed to be Methodists. The growth rate was so phenomenal that had it continued for a few more generations, every American would have been won to Christ and an overwhelming majority would have been called Methodists (Coleman 1990:18-19).

In the spirit of Sooy's original question, what were the causes of this phenomenal progress?

Number of Circuits, Circuit Riders and Members between 1770 and 1820[2]

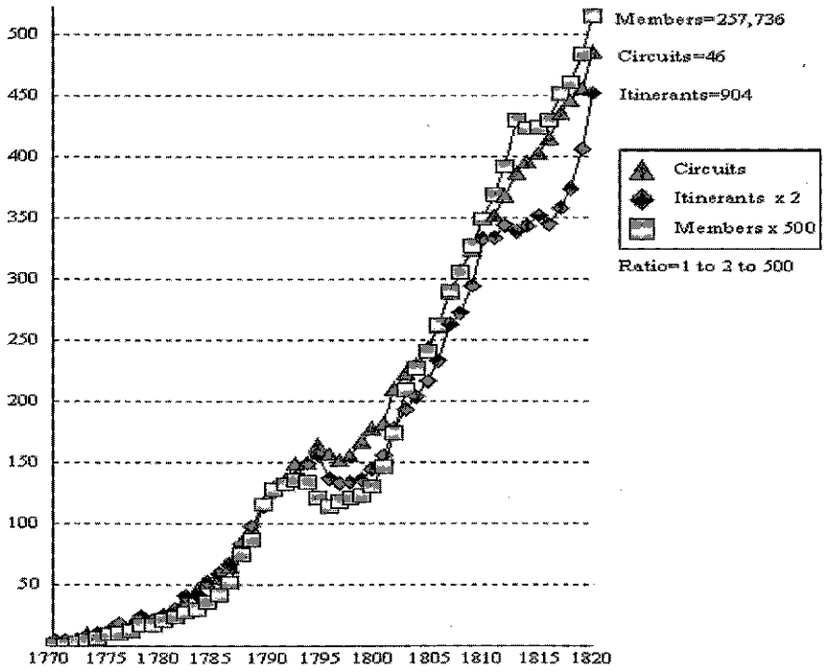

Figure 1

Doubtless, many factors contributed to the numerical growth. Contextual factors related to shifting demographics, the declining influence of colonial denominations, and emerging growth opportunities must be considered. Equally significant was the Methodist system. It maximized growth opportunities and minimized negative contextual factors as it adapted the institution to its external environments. Also, spiritual factors related to the continuous cycle of revivals and visible signs of power encounter positively affected numerical growth. Yet, even though the above factors predisposed early American Methodism to growth, the ministry of local preachers, lay leaders, and circuit riders actualized the growth potential. They took the gospel

to the masses, harvested the fruits of evangelism, discipled the converts, and transformed a nation. They embodied the essence of the apostolic spirit.[3]

The Ministers

Early American Methodism began as a lay movement with nominal connections to the Anglican Church. After American Methodism formed itself into the MEC in 1784, a team of lay people continued to shepherd each local society. That team included local preachers, exhorters and class leaders. None of these had membership in a Methodist conference or the benefit of a conference appointment.

In early American Methodism, local preachers conducted the weekly prayer meetings, preached when the circuit riders were at another charge, instructed new converts, made visits to homes, called on the sick, conducted most of the funerals, assisted at protracted meetings, performed weddings, rode the circuit when the appointed preachers could not, and acted like a missionary when emigrating to new areas.[4] Exhorters worked with the preachers. They extolled the people to action and encouraged them to remain constant in their walk with God. They appealed to the emotions and to the mind. Class leaders provided intimate pastoral care on a regular basis to a small group of people. They are the ministers who were most responsible for a seeker's conversion and growth in grace.

Parenthetically, every Methodist had to belong to a class in order to belong to a society. As soon as a person was "awakened" or desired to become a Methodist, he or she was enrolled in a class. Participation in a class required self-examination, accountability, and adherence to the Methodist discipline. The positive relationship between growth in grace and discipline was crucial. Experience proved to Wesley that growth in grace happened as a person kept the discipline. That is why he told his traveling preachers not to awaken people through preaching if they did not have the means to form them into classes where they would grow in grace. Discipline and Methodism became synonymous.

A circuit rider examined the members of a class on a quarterly basis. If the class participants kept the discipline and evinced growth in grace, he issued them a class ticket that allowed them to participate in restricted society functions. Routinely, circuit riders purged the societies of people who were not

keeping the discipline. The admittance of "undisciplined" people to the society meetings hindered the spiritual growth of those who were striving for more grace.[5] This quality control mechanism ensured that Methodist membership figures accurately reflected numbers of disciples.

Methodism would not have survived in America had it not been for the pastoral care provided by the local ministry. Moreover, because of the pastoral care provided by the local ministry, circuit riders could focus their efforts on evangelism and the expansion of Methodism.

The circuit riders turned Methodism into a church growth machine. Typically, they were young men who gave their lives to the ministry. Most died at an early age from exposure, sickness and deprivation. In essence, they took vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. They were paid $64 per year and no more. If they received gifts (items of clothing, horses, or honorariums), they had to count them toward their annual salary. By virtue of their poverty, circuit riders could not get married. If they did get married, they had to locate. As they rode the circuit, they slept in the homes of the people they visited. Often, they slept under the stars. Occasionally, they slept in a tavern. Every six months to a year, they were transferred to a new appointment. Most would run out of sermons if they stayed on the same circuit too long. Besides, frequent transfers prevented the circuit riders from becoming too attached and allowed the local ministry to maintain pastoral control of the societies.

When Asbury told a circuit rider to move, he had to go on a moment's notice. Asbury was the commanding general who deployed his preachers in the way that most effectively accomplished the mission of the movement. He knew the abilities of the preachers and the needs of the connection. No one could complain about an appointment or the hardship that accompanied it because Asbury modeled the ideal in his own ministry through his constant travels, frequent illnesses, and continuous deprivation. Like the other traveling preachers, he only received $64 a year, never married, and died on the circuit.

Circuit riders were recruited from the local societies. Before being recruited, they demonstrated their abilities as a class leader, exhorter, or local preacher. After a probationary period, a circuit rider could apply for conference membership. When he did, he was judged on the basis of effectiveness. In other words, did people respond to his preaching, did he keep to his circuit, and did numerical growth accompany his ministry? One thing is certain, early American Methodism counted the converts.

In early American Methodism, new circuit riders did not have the benefit of a seminary education. After being trained in the local society, they were apprenticed to a veteran circuit rider when given their first appointment. During this time, they enrolled in the course of study and learned many of the classical disciplines associated with the ordained clergy. Even still, on-the-job training remained the central means by which they were equipped for ministry.

The Circuit

The circuit system also reflected the apostolic nature of early Methodism. In early American Methodism, local churches did not exist in the same way that they existed in other denominations because the circuit was not a church or a congregation. It was a geographic area. It consisted of many preaching points and might contain any number of societies and classes. A preaching point could be a home, a barn, a school room, or a preaching house. Almost any structure could serve as a preaching point. By 1800, chapels became common in established areas. Even still, the circuit rider was not appointed to a chapel. He was responsible for the evangelization of the geographic area to which he was appointed.[6] Consequently, every circuit rider tried to grow his circuit. At this point, a striking similarity existed between Methodist circuit riders and the apostolic bands that evangelized the Mediterranean basin in the days of the primitive church.

Methodist circuits grew in three primary ways. The main method is called extension. When a circuit bordered an area in which there was no active Methodist work, the circuit rider made preaching forays into the area. As he visited in homes and in local establishments, some individuals or families would become interested and allow the circuit rider to preach from their homes or businesses to a gathering of invited neighbors and family members. At other times, the circuit rider would go into an area, rent a facility, and advertise that he would preach there on a specific date. In either case, if people responded positively to the preaching, they would be formed into classes, attached to a society, and added as a new preaching point to the expanding circuit. Through this method, the borders of Methodism expanded until they reached a natural barrier or another circuit.

A second method was the missionary approach. When Methodism wanted to expand into an area that was not coterminous with an existing work, the

yearly conference appointed missionaries. For example, in 1789, Asbury dispatched Jesse Lee to Boston to start a New England work. In time, Lee organized one society and a circuit in the area of Lynn, Massachusetts. From that one circuit, a web of Methodist circuits and societies covered all of New England by 1797. Lynn was a hub from which spokes shot out in every direction. As the spokes went forward, new hubs were formed and more spokes were sent out until all of New England was enclosed within the embrace of Methodism. In essence, Lee got his foot in the door. As he pried it open, an army of preachers rushed in to open it all the way. In early American Methodism, the missionary approach was used in Natchez, Savannah, Kentucky, and different regions of Canada.

Because of the high priority on expansion, the MEC took circuit riders and money from existing circuits and sent them to establish new circuits in unreached areas. Asbury believed that the local preachers in established circuits could carry on in the absence of circuit riders, but new works could not be maintained or started without an abundance of circuit riders. The focus on the evangelistic mandate reflects the apostolic nature of early American Methodism.

The third method relates to the first two. It is called division. When a web of circuits covered an area, additional circuit riders would be raised up from that work or sent in from other works. These circuit riders would work the area more carefully. A four-week circuit would be divided between two circuit riders and become a two-week circuit. As the division process continued, the percentage of Methodists in the area would grow dramatically. As Methodism grew, it continued to divide so that it could maximize the evangelistic potential of an area.

Both the division and expansion methods equally added to Methodist growth during the early years. For example, in the late 1780s, a loose network of circuits already covered Virginia. At the same time, South Carolina was in the process of being covered. During this time, South Carolina Methodism grew by expansion and Virginia Methodism grew by division. Interestingly, they both had the same growth in terms of raw numbers.

The following pattern emerges. Methodism sought to get a foothold in an area. Then it expanded from that foothold in an effort to blanket the area with a light covering of circuits. Then it sought to increase its presence in the area by concentrating on local growth, which necessitated dividing growing circuits

and increasing the number of circuit riders in that area. Within the area, it worked the places that were most receptive first.

Even though there is a discernible progression in the process from the perspective of one area, it is important to remember that all phases of the process occurred simultaneously from the perspective of the larger church. Early American Methodism sent missionaries to new areas, worked its borders, and divided circuits continuously.

The Founding of Early American Methodism

In the early years of American Methodism, southern Methodism demonstrated the apostolic nature of the movement and became a corrective to the "clergy" dominated experience in the mid-Atlantic area.

Mid-Atlantic Methodism was founded by two lay preachers from Europe. In New York, Philip Embury formed a society in 1768 after Barbara Heck admonished him to start preaching before they all went to hell. He did not itinerate. Shortly after this, Captain Thomas Webb of the British Army formed a society in Philadelphia. Webb loved to itinerate. He traveled widely. For that reason, his society in Philadelphia lacked dedicated leadership until Methodist missionaries disembarked from England in 1769.

A letter written by Thomas Taylor to Wesley on April 11, 1768, demonstrates the situation in the mid-Atlantic.

> You will not wonder at my being agreeably surprised in meeting a few here who have a desire again to be in connection with you. . . . There is another point far more material, and in which I must importune your assistance, not only in my own name, but also in the name of the whole society [in New York]. We want an able and experienced preacher; one who has both gifts and grace necessary for the work. . . . In regard to a preacher, if possible we must have a man of wisdom, of sound faith, and a good disciplinarian. . . . We may make many shifts to evade temporal inconveniences, but we cannot *purchase* such a preacher as I have described. (Bangs 1860:52-58)

Several points need to be made related to this. First, many of the Methodists in the societies in the mid-Atlantic area had a prior association with

British Methodism.[7] Second, they requested a preacher, not a circuit rider. Taylor did not envision a circuit system with itinerating preachers. Rather, he wanted to hire a pastor from Wesley in the same way that other churches employed a pastor. Third, despite the pleading of Webb, when the first missionaries arrived, they became the *de facto* pastors of the societies in New York and Philadelphia and did not itinerate. This established an unfortunate precedent. Fourth, in 1770, after other missionaries began to arrive, many of the native leaders relocated. This left the door wide open for the English preachers to take control. Fifth, when Wesley recalled the missionaries because of the Revolutionary War, the northern circuits did not have a trained cadre of native circuit riders. This caused numerical decline. Finally, to make matters worse, the missionaries were Tories. Some of them excoriated the patriots, alienated many members and potential members, and engendered great opposition to the Methodist movement. By 1778, northern Methodism dwindled to 150 active members and one circuit.[8]

In the 1760s, Robert Strawbridge formed a society in Maryland. Before 1770, Strawbridge discipled and dispatched a small army of lay evangelists to expand the burgeoning work. He was the force behind southern Methodism. Even after his death, his evangelistic spirit continued to hover over southern Methodism. His ministry produced the first substantial Methodist harvest in America. Additionally, many of his lay preachers became giants in early Methodism.

> It is evident that the Lord was with this little church in the wilderness in spite of its alleged irregularities, for its numbers increased in an encouraging manner, and in the log chapel on Sam's Creek as many as four or five preachers were raised up who, under the direction of Strawbridge, traveled little circuits on Sabbath, and worked for their daily bread on the other days of the week.[9] (Daniels 1880:378)

When the Methodist missionaries discovered Strawbridge and his ministry team, he and his preachers joined with them. However, the southern preachers struggled with the autocratic tendencies of the missionaries. Eventually, that struggle led to the formation of an independent MEC and a rift with Wesley.

Many factors account for the success of southern Methodism. First, Strawbridge modeled his circuit after English Methodism, but he was not beholden to it. Second, Strawbridge was the only person in the southern church who had a prior association with Methodism. Everyone else was converted to it. Third, Strawbridge and his preachers did not request help from Wesley or ask the missionaries to come to them. The native preachers were seasoned preachers when the missionaries arrived. Consequently, they worked side-by-side with the missionaries and did not cease from traveling their circuits. Fourth, Strawbridge adapted Methodism to his context. His emphases and innovations made the movement more attractive to Americans. Eventually, his "peculiarities" caused conflict with the missionaries. The missionaries resisted the indigenization of American Methodism as they tried to mold the movement after the British model. Fifth, the southern Methodists were accustomed to itinerating preachers and had no expectations for a settled ministry. In fact, a lay leadership grew up in southern Methodism that resisted autocratic circuit riders. Future generations of southern Methodists continued this debate when they argued for lay representation, attempted to minimize the power of the bishops, and wanted to elect presiding elders. Sixth, the southern preachers continued to work their home terrain even after the war caused the British missionaries to leave. Because they were homegrown patriots, they had an instant rapport with the people. Finally, numbers point to success. By 1779, southern Methodism grew to 8,258 members, 17 large circuits, and 28 full-time American circuit riders.

In summary, between 1770 and 1775, the primary institutional factor for the tremendous growth of Methodism in the South was the work of Strawbridge and his band of preachers. They had already plowed the soil and were reaping a big harvest before Wesley's missionaries came to oversee the work. Many other institutional factors relate to this. The preachers were home-grown, demonstrated natural abilities, and had a tremendous evangelistic zeal.

Table 1 (below) shows the continued decline of mid-Atlantic Methodism through 1778. Eventually, southern preachers went to the mid-Atlantic area and helped to reestablish the work around native preachers. Following that, mid-Atlantic Methodism expanded rapidly. By 1783, it grew to 1,633 members, had 12 circuits, and 12 circuit riders.

Table 1
Numerical Analysis of American Methodism
by Sections from 1776 – 1784

Membership Comparison

Year	M-A	MD	E.S	VA
1776	518	1609	486	2789
1777	488	1711	720	4049
1778	150	N.A	N.A	N.A.
1779	319	1880	1288	5090
1780	386	1970	1135	4773
1781	873	2493	2755	4625
1782	1174	2485	3952	4164
1783	1633	2245	4369	5503
1784	1607	2119	4604	6459

Number of Circuits

Year	M-A	MD	E.S.	VA
1776	4	3	1	5
1777	4	4	1	6
1778	1	3	2	9
1779	5	4	1	12
1780	5	4	1	11
1781	7	5	3	12
1782	9	5	4	11
1783	12	5	6	20
1784	14	5	6	22

Number of Itinerants

Year	M-A	MD	E.S.	VA
1776	4	8	3	9
1777	4	10	4	18
1778	1	7	6	15
1779	5	9	7	12
1780	5	9	8	20
1781	8	12	16	19
1782	9	12	13	25
1783	12	11	17	42
1784	14	11	17	38

M-A = Mid-Atlantic, MD = Maryland, E.S. = Eastern Shore (Delmarva), VA = Virginia, N.A. = None Available

Source: MEC *Minutes* (1813) as adapted by author

Lessons Learned

What does early American Methodism teach about apostolic Christianity? First, leadership is essential but it is not the only factor that determines the growth and health of a local congregation. Second, a local congregation should never become dependent on a professional pastor. It takes a team of people to give proper pastoral care to a congregation. God has equipped the local church to be his body and has called various members into pastoral ministry in accordance with their spiritual gifts. Third, usually, conversion and discipleship happen through one's participation in small groups. As such, the outreach efforts of a local church should attempt to assimilate seekers into small groups as a means of affecting salvation. Fourth, a radical distinction between clergy and laity may be a primary reason for the decline of many traditional churches. Every Christian is called to become a disciple and to engage in ministry. Apostolic churches emphasize the priesthood of all believers. Fifth, apostolic pastors have a vision for what God is calling the church to become. By means of effective leadership and modeling, they guide the people of God to the place

where God wants them to be. Sixth, pastors should keep the church focused on the bigger picture. Local congregations are part of a larger connection. No church exists for itself. Every church exists for the unchurched. By nature, churches become inwardly focused and want their pastors to serve them. Pastors must resist the temptation to become hired chaplains to a gathered colony of cloistered saints. Seventh, pastors should do evangelism and lead their congregation in the ministry of extension growth. Evangelism must be central to the mission of the denomination and integrated into the core of every local congregation. Eighth, pastors should be evaluated on the basis of effective ministry, not professional competencies. Training should include academic preparation and practical experience. Mentoring is essential. Ninth, the pastorate is not a career. It is a calling that requires self-denial and total dedication. Tenth, the local church should be the place where Christian leaders learn how to lead. Finally, early Methodism did not create churches that were distinct from their communities. Rather, the church was sewn into the very fabric of society. It existed in a home class meeting or a preaching event at a local tavern. People became converted by means of their contact with a Christian community that penetrated the various layers of their lives.

Conclusion

What would happen if every church in every annual conference of the United Methodist Church was shepherded by a team of lay people and every ordained minister focused his or her efforts on evangelism, church planting and ministries of peace and justice? That happened in early American Methodism. Second, American Methodism did not experience any significant decline in percent population growth until the circuit riders got off their horses and became pastors. At that point, they displaced the lay leadership teams and began an era when professional clergy dominated local churches. Today, the typical United Methodist congregation does not have the benefit of the circuit rider or the local team of lay ministers to provide comprehensive pastoral care. Early American Methodism had a missionary character, evangelistic zeal, and effective organization. It provides a case study in apostolic Christianity. Modern Methodism suffers from amnesia. Before it can move forward and recapture its essence, it must look backward and rediscover why God raised up the people called Methodists. Until it does, Methodism will continue its

downward trend until it becomes a memory like other apostolic movements that lost their way.

NOTES

1. Many people could not meet the membership requirements of early American Methodism but attended public preaching and depended on it for pastoral care.

2. Guy Smeltzer produced a similar graph for 1784 through 1797 (1982:85). His ratio was 1to 2 to 400. The ratio 1 to 2 to 500 more accurately demonstrates the correlation.

3. For more information on the growth and significance of early American Methodism, see Coleman 1954, Wigger 1998, and Payne 2001.

4. If a circuit rider got married, became incapacitated, or could not ride the circuit, he was located. A located circuit rider lost his conference membership and became a local preacher.

5. After purging a society, Asbury said, "Disorderly members [are] always a weight and a curse to any religious community. . . . No doubt but this frequently checks the spiritual progress of the righteous; especially if ungodly members are known and not dealt with according to the Gospel" (1958a:283). See Wesley 1991:VIII:249 and Cowan 1991:98-100.

6. In early American Methodism, all the circuits were names after geo-political features. The name identified the location of the circuit and pointed to the geographic organization of the movement.

7. "On Thursday, August 1, 1769, our Conference began at Leeds. On Thursday I mentioned the case of our brethren in New-York. For some years past, several of our brethren from England and Ireland, (and some of them preachers), had settled in North America, and had in various places formed societies, particularly in Philadelphia and New-York" (Wesley 1991:VIII:367).

8. In the early years of the war, troop movements, immigration, occupation, and fighting greatly disrupted the northern circuits.

9. William Watters, Philip Gatch, Richard Owen, Freeborn Garrettson, and John Hagerty.

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The Catechumenate in West Texas: A Critical Contextualization through Local Cultural Formative Structures

Brooks Morton

An anxious 18-year-old sits in the parking lot among a mob of strangers on a warm Sunday morning outside the barracks. When the right time comes, he tells his family goodbye, kisses his proud weeping mother and reports to a table where cadets will lead him into the "Quad." This quadrangle of three story dorms will be his home for the next two years. With the gracious help of his cadre, he hands over his bags, his civilian clothes, his hair and his digital watch. These are symbols of his former life. He is given new clothes that identify him as a "Recruit at Training" (a RAT). It will be at least 21 days before he will be allowed to speak to his family or friends. He is instructed how to walk, how to talk, where to look and why it is necessary for him (as well as all the rest of his "RAT buddies") to learn how to march, sing, drill, assimilate new knowledge, joyously pump out pushups, know who his leaders are and who the heroes that have gone before him were. He is part of a new and large extended community, past, present and future. He lives by a new code and functions as part of a new order of reality. He walks by a new ethic, "A cadet will not lie, cheat or steal, nor tolerate those who do." As time progresses, some of his buddies are no longer sitting across the table from him. Only cadets that persevere attain the prize of graduation. They rejoice and suffer together as a distinct people, forever fused by similar experiences and common symbols.

The above story reflects this writer's experience as an incoming college freshman at the New Mexico Military Institute. New students are instructed and properly initiated into the Corps of Cadets in order to insure their survival and success. There are ongoing ceremonies and rituals allowing further changes in status and responsibility. In summary, I was re-clothed for a new community, re-imaged for equality, reorientated to a new system of time, resocialized to a

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new way of life within this new environment, re-molded to a new ethic, re-skilled for a new purpose and mission and reindex frequently of the consequences of not living up to par. The experience was traumatic and wonderful.

The previous narrative illustrates the conversion and initiation of a civilian student into a new reality as a cadet. Just as new students are broken down, re-trained and graduated from RATs to New Cadets to Yearlings to Old Cadets and finally to the hallowed status of alumni, so also early Christians in the Roman west responded and were invited, nurtured and discipled, examined and prepared for spiritual warfare. Finally, these people were initiated through baptism as faithful followers of Christ. This process is commonly known as the Catechumenate.

This article presupposes that the early church process of evangelization, conversion and initiation into the Body of Christ remains a theologically sound model for Christian spiritual transformation today. Nevertheless, neither the ancient model nor the new Roman Catholic model (the RCIA) can merely be dug up from their specific contexts and transplanted through time or carried over socio-cultural-religio-political boundaries to be repotted in a new cultural soil without a serious attempt at critical contextualization. Therefore, this article intends to contextualize the ancient model to a small rural West Texas church in three stages: (1) represent the ancient catechumenate as a historical model and beginning point for contextualization, (2) contextualize the catechumenate model through the concept of local cultural formative structures, (3) create a theoretical model and draw conclusions as to why this contextualized model would be appropriate for small church evangelism and discipleship.

The Catechumenate as a Historical Model and Beginning Point

The catechumenate is one big pre-baptismal preparation. Thomas Finn argues, "Christians survived in Rome to a large extent because they developed a dynamic ritual process for the making of Christians" (Finn 1989). Interestingly, Rodney Stark notes that the ultimate factor in the rise of Christianity was how "Central doctrines of Christianity prompted and sustained attractive, liberating, and effective social relations and organizations" (Stark 1997). These intense communities that were formed led to an approximate

40%, per decade growth of Christianity over the first three hundred years of its existence (Stark 1997). Alan Kreider in *The Change of Conversion and the Origin of Christendom* refers to conversion in the early church period as a process of re-socialization (out of the world and into the church) through a change in what one believes, how one behaves and where one belongs. The process consisted of four stages: (1) evangelization, (2) the catechumenate, (3) enlightenment and (4) mystagogy (Kreider 1999). The four stages were connected by three rites of passage (welcoming, enrolling and baptizing). A person transitioned from one stage to another, from an old status and role to a new status and role. Early church evangelism was an informal process that occurred outside the walls of the house churches and followed pre-existing social networks; making the best use of social conditions of the day. Christian evangelism was the beginning point of the Seeker's new life in Christ. It was an invitation to participate in a life changing process that only brought the Seeker to the front door of the church.

Rite of Welcome: From Seeker to Hearer

A seeker responded to the gospel and was brought to a catechist and was examined based on background, current situation and seriousness of intent. Far from modern "seeker driven" models of the church, the early church was suspicious of outsiders. Seekers were brought by their sponsors who were often the people who evangelized them. The examination began.

> Those who come forward the first time to hear the word shall first be brought to the teachers at the house before all the people come in. And let them be examined as to the reason why they have come forward to the faith. And those who bring them shall bear witness for them whether they are able to hear. Let their life and manner of living be enquired into. (Dujarier 1979)

The early Christians wanted to know the intentions of the Seekers, no doubt in part because they were living in a hostile Roman environment, but also because they believed that becoming a Christian entailed more than merely responding to the gospel. Becoming a Christian entailed an entire life-change of believing, behaving and belonging. Therefore, certain occupations had to be

stopped immediately or redirected to glorify Christ *and* reflect the Christian way of life. Seekers were forced to make a choice: either leave or modify occupations (their lifestyle) or be rejected as candidates for baptism.

If a seeker passed inspection, and was willing to continue the conversion and initiation process, he or she entered through a fourfold rite of welcoming: (1) signing of the cross on the forehead; (2) laying on of hands to represent dependence and belonging to the church; (3) the presenting of salt that represented welcome and hospitality; and (4) the rite of breathing, which could be a form of exorcism of evil spirits or a sign of receiving the Holy Spirit (Webber 2001). Salt reminded the initiate that Jesus commanded his disciples to be salt in the world. Transformation is possible only because the Hearer has counted the cost of discipleship, has separated from his or her former pagan life and in symbol and action has responded to Christ's gospel and kingdom. The reorientation process begins.

The Catechumenate: Discipleship as a Conversion Process

The former rite connected the evangelization stage with the catechumenate stage, which commonly lasted three years, although it was adaptable to the local context and individual (Dujarier, 1979:51). It concentrated on changing the behavior of the baptismal candidate. The Hearer stepped into a new social network. New allegiances formed through daily teaching and prayer as well as common bonds through struggle and fellowship in the class of catechumens.

Early Christian preachers used analogies of soldiers preparing for war, Israelites preparing to cross over the Red Sea and the church as a mother who nurtures her young and at the right time gestates them into new life (Webber, 2001:98-9). The early church theology of discipleship through the catechumenate emphasized one main goal: intensive holistic conversion as pre-baptismal preparation. Finn aptly states:

> The function of catechesis was to refashion the divided heart. In the process the catechesis sought to fashion a steadfast community ... In short, the cumulative power of catechesis to socialize, resocialize, refashion, reform, remind, and renew made a signal contribution to the Roman Christian community's ability to withstand its social and legal jeopardy (Finn, 1989: 73-74).

The catechumenate formed a new community and solidified existing members around a single unifying person, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Rite of the Enrollment of Names

If a Hearer persevered through the extended discipleship period he or she became an eligible candidate for baptism. Whereas the Rite of Conversion and Welcome examined the Seeker's life outside the community, the Rite of Enrollment examined the Hearer's progress in Christ *within* the community. The Hearer's sponsor testified on behalf of the candidate's character and good deeds, which were believed to mark a genuine relationship with Christ. This rite of passage transitioned a person from a Hearer to a Kneeler, into a more intense stage of spiritual formation.

Enlightenment

The period of Enlightenment before Easter involved the initial presentation of creeds, the Lord's Prayer and local community rules and warnings against heresies; hence the description- enlightenment. It focused on changing beliefs. Exorcisms or "scrutinies" were numerous, perhaps daily (Kreider, 1999:25). The term "Kneeler" described the intended posture of the candidates. This was a stage of humbleness, reflection, purification and intense spiritual preparation. Webber sums up the purpose of this stage in relation to the dominant theme of spiritual warfare, "This phase checks the weapons and readies the warrior. Baptism into Christ is baptism into battle with the powers of evil. The battle is waged not alone, but with the company of God's people in the church" (Webber, 2001:131).

Right of Baptism

Finally, after a long training period the Kneeler approaches Easter. The process of the three-year ordeal came to a climax in a baptismal crescendo. The purpose of the process was evident: evangelism and discipleship (conversion) of a pagan through a re-socialization out of the world and into the church through baptism, predicated on a systematic change of belief, behavior and belonging.

Mystagogy

The catechetical process was over but the learning had just begun. Early Christianity developed a type of "continuing education" for newly baptized Christians called mystagogy. Mystagogy referred to the baptismal and Eucharistic preaching and teaching of the "mysteries" that are the "great truths of God made clear in Christ Jesus" (Ruth, 2001:7). Classically, mystagogical preaching followed the administration of the sacraments daily the week after Easter and weekly for the entire season of Pentecost. First, one experienced the sacraments (Baptism only once, the Eucharist as often as possible) and then one listened to the word of God illuminate the implications of participating in worship and the partaking of the Lord's Supper.

Critical Contextualization through Local Cultural Formative Structures

The Catechumenate model was not handed down from Jesus to Peter and from Peter to the church. It was a pastoral development. Working from scriptural principles, following generations of ancient Christians, the church developed a process such as the one above. I call it a "pastoral-faith" response—that is, a pastoral effort to be faithful to their calling as shepherds of the apostolic message and traditions. Christians may have drawn from and made use of non-Christian practices from Jewish and Qumranic rites (Dujarier, 1979:12-23). Their pastoral-faith response was appropriate for their context but not necessarily for our modern day world.

Although some might disagree, it is this writer's conviction that the modern church should not go back to copying ancient models of doing church. Just as early Christians developed means of making disciples in response to their own religious and political contexts, so the church today is free to develop its own culturally appropriate discipleship processes. In this case, what aspects of the catechumenate are culturally bound? What is reproducible across our cultures? The goal is to discover the principles behind the model that work together within the process and apply them to a new context in their *original cultural meaning*; but in a new culturally appropriate manner. Here is a summary:

1. Evangelism is done outside the church building along social networks (kinship and friendship).

2. A period of examination precedes the catechumenate process.

3. The act of separation frees the individual to be open to new meaning and new bonding.

4. Extended teaching, prayer, accountability, small group participation and mentoring facilitate spiritual formation.

5. Good deeds must be evident as signs of a transformed heart and life.

6. A gradual change of status (climaxing in baptism) facilitates meaningful discipleship.
7. Cleansing of the heart through exorcism and equipping of the servant of Christ is valid today.

8. Church as a disciple making "womb" involves a committed community of believers.

9. Common communal struggle forms and bonds individuals into dynamic organizations.

10. Emphasis on the meaning of and participation in rites and sacraments are at the heart of church worship and an individual believer's spirituality.

Local Cultural Formative Structures (LCFS)

All across the globe, in every culture, in the life of every person there are rites of passage. Rites of passage mark every substantial change and transition in a person's life (change of place, state, social position, age). Rites of passage consist of three stages: separation, liminality, and reincorporation.

Separation occurs when a person leaves behind his or her old life and enters into a transitional stage described as liminality. This in-between stage positions a person to become receptive to transformation as he or she prepares

for something greater. When the transition period is complete, mew believers are re-incorporated back into their community, but with a new status and role. The diagram below illustrates this. In the early church, pagan "Seekers" were brought to a catechist and examined. Then they separated themselves from culture at large by entering into a catechumenate and becoming "Hearers." They remained at this state (and later as "Kneelers") until they were officially incorporated into the local Christian community (as well as the universal church) through baptism.

Family Farming for a People of God

Evangelism: Rite of Welcome	Kingdom Hospitality
Catechumenate: Rite of enrollment of Names Enlightenment: Rite of Baptism	Kingdom Farming A. Breaking Soil/ Tilling the Heart B. Planting Seeds/ Birth of Belief C. Tending Crops/ Maturing Behavior D. Fending Crops/ Protecting the Soul E. Harvesting Crops/ Baptizing
Mystagogy	Kingdom Drilling
Historical Model	Critical Contextualized Model

North America is a "salad bowl" of people consisting of numerous interrelating micro-cultures. Unlike non-Western societies, heterogeneous North America does not have set rites that transition children into adults, boys into men, girls into women. However, each micro-culture might have what this writer coins "local cultural formative structures." Here is a definition in progress: An LCFS is any essential structure or process that moves an individual or group from one status to another for a new purpose.

An LCFS might relate to surfing on the west coast of California. What is involved in learning how to surf, in becoming an expert and riding a big wave? One might relate fishing on the east coast of Maine, or dairy farming in Pennsylvania, crop farming in Kansas or mountain climbing in Colorado. What is involved in successful and safe mountain climbing? What do the "experts" know and do as compared to the "novices?" Is there a structure or a process to becoming a mountain climber?

"Critical contextualization" involves the understanding and adaptation of the catechumenate to the local context through an appropriate understanding and application of local cultural formative structures. The reader is encouraged to refer to two sources, *Understanding Folk Religions* (Hiebert, et al. 2001)and *Symbol and Ceremony* (Zahniser 1997).

What is my context?

This project is set in the context of the small, West Texas, rural church, so it is important to have a grasp of the ins and outs of the immediate context, as well as small church dynamics.

It is important to understand that small churches are not small-scale large churches. They are unique organisms. Lyle Schaller defines a small church as a congregation that has 125 or below for attendance on a Sunday morning. This incorporates about 225,000 out of the approximate 325,000 protestant churches in North America (Schaller, 2003:24-25). These churches function as single-cell caring groups or large families. Whereas a large church may have dozens or even hundreds of small groups, the small church *is* a small group that revolves around long lasting personal relationships among those who "belong." Outsiders who visit small churches and, in time, wish to join, must identify and be at peace with the congregational history and purpose. They must also be "adopted" by the congregation and integrated into the life of the "family" (Dudley, 2003:33-62). Small churches want a pastor who is a "lover," A loving pastor spends time with the people and genuinely cares for them and is interested in their life struggles. This is preferred over the pastor as "specialist" who constantly thinks programs, rather than people (Dudley, 2003:80). Effective small churches "have a clarity of purpose that fits with their identity." They are tough and resilient over the years. Effective small churches represent

themselves appropriately; they don't pretend to be what they aren't and are comfortable with their form of witness (Dudley, 2003:122).

Second, it is necessary to understand the church in its context. What is the history of the church? What do the members respond to? What do they not respond to? What is the makeup of the congregation? Is it comprised of university professors or factory workers, ranchers or suburbanites? For example, one West Texas pastor of a small church stated that although his people would attend Bible studies, they wouldn't do homework. His people learned discipleship through relational models, which corresponds with what small church research and researchers like Lyle Schaller, Carl Dudley, Anthony Pappas, Jeff Patton, and Ron Crandall have been telling us. In small churches, relationships are more influential than programs.) Another pastor, just down the road from the first, lamented the ineffectiveness and lack of interest of his congregation in long term programs like Alpha. He was not sure any substantial discipleship was possible in West Texas. Such voices help us understand the culture and the hard realities of the rural West Texas (in this case United Methodist Church) context.

In addition to understanding small church dynamics in general, and the dynamics of a particular congregation, it is also useful to look to at how similar congregations in similar contexts do things and learn from them.

What has God provided through the local culture?

There is one critical place a missionary or pastor must look. The wheel does not have to be reinvented, but all programs must be re-contextualized when transferred from one context to another. One possible way to do this is to turn one's discipling eyes toward the local culture and ask, "What has God provided here that can be redeemed through critical contextualization for disciple making?" Thinking of LCFSs in West Texas, what comes to mind? Oil drilling? Ranching? West Texas hospitality? High school football? This is the process that the local church and pastor must begin. For the sake of brevity, this writer suggests one cultural structure: *farming*.

In many West Texas communities, the most predominant issue is whether or not it is going to rain *and could God please time that rain so that people can get their cotton bailed*! Across the nation, the cultural landscape is shifting from the small family farm to the large agribusiness scene (or no farm at all).

Although fewer children are growing up on farms, the farming life is still pervasive and a general "farming process" is still commonly understood. The process includes the following: (1) preparing and breaking the ground, (2) planting and fertilization, (3) tending the crops, (4) weeding and protecting the crops from predation and (5) harvest time. Within this process a seed that is planted becomes a sprout. A sprout becomes a young plant that matures to the point that it bears fruit and is ready for harvest. Why not adapt this local cultural structure into a means of discipleship?

Theoretical Model and Conclusions

What follows is a possible model for evangelism and discipleship in a small West Texas rural church. The model is called *Family Farming for a People of God*. Although we must limit this paper to pre-baptismal discipleship through contextualization of the farming process ("Kingdom Farming"), other possibilities exist. For example, a fuller representation of early church evangelism might be represented by a contextualized form called "Kingdom Hospitality," capitalizing on the West Texas reputation for "friendliness." And a focus on the mystagogy stage might be represented through a contextualization of the oil drilling process, called "Kingdom Drilling."

A Brief Description

Family Farming for a People of God is small church evangelism and discipleship with a kingdom of God purpose. "Family" respects the tendency for a small church to act as a caring cell. This image is organic and relationship-centered not program centered, and that, as we have noted, is how small churches tend to function. The image of "family farming" implies two meanings. First, it connects people with a heritage that is quietly slipping away. The older generations constituting much of small church membership everywhere remember what life was like growing up on the farm, milking cows or gathering eggs. Perhaps, many members still connect with this image. It is often associated with hard, but wholesome living, good values, patriotism, uncertainty and routine. Second, this image implies that the purpose of the family (the small church) is to work together and to farm (plant and harvest/evangelize and disciple). Family Farming as God's people then is

planting gospel seeds in many hearts. And for those that sprout, Family Farming is about nurturing, fertilizing and harvesting.

Next, note the deep significance of the word "for" as it connects "Family Farming" with "a People of God." Why does a church family choose to farm? A family farms for the purpose of making a people of God. This implies that the local church is part of a larger body that is on a mission. Small churches can and do make inestimable contributions. Without the contribution of the local small church, the "people of God" would die out for lack of planting and harvesting. Without the larger perspective of the "people of God," the small church would turn its focus inward and wither away.

Kingdom Farming is more than just hanging onto family land so that there is something to pass on to the next generation. This is not the sense anyone wants to bring to the discipleship process. Rather, Kingdom Farming is about growing a transformational crop of disciples that nourish and bring life to our communities and the world. Kingdom Farming begins with Breaking the Soil/Tilling the Heart. Just as the introductory narrative illustrated how an outsider could become a cadet through giving up certain lifestyles; new Christians are asked to "break up" their current allegiances and habits that do not benefit their soul. New believers are asked to commit to no less than daily self denial and cross bearing (Luke 9:23-26). The new life involves making new habits that cultivate the heart by spending time with a group of people week in and week out, with a common purpose, and through disciplines that cultivate a "soil bed" where before there were only weeds and rocks. Through the tilling process of the heart, foreign roots and unnecessary rocks are turned over, exposed and plucked out through God's love, God's sanctifying grace and the loving bond between other group members.

Family Farmers (pastors, small group leaders) can provide rituals that allow new Christians to separate from their old ways of life and bond to another. This can be done by requiring the new crop (class of catechumens) to remove their watches and cell phones during instructional time, or covenant with each other for a 21-day "TV Fast." Separation allows for new bonding to meaning (Christian truth) and new bonding to the church community fellowship (Zahniser 1997).

The process continues with Planting Seeds/Birth of Belief, which along with the next stage entails the bulk of the Family Farming process. It is here that the seeds of historic Christian orthodoxy are planted in good soil that has

been prepared for reception. The seeds of belief relate to the rich, life giving, basic Christian doctrines. Here is the opportunity to provide the new convert with theological distinctives that relate to certain traditions, for example Wesleyan or Reformed.

It is possible however, in the planting process, to plant seeds too deep into the ground. The result is catastrophic. The seeds will not sprout. They will rot and disintegrate. New Christians must first be handed the basics. New seeds need light and warmth to sprout and grow. New Christians are new Christians! They might not know their way within a worship service and they most likely do not have a grasp of Christian terms, much less popular jargon. They are delicate, more like seedlings and sprouts. These Christ-seedlings must be given patient, caring and competent supervision within a warm and positive environment that is conducive to spiritual growth. Finally, and most important, unless a seed dies it cannot produce fruit. In post-modern, post-Christian pluralistic North America, the Bible must be restored to its primary role in the life of the believer for faith and practice. The church must recapture its loving, nurturing and mothering role. As a new seed sprouts from proper care (a loving small group), proper nutrition (doctrine and disciplines) and proper context (the good ground of a realigned heart and a mothering church), that seed becomes a vibrant plant. Public celebrations of the progress of the new crop of young Christians could be accompanied by times of corporate prayer and the laying on of hands with oil, etc. Public rituals like these help the broader congregation accept new people into their fold and gain ownership for their role in nurturing them into maturity.

The next step involves *Tending Crops/Maturing Behavior*. It is here that Family Farming begins to challenge the values of the predominant culture with Christian ethics. Teaching involves the questions of how one should live in the world as a Christian today and how one should discover his or her budding gifts and graces. Family Farmers (pastors, small group leaders) should inspect their crops and encourage healthy growth. Perhaps, there is room in this stage for crop members or the crop as a whole to demonstrate new found gifts with each other and the larger family (congregation) as a whole.

Fending Crops/Protecting the Soul is the next step, which can correlate with the Lenten season, focusing on equipping the believer for spiritual warfare. In farming, weeds are pulled up and varmints are kept out of the crops. This is a little harder to contextualize because today farmers spray for weeds

or biologically design plants that are healthy to humans but toxic to the pests that decide to eat them. Just as there are enemies of the farm, there are also enemies of the church such as persecution and the work of the Evil One. A Family Farmer might teach about spiritual warfare and the dangers of heresy. The Family Farmer will warn against falling away from the faith. The Lord's Prayer and the Apostle's Creed can be handed out and memorized as "pest-control" methods. One approach to avoid, however, would be erecting electric fences at the entrance of the church.

The entire Family Farming endeavor climaxes with the Harvesting of the Crops/Baptism. For an extended season, the Family Farm has welcomed, prepared and defended a crop of new believers. The new believers have grown, resisted temptation and survived the hot sun plus the drought periods. New believers grow taller to receive baptism. In the church's own way, the local farming family should so lavishly pour out love and congratulation, ritual and meaning; that new believers are undeniably impressed for life by the grace and beauty of the event. For the new believers, the experience of Harvest/Baptism is the climax of their lives to date. Baptism as initiation in the Body of Christ and reception in a local congregation is the launching point for faithful living in the world through service to Christ and the church.

Conclusion

This article affirms the ancient catechumenate as an effective model for small church evangelism and discipleship. Rather than re-planting old forms in new contexts, through the contextualization process and local cultural formative structures, the ancient meanings *in new forms* are provided for contemporary evangelism and discipleship. The idea of local cultural formative structures is available to churches of any size and in any context. As stated before, the three stages of a rite of passage (separation, liminality and re-incorporation) are universal.

The following six observations support the *Family Farming for a People of God* model as a critically contextualized catechumenate through an appropriate local cultural formative structure for a small church in West Texas.

1. Family Farming is relational, traveling along kinship and friendship networks
2. Family Farms acts as large families, therefore, evangelism should be seen

as joining and growing up in the family (of the church and of God).

3. Family Farming understands the dynamic relationship between the small church and the larger Body of Christ, as well as the unique dynamics of most small congregations.
4. Family Farming helps the church to understand what God wants to do in her midst and how God has provided resources from them in their culture, as opposed to the mentality that "unless we become like them (mega-churches) we are rather insignificant."
5. Family Farming provides long-term members a meaningful environment to pass down local church history and experiences to following generations.
6. Family Farming is grounded in a historically proven and theologically sound model.

The catechumenate is not the only option for small church evangelism and discipleship, any more than such more popular models as Rick Warren's Purpose Driven Church or Bill Hybell's Willow Creek model are. But the catechumenate is a tried and proven way with 1900 years of history and a long lineage of saints to testify on its behalf. Nevertheless, for 21st century small churches in places like West Texas, it will need a new body and new clothes if it is to be successfully resurrected. By becoming aware of Local Cultural Formative Structures, the small, rural, West Texas church can take a key missiological step in that direction. She takes it by grasping her responsibility to communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ in a way that is culturally relevant and biblically and theologically redemptive: by turning her discipling eyes toward her people, her community, and her location in the world. Here in this author's opinion, is the key that gives the *Family Farming* model cultural appeal and the potential for effective discipling. *Family Farming for a People of God* returns the church to the people and the culture to the church.

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Book Reviews

Sharing Your Faith with a Buddhist
By Madasamy Thirumalai
Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 2003. 208 pp.

Madasamy Thirumalai—a solid evangelical, born Hindu, converted to Buddhism and then to Christianity—is the ideal person to write this important book. Thoroughly readable, I recommend it for anyone interested in the broader aspects of evangelism—both lay and clergy alike—especially if there is opportunity to be among those with a Buddhist mindset (which could include many non-Buddhists with a more eastern bent).

Thirumalai is best when he is being more descriptive than proscriptive. In his descriptive mode he is informative and insightful. In his proscriptive mode he sometimes drifts toward the polemic (albeit with a soft and sympathetic eye).

Perhaps the greatest strength of the book is his ability to explain—from the perspective of a Buddhist—the various sects within Buddhism (roughly 12). I found his understanding of the origin and basic tenets of Buddhism convincing and enlightening. For example, although Buddhism itself would eventually fashion a hierarchy of its own, it was first an offshoot reacting against a Hindu Brahman hierarchy—with its bent toward an ideological system of castes. Ironically, their own hierarchy—a system raising their monks to the level of super Buddhists—would become just as enslaving as the upper caste Hindus they were trying to displace.

Early on in the text Thirumalai does an excellent job of clearly stating the critical differences between Buddhism and Christianity. He helps the reader to understand the ultimate goal of Buddhism—annihilation—the freedom from more reincarnations. He is also good at describing the means of Buddhism—basically a pattern of works-righteousness focusing on meditation. Desire—the first principle of sin—distracts and leads to acts of selfishness (bad karma) that greatly diminish the prospect of an improved next existence.

Perhaps the most powerful part of the book is his ability to describe the principles that lead from Buddhism to Christianity. Buddhists are consumed by the concept of meditation as the greatest discipline leading from one path to another and away from all desire. For example, Theravada Buddhism, to which roughly 60% of Buddhists worldwide ascribe, has no understanding of a

transcendent God. The "Eightfold Path" is an inward journey with no appeal whatsoever to God as a Supreme Being. This leads to the Buddhist need for "grace." The author points out as gently as possible that Buddhists are too individualistic. Ultimately a "self-help religion," there is no appeal whatsoever to the supernatural. Even among some of the sects that seem to imply some aspect of worship of the various Buddha images (and there are thousands), there is much confusion, even among Buddhists. I once watched a priest in Cambodia slap a fellow Buddhist for apparently praying to a statue of Gautama Buddha.

So, what is the Christian appeal for Buddhists? Again, the primary word is grace, the power of the Holy Spirit, available through personal faith in Jesus Christ. As Christians we are not left alone in our need to overcome the things that would attempt to consume us. At our best, not only can we receive help from on High, we can assist one another in our pilgrimage toward true spirituality. Whereas most Buddhists have no understanding of worship, Christianity builds its whole concept of holiness on the foundation of experiencing God within the context of significant worship that finds its focus in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

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Holy Boldness: Practices of an Evangelistic Lifestyle
By Paul R. Dekar
Macon GA: Smyth and Helwys, 2004. 196 pp.

David Watson points out that evangelism in the New Testament is always a verbal activity, but that it always takes place in a rich context of other expressions of the Gospel such as community, love, healing, exorcism and prayer. In this book, Paul Dekar talks not so much about verbal evangelism, but about that "rich context" in which evangelism needs to happen. Another way to say this is that "Holy Boldness" is not really a book about evangelism but about Christian formation and discipleship. Dekar, I suspect, would counter by saying, "But if our lives are lived in this way, that actually is evangelism." I will return to this question later.

The book is attractively set out. It discusses fifteen "spiritual practices," each described in a short chapter (eight or so pages) and followed by questions for reflection and discussion. The fifteen are grouped into four sections: Practices of Humility (Practices of Holy Prayer, Holy Sabbath, Holy Play and Holy Discernment), Practices of Loving-Kindness (Practices of Love, Listening, Compassion and Testimony), Practices of Just Living (Practices of Reconciliation, Jubilee, Dialogue, Servant Leadership) and Seasonal Practices (Practices of Thanksgiving, Advent, Easter and Epiphany, and of and Easter People).

I found the sections wise, pastoral, insightful, and catholic in scope (Dekar is a Baptist who quotes Nouwen, Merton, Newbigin, Kierkegaard, Bonhoeffer, Martin Buber, René Girard, Wendell Berry and Richard Foster). Among several, I was helped and challenged by the section on Holy Play. What is that?

> By holy play, I mean play that takes us to the realms of creativity, ecstasy, joyous celebration and make-believe. Holy play encompasses the arts and festivity. . . . [H]oly play entails freedom and spontaneity. Holy play wells up from the depths of our being." (39)

Something for those of us who struggle with workaholism (in the name of the Kingdom, of course) to reflect on, I suspect. The whole book would be suitable as, say, a Lenten study book for a group of thoughtful lay people.

Having said that, I fear I have two complaints to lodge about this book. One is a danger for all books on "how to live the Christian life"--a tendency to say, "You must do this" and "You ought to do that," and thus make the Christian life a long list of responsibilities. Though the book is certainly not without grace, Dekar does not entirely avoid this trap, and I began to feel weighed down after a few chapters.

My second and bigger problem, however, is its take on evangelism. There is no extended treatment of a theology of evangelism or of biblical material about evangelism—strange in a book about evangelism by a professor of evangelism. Instead, Dekar's understanding of evangelism emerges along the way. For example:

> while evangelism can be invitational, it must be seen primarily as living the Jesus way (5);

> evangelism is walking in the light of God (58);
>
> [w]e are to proclaim the Gospel by doing justice. (109)

Lest I be misunderstood, let me stress that I want to affirm "living the Jesus way," "walking in the light of God" and "doing justice" as essential Christian practices. Nevertheless I have to say that they are not evangelism. There are three words related to evangelism in the New Testament, and all three are inescapably to do with words: the evangel itself, the evangelist (the speaker of the message), and the activity of evangelizing (speaking the message).

I realize there is a danger in over-emphasizing verbal proclamation to the neglect of living the life, and evangelicals have sometime been guilty of this. But there is an equal and opposite danger, that of neglecting the speaking of the Gospel, and it seems to me that Dekar goes too far in this direction. The example of Jesus if nothing else would suggest that both are necessary for wholesome and balanced witness.

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The Gospel According to Dr. Seuss
James W. Kemp
Valley Forge PA: Judson Press, 2004. 90 pp.

The tradition of works entitled "The Gospel According to . . ." is now forty years old. Andre Crouch recently reviewed the genre in Books and Culture and traced its genesis to *The Gospel According to Peanuts* by Robert L. Short in 1964. Apparently, the tradition is still going strong.

Each chapter of this book begins with a story by children's author Dr. Seuss. Then author Kemp, a retired United Methodist pastor, connects the story to a universal human problem, then offers the Bible's answer to the problem. Thus in one story, the *Cat in the Hat* takes a bath, leave a pink ring around the tub, and his cat friends, trying to clear up the mess, simply make things worse, spreading pink snow everywhere. Finally the smallest of the cats produces his

"Voom," which cleans up the mess and restores everything the way it ought to be. Fundamental human problem? We have messed up God's world. Biblical analogy: the "Voom is the restoring power that came in Jesus Christ." In another, a North-going Zax meets a South-going Zax head-on. Neither will give way, and so they stay there, head to head, indefinitely, while a city grows up around them. Fundamental human problem? Pride. Biblical analogy: the prodigal son, who must have struggled with pride before going home, and the older brother, too proud to welcome him back. In a third tale, *Horton Meets a Who*, Horton the Elephant is the only one to be able to detect the sounds of the Whos, who inhabit Whoville, a tiny world contained in a single speck of dust. Horton cares for them and protects them even though they are so tiny. Fundamental human problem? People do not care enough (specially, in this chapter, for the environment). Biblical analogy? God cares for even the smallest sparrow that falls. Well, you get the idea.

The theologian in me finds this book superficial and its energy misdirected. He wants to argue that the parallels are too simplistic, that Christ's achievement on the cross is not to be compared with Voom of Cat Z, that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is not to be compared with Horton the Elephant. This book trivializes holy things. In fact, the theologian in me can be quite pompous.

But then the evangelist in me pipes up: Did not Christ humble himself and make himself of no account in order to save us? Did he not take on human nature, unworthy of his glory and dignity, for our salvation? What is the Incarnation about if not the willing humiliation of God?

I went in to my doctor's office for an allergy shot this afternoon, taking Kemp's book with me to read in the waiting room. As the student doctor walked in, she immediately said, That looks like an interesting book. I told her it was, and we talked a bit. We'll probably talk some more when I go for my next shot. If I had been carrying a volume of Barth's *Church Dogmatics*, it is unlikely there would have been a comment, let alone a conversation.

I suppose my inner theologian might not appreciate Paul's sermon at Athens either: after all, he appears to affirm their idolatry ("I see you are very religious people") instead of condemning it; he weaves Stoic and Epicurean themes into his sermon (according to F.F. Bruce); and he quotes with approval poems written in praise of Zeus (not to be confused with Seuss, of course). Does this not trivialize the Gospel and border on syncretism? Apparently not.

(According to John Stott's commentary on Acts, only one commentator has seriously questioned Paul's approach--and even he changed his mind later.)

Neither Paul at Athens nor Kemp on Dr. Seuss is the last word in theological depth. But for many unbelievers–like my doctor today–it may well be the first word. And without that first word, they may never go on to discover the Last Word. There is plenty of time for the curious soul to graduate to a more meaty diet. But God bless those who reach out and help enquirers take the first step. James Kemp does that. May his tribe increase.

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Having. Property and Possession in Religious and Social Life
Edited by William Schweiker and Charles Mathewes
Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004. 415 pp.

Supported by a grant from the Lilly Endowment, this book is the result of several years of collaboration across scholarly disciplines (Bible, Christian ethics, economics, and cultural studies). This volume consists of sixteen essays and a bibliography on "Property, Possession, and the Theology of Culture." The papers are organized around three broad themes: biblical trajectories and theological meanings; having and using material possessions; greed and grace in the social, cultural, and religious imagination. In their introduction, the co-editors set some common points of departure regarding focus and methodology, but only a few of the subsequent authors adhere to this common framework. Still, each paper is worth reading in its own right.

Space permits highlighting only some of the papers. The first article by Patrick Miller, "Property and Possession in Light of the Ten Commandments," argues that the Commandments set up a moral space and instigate a trajectory of thought that runs through the rest of the Bible and indeed through the history of Christian theology. Importantly, Miller shows how the idea of "property" is basic to the whole Decalogue. The worshiping of God or making of other gods begins with what one has and what one desires. That human beings are to trust, love, and fear God flies in the face of politicization and polarization of the

Commandments and the theology of prosperity current in the United States at present.

In her contribution, "Silver Chamber Pots and Other Goods Which Are Not Good," Margaret Mitchell engages the thought of Chrysostom, a renowned early interpreter of St. Paul. Mitchell clarifies how this early preacher developed biblical texts, and how a careful reading of his sermons might help us today. Chrysostom's rhetoric was motivated by the moral imperative he felt from observing gap he observed between the rich and the poor of fourth-century Antioch and Constantinople. Propelled into the role of champion of the poor, he called for the creation of a Christian society based on economic justice, right use of means, and a sense of the common good. His vision of a new social order led him to use vivid images ("silver chamber pot") that find modern equivalence in Imelda Marcos's shoes or Tammy Faye's air-conditioned doghouse.

In her essay "The Body and Projects of Self-Possession," Jean Bethke Elshtain examines the theme of the "body" in contemporary political discourse. She suggests that we increasingly see the body as a matter of disposable property. She cites the Human Genome Project that has mapped the genetic code of the human race as an area to which we must be attentive both to the promise of new technologies, and to their dangers. I read this at the same time that a headline screamed out to me in a March 30, 2005 Reuters report, "Barcode That Baby, Maybe Says Embryology Body." In a move designed to prevent a repeat of the case in 2002 when two white parents using IVF had mixed race twins after a clinic error, sperm and eggs from couples trying for a test-tube baby could in future be bar-coded to avoid emotionally devastating mix-ups, according to Britain's human fertility watchdog. "We are always looking for new ways to ensure safety and consistency in laboratory practice," said a spokesman for the Human Fertilization and Embryology Authority.

A strength of the volume is its diversity of voices. On the whole the authors sound alarm bells about greed and stinginess endemic in rich countries. Nonetheless, the economic historian Deirdre McCloskey challenges both the view that the gap between rich and poor is growing: "The gap between rich and poor is smaller, not larger;" and the pessimism that growth in newly emerging world economies such as China and India is a threat to the environment: "the environment improves when the people want it to, that is, when they become well off." (p. 329)

Because of the increasingly globalized economic order within which missiologists work, the book is very relevant to readers of this journal. I undertook reviewing the book in the hope I could use it in courses on missions and evangelism. However, I will opt for Vincent J. Miller, *Consuming Religion. Christian Faith and Practice in a Consumer Culture* (New York: Continuum, 2004). I found the articles dense, and the volume lacking the coherence that a single-author can provide.

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21 Things God Never Said: Correcting Our Misconceptions About Evangelism

By R. Larry Moyer

Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2004, 176 pp.

"God never meant evangelism to be a pain. He meant it to be a privilege. It's to be a delight, not a dread." With these words Moyer opens the introduction of his very objective and specific book. "A correct biblical approach to evangelism enhances clarity." And the author uses many biblical passages to prove his thesis, which is "God never said many of the things we say about evangelism."

Moyer lists these 21 things God never said as "misconceptions." Here are some examples: "If you don't know the date you were saved, then you're not saved." "If you don't tell others about Me, then you're not a Christian." "You shouldn't keep company with sinners."

So his list of 21 misconceptions goes. There are many Biblical quotes in the book. In fact, I could see this book as an ideal study for a local church – for Bible Study, for Sunday nights, for small groups. While grappling with the 21 misconceptions the reader/student is led to grapple with many scripture passages.

The book would be good for students of evangelism to read and study because it challenges some of the many concepts that float among us relative to proper concepts concerning evangelism. It will also enforce Bible study for those students as they wrestle with the listed "misconceptions."

The author is big on tract evangelism. He gives the content of some tracts he uses regularly – even citing where they can be purchased. Thus he puts forward his own organization, "Evantell" of Dallas. There is heavy influence noted from Dallas Seminary where Dr. Moyer teaches. This book is written for evangelists by one who considers himself to have the spiritual gift of evangelist. He considers the gospel of John as written to tell us how to obtain eternal life. "John used believe 98 times in the gospel."

There seems to be an inordinately heavy emphasis on predestination in the book, but the author sees evangelism as a means God uses for us to become the elect. Those who are sensitive about the doctrine of predestination might shy away from some of the writing. All in all, this is a good and readable book – a good Bible study guide as well as an excellent presentation of "21 Things God Never Said (Correcting Our Misconceptions About Evangelism)."

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Becoming a Healthy Disciple: Ten Vital Traits of a Vital Christian
By Stephen A. Macchia
Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004. 355 pp.

Those familiar with Stephen Macchia's 1999 book, *Becoming a Healthy Church*, will immediately recognize the format of this new offering. In the former book, Macchia identified ten characteristics of a healthy church, devoting a chapter to each one. In the new work, he takes the same ten characteristics and applies them to the individual disciple. Macchia has written this second book as a companion to the first because he believers that if individual followers of Jesus begin to practice seriously those traits that lead to spiritual health, the impact on the church will be profound. In his own words, "I have written the book you are holding on the basic premise that if two or more disciples of Jesus are pursuing the same priorities in life and service, they will have a very positive effect on the whole church."

The author devotes a chapter to each of the ten marks of personal spiritual health. He begins each chapter with a story that sets the context for describing that mark. Using the Gospel of John, he explores the life of Christ in relation

to the particular mark of health under discussion. He then proceeds to outline a series of principles that, if practiced, should increase the possibility of living a healthy spiritual life. He concludes each chapter with a person al prayer of commitment to practice the characteristic under discussion and concludes with assignments for reflection and renewal. The ten marks of health he identifies are: experiencing God's presence; exalting God in worship; practicing spiritual disciplines; growing in community; fostering loving relationships; practicing Christlike servanthood; sharing Christ's love in evangelism and social ministry; managing life with accountability; networking within the body of Christ; and being a steward of God's abundance.

This book would be suitable for a small group discussion on discipleship or spiritual growth. While it does not contribute directly to evangelistic theory or practice, it is useful for the follow-up process of disciple-building. It is written at a level that would be easily understood by people in the local church. Even new believers could grasp much of what it says.

The style of the author is warm and conversational. Seasoned believers will find a few nuggets that will encourage them, and a few practices that may be helpful in growth. New believers may be overwhelmed by the number of suggestions for implementing each characteristic that are put forth. One of the dangers of books of lists, such as this one, is that the lists are interpreted as a standard to measure performance. For that reason, the book should be used in a group led by a person who can explain that the ideas put forth are suggestions and not standards of behavior.

On the whole, this book is a pleasant read. I commend it.
While the two books by Macchia complement each other, it is not necessary to read both of them. Which book one would choose to use would depend on the audience. To work with a group of people interested in personal spiritual health, use the latter. For discussion with church leaders about church health, the former is appropriate.

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Reaching The World In Our Own Backyard: A Guide to Building Relationships with People of Other Faiths and Cultures
By Rajendra K. Pillai
Colorado Springs CO: WaterBrook Press, 2003. 243 pp.

Nowadays, it is not easy to judge a book by its cover. The front cover of this volume is striking with colorful faces of people and the flags of nations. The author's thesis is revealed in the title and repeated several times within the book. It invites all Christians to be obedient to the Great Commission by engaging in cross-cultural ministry right in their "Jerusalems" and "Samarias". Another title of the volume could have been, Doing Missions Within Your Reach. With the inclusion of several anecdotes from real-life situations the book is delightful and motivational.

The author, Rajendra K. Pillai, a layperson is adequately and appropriately qualified to address this topic. Being an immigrant from India and now a resident of the United States demonstrates keen observation, comprehends the issues and is personally engaged in ministry. Both by education and vocation he is well informed of the cultures and religions of the world. With an MBA in global, economic development, the author conducts corporate training in cross-cultural and management issues for public and private organizations.

The book is neatly divided in three unequal sections. Part 1 – America's Greatest Opportunity, Part 2 – Fulfilling the Great Commission, Part 3 – How to Present the Gospel to People of Other Religions. Though the author's intended audience is clearly American, there are valuable and transferable concepts for any Western country because of the increasing number from diverse ethnic Diaspora movements who are becoming new neighbors of Westerners.

With demographic data and statistics the author in Part 1 winsomely persuades and invites Christians to seize "America's greatest opportunity" of evangelizing the new immigrants and internationals. To help the American reader grasp the impact of the world cultures on daily life due to massive immigration, the author includes a "Test Your Cultural Quotient" quiz in chapter 1. The answer guide could prove to be eye-opening and humbling for most.

After countering the four stages he identifies in the process of stereotypical responses in chapter 3, the author provides seven helpful categories of

responses of Americans to internationals – Pretenders: "I Don't Have the Time," Dodgers: "Are They Safe," Globalizers: "All Cultures Are the Same," Patronizers: "We Know Best," Categorizers: "One Good or Bad Experience is Enough" Xenophobes: "Not in My Neighborhood!" and Empathizers: "We are All Precious in God's Sight." He champions Empathizers because their response is "biblically correct and practically effective" (p.42). Using 1 Peter 3:15 he espouses relational evangelism rather than confrontational evangelism and provides excellent tips for it. The list of guidelines given in chapter 4 for relating with new arrivals is invaluable.

The author is superb at description and detail especially in the middle section. After listing 21 general keys for cross-cultural interaction he provides a handy reference to relate to people from 50 countries with tips categorized for each under greetings, gestures, sensitive issues, common phrases in local language and things to remember. Chapter 12 offers insights on relating to the half a million students in the country.

The third section begins with general guidelines for interacting with all people of other faiths. A chapter each is dedicated to understanding and reaching Hindus, Muslims, Jews, and Buddhists. Individual chapters give a brief treatment of the origin of the religion, sacred texts, key beliefs, common practices and finally pointers on how to witness to them starting with points of agreement between Christianity and the respective religion. Confucianism, Jainism, Shintoism and Sikhism are scantily touched on in one chapter.

Many missiologists will dispute the veracity of the statement on page 194: "Islam is the fastest growing religion in the United States and throughout the world." Muslim propaganda may claim that but it is statistically unfounded.

Local church ministry leaders would have wished that the two-page Epilogue was significantly more elaborate to fully enable them to develop a meaningful ministry with internationals in their community. Professors using this volume as a textbook need to under gird its biblical and theological framework, especially from the Old Testament.

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View from the Pew: What Preachers Can Learn from Church Members
By Lora-Ellen McKinney
Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2004. 110 pp.

What do people in the pews really hear when the preacher climbs into the pulpit? Do preachers hear what congregants hear? Do they see themselves as others see them? Do the views of both laity and clergy converge on similar points, or is there dissonance? What might preachers learn from those who listen to sermon after sermon on Sunday?

These are only some of the questions Lora-Ellen McKinney explores in her fascinating little book *View from the Pew*. Written from the perspective of a lay person with a great deal of church experience (a fourth generation Baptist and daughter of a third-generation minister with a PhD in psychology and master's in public administration), McKinney has put together a helpful resource to assist preachers and lay persons in the art of listening to and sharing God's Word in worship. Designed as a way to help persons in both the pulpit and pew, she argues that preaching is a process of mutual learning that inspires persons to teach, honor, praise, and move God's people to action (p. xxii). Her critical insights into the preaching experience opens up for readers what moves hearts to tears or confuses minds to doubt. The book is a short-treatise on regaining integrity in the pulpit and on understanding the dynamics of communication between pastor and congregation.

Lora-Ellen McKinney begins her work by putting forth a ten-point 'preacher's checklist'. It is a check-list based upon conversations McKinney has had with pew-sitters over the years and represents a kind of collective wisdom. The ten items she identifies, then, provide primary content of each chapter: 1) Be prepared to preach. 2) Celebrating the centrality of Christ, 3) Preaching God's Word, not your words, 4) On being a shepherd, not a showman, 5) Doing the vision thing, 6) Exposing the pastor in you, 7) Connecting the head and the heart, 8) Standing on the shoulders of the saints, 9) Viewing yourself from the pew, 10) On being satisfied.

To be sure, each chapter speaks to the practical challenges preachers will face when they step into the pulpit on Sunday and to the realities of pastoral ministry in the local church. Her "thoughts from the pulpit," for example, containing a "Preacher's Prayer," a "Pastor's Promise," and "Minister's Message," bring into sharp focus key themes to any vital pastoral praxis (e.g., combining the roles of preacher, pastor, and minister). On the other hand, her "thoughts from the pew," containing a "Parishioner's Prayer" and a "Parishioner's Plea," addresses the way persons in the pews yearn to hear God's Word. McKinney demonstrates how all parishioners at a deep, fundamental level want to pray for the preacher. These two helpful sections at the end of each chapter supplies helpful guidance to clergy and laity alike. This is one of the strengths of the book.

Another strength of the book is its accessibility to those in the pew and pulpit. McKinney states at the beginning that her primary audience is ministers, or persons who pastor churches on a weekly basis (p. xxiv). Her second audience is students preparing for the ministry. A third group, she contends, might include a pulpit selection committee (p. xxiv). However, as a pastor serving in the local church, I would also want to assign this book to persons in the church who would want to covenant with the pastor to grow in a process of mutual learning and accountability. This book could assist pew-sitters and pastors with understanding the basics of communication and the need for prayer support. In addition, it could aid in the task of helping all sides come to grips with the purpose of worship and the place of the sermon within the worship experience.

Here, the ministry of evangelism comes into the picture. While McKinney's work does not explicitly address evangelism, it definitely has implications for evangelism in the life of the church. Though persons will not obtain the latest church-growth tip or evangelism tidbit, they will receive insight into the important of preaching God's Word with integrity and purpose. McKinney's work helps pastors work through the craft they practice with a great deal of humility (p. 44). More than once the pastor is confronted with the question, "Is this message about God or me?" "Is this sermon a demonstration of God's power or my ego-power?" The implications for evangelism come center stage: How will the pastor proclaim God's Word with urgency, yet with compassion and sensitivity? With the temptation to grow into a show and influence the surrounding culture, how will the preacher not take the bait of the preacher-superstar? In this sense, McKinney's work is more than a book on preaching: it offers a sustained critique of contemporary culture and church practice. Laity and clergy would benefit from discussing such obstacles and the challenges such obstacles place in the way of effective evangelism.

Lora-Ellen McKinney has written an excellent book that brings the pastor and pew back to the basics of ministry in the local church. Gone are the simple 'how-to's' and 'what if's' of the quick fix. Instead, McKinney challenges the church to focus on the substance of the Gospel and to steer the church-ship away from the mindless 'worship-style' wars that now plague so many congregations on Sunday morning. It is a book for laity and clergy at all levels, regardless of denominational affiliation.

And yet, for persons who care deeply about the church's witness through preaching, this book will offer a necessary correction to the continual pablum of church-growth theory now on most pastors' shelves. Indeed, it will offer to persons in the church a needed-boost to the church's evangelistic ministry, as it begins an overdue conversation about the way the church can reclaim the importance of the proclaimed Word in worship and remind the persons who proclaim and listen to the Word that renewal is ultimately a work of the Holy Spirit who gives us all the power to see ourselves as God truly sees us.

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A Many Colored Kingdom: Multicultural Dynamics for Spiritual Formation
By Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, S. Steve Kang and Gary A. Parrett
Grand Rapids MI: Baker Academic, 2004. 224 pp.

Three professors at three theological institutions located in three diverse regions of the United States co-authored this volume. Though they are ethnically and denominationally diverse, all three are facilitating Christian spiritual formation in academic and congregational contexts. This is the fruit of their common passion and authentic friendship of more than eight years. Their thesis is plainly stated in the opening paragraph of the book, " . . . when authentic relationships are built that embrace diverse backgrounds, tremendously positive growth in Christlikeness can occur" (p.7)

Multiculturalism is increasingly becoming an urban reality in the United States and all the projections of the US Census Bureau point to that trend continuing. The number of hyphenated Americans (i.e. Korean-American, Cuban-American, etc.) will escalate and has huge implications to the Church

and society. Keeping true to their academic orientation, the authors clarified and provided helpful definitions of several terms including culture, race, ethnicity, gender, etc.

This book plunges the Christian fully into wrestling with the multicultural, multiethnic and multiracial dimensions in global ecclesiology. The universal Church of Jesus Christ needs to align itself with the Kingdom of God vision, agenda and practice. This makes obedience of Christians and churches to be faithful to God and His Kingdom, non-optional. The authors are hoping for two goals. First, the local church will reflect the diversity in its subculture similar to the many colored culture of the global Kingdom. Secondly, the Christian educators will use this book with students as a resource and catalyst "toward personal growth in Kingdom consciousness and obedience" (p.8).

The interaction of the authors with the key literature on related topics in the last two decades is certainly impressive. Their conclusion is that evangelical churches in America are largely mono-ethnic and therefore are not in alignment with God's heart and purposes in realms of culture, race, ethnicity and class. The authors affirm Miroslav Volf's conclusion that "in order to keep our allegiance to Jesus Christ pure, we need to nurture commitment to the multicultural community of Christian churches," (Exclusion and Embrace, p.53).

Though the authors claim that their work is an exploration and experiment in the Introduction, they are much more definitive and prescriptive in subsequent chapters. Gary and Steve, in chapter 2, "Lord of the Nations" trace the biblical evidence that God's heart is inclined toward all people regardless of cultural identities, to be one in Christ and worship the Lamb on the throne (Rev. 7:9-10). In chapter 3, Gary biblically elaborates that because of the cross Christians have been given the loving "ministry of reconciliation" and the "message of reconciliation" (2 Cor 5:18-19) and to build up the body of Christ in unity with all its diversity (Eph. 4; 1 Cor 12).

In chapter 4, Kang outlines some educational theories and practices that could be used on campuses and in congregations in the spiritual formation of Kingdom citizens. After seeking to understand prejudice and how to overcome it from the perspectives of social sciences, Elizabeth in chapter 5 explains the necessity of biblical conversion to bring about the transformation process "whereby the grace of God integrates our knowledge of God's will with our practice of it" (p.119).

Drawing from the images of Christ's incarnational ministry (John 13:3-17; Phil. 2:5-11) Parrett in chapter 6 extracts principles to engage in culturally sensitive ministry. Kang suggests strategies for congregations and campuses to develop individuals with right hearts within a holy, loving, God-glorifying, learning community.

Readers will find Conde-Frazier's, "From Hospitality to Shalom" both refreshing and convicting. She biblically encourages the forming of personal habits that ensure successful multicultural living. It starts with "hospitality," includes "encounter," "compassion," "passion" and ends with "shalom." This shalom is the result of God's reconciling work in Christ and "embraces social, cultural, political and economic structures" (p.209).

Narrative plays a significant role in the book, particularly in the opening chapter, "Three Stories" and the Conclusion, "Living the Biblical Vision." In chapter 1, the authors tell of their own personal journeys toward Christian spiritual formation without hiding the struggles they had with cultural diversity and multi-ethnicity. In the Conclusion, the readers are invited by Gary to choose the "Jesus Way," encouraged by Steve to be a "Kingdom citizen" and summoned by Elizabeth to be "humble servants" led by the Spirit.

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Exploring the History and Philosophy of Christian Education: Principles for the 21st Century

By Michael J. Anthony and Warren S. Benson

Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2003. 443 pp.

According to the introduction, the goal of this book is to provide guidance for Christian education in the present and future by locating influential educational theories in their historical context. To that end, each chapter follows the same structure. A chronological chart at the beginning helps the reader to see what is happening in the wider world. Then comes a summary of major thinkers and movements. Each chapter ends with a section entitled, "So What?" that purports to give guidance on developing well-informed educational ministries for today.

Several chapters into the reading, one begins to puzzle. First, "Christian education" is never defined. Then, for at least the first half of the book Christian education seems to have little to do with the narrative. For example, the book lists every one of Luther's Ninety-Five Theses (pp. 200-207), but does not mention Luther's Catechism, even though the authors say that Luther's contributions to Christian education "are many," (p. 207). No explanation is given as to what those contributions are or why all the theses required inclusion.

Not until we arrive at chapter eight ("European Origins of Modern Christian Education") does the book begin to focus on its stated task. In one way this makes perfect sense, since with the Enlightenment we begin to see more attention paid to individual growth and development. To be sure, there are snippets of helpful theoretical summary (e.g. "Pestalozzi's Classroom Reformation," p. 248). Still, on the whole, the content on Christian education is frustratingly anemic.

At the colonial period the book narrows to the American scene and focuses on major thinkers influencing all of education, not just the Christian version. John Dewey, for example, gets a good deal of attention, but mainly for the purposes of asking whether or not evangelical Christians can use his theory without buying his world view (pp. 336-337). The chapter dealing with Christian education in the twentieth century pits mainline Protestant liberal educators (who use the pragmatism of Dewey and the developmental theories of Horace Bushnell) against evangelical leading lights like Henrietta Mears, Lawrence Richards and Kenneth Gangel (one wonders why Howard Hendricks does not get mentioned).

Only the final two chapters deal in a sustained way with book's stated themes. The chapter on the philosophical foundations of Christian education attempts to connect certain philosophical schools with certain approaches to Christian education, but just when one thinks the wait has been worth it, the book simply fails. Some of the philosophical summaries are mystifyingly contradictory. Immanuel Kant is listed as both an Idealist and a Realist in two consecutive pages (393-394). Some sentences don't make any sense: "The realist views the world through an uncomplicated mystical construct of ideas, or transcendent persons or selves, and prefers to base reality on three means, including knowing based upon direct sensing of an object (e.g, taste, touch, smell, hearing, sight)," (p. 394). Some descriptions are stereotypically

misleading, such as the summary of Kierkegaard's existentialism which seems more descriptive of Sartre than Kierkegaard.

Some errors can be attributed to editing. "Neo-thomism" transmogrifies into "neo-theism" in the chart on page 392. And one anachronism in the historical narrative occurs on page 265. The Sunday School movement in England is credited with triggering and supporting the evangelical revival led by the Wesleys and Whitefield. Maybe the authors did not mean it thus, but the way the sentence is worded clearly leaves one with the impression that the Sunday School movement came before the revival, when in fact, the revival predates the beginning of the Sunday School movement by roughly fifty years.

For the most part, therefore, the book reads a little like an academic "travelogue" of major movements and figures in church history, philosophy and education. It does not sustain a clear focus. It depends almost exclusively on secondary sources, including dictionary articles (although, to be fair, the authors wrote some of those articles). The reader should know that Dr. Benson died during the writing of the book and Dr. Anthony had to carry on alone. This tragedy might account for some of the problems. Nonetheless, if one is looking for a history and philosophy of Christian education, one would do better elsewhere. Introducing Christian Education: Foundations for the Twenty-first Century (Baker Academic, 2001), edited by the same Michael Anthony, looks more promising, even though a bit older.

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Questioning Evangelism Engaging People's Hearts the Way Jesus Did
By Randy Newman
Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2004. 269 pp.

Randy Newman's book is an attempt to recapture the rabbinic method of questioning-dialogue as an evangelistic approach. Newman, who worked for more than twenty years in campus ministry, is helpful for readers who employ apologetics as the primary approach to evangelism in the twenty-first century.

With certainty, the book declares that our postmodern American culture requires a new approach employing questions that lead to meaningful dialogue.

This conclusion comes from painful personal experience. Newman, once a staunch proponent of the apologetic, witnessing-device approach to evangelism, began to notice the ineffectiveness of his methodology with the present college generation. Precluding or delaying questions was the former method he used when he witnessed to people. Candidly, Newman admitted that this approach no longer works with the inquisitive postmodern mind.

The book states that there are three key skills requisite in any evangelistic approach: declaring the gospel, defending the gospel and dialoguing the gospel. Questioning evangelism fits into the third category. The purpose of asking questions is to pave the way for sincere Christian dialogue and inquiry. Questions can also be used in response to verbal assaults and insincerity.

The book invites readers to explore three main topics: Why Ask Questions? What Questions Are People Asking? Why Aren't Questions and Answers Enough? The second topic, concerning the questions that people are asking today, is covered most extensively and is the most provocative. Newman addresses the classic questions posed by people today, such as: Why Are Christians So Intolerant? Why Does a Good God Allow Evil and Suffering Such as Columbine and AIDS? Why Are Christians so Homophobic? If Jesus Is So Great, Why Are Some of His Followers Such Jerks? Newman is at his best when he exposes the flawed reasoning and insincere motives lurking behind such questions.

Newman's skill as an apologist is both the strength and weakness of the book. He offers critical insights to aid readers in discerning whether the questions of postmoderns are sincere inquiries or malicious attacks. The two-part treatment of Why Does a Good God Allow Evil . . . is a must read. Newman skillfully compares this line of questioning with that of the character Job in the Old Testament. Instead of offering layers of rationale and explanations as apologetic ammunition, the book points readers to the Sovereignty of God and God's prerogative not to answer all of our questions.

In the introduction, Newman shares two personal fears regarding this book. The first fear is that some people might see the book as a criticism of other books on evangelism or apologetics. The tone of the book betrays no such critical sentiment.

The second fear is that some people might view the book as a technical handbook and be tempted to memorize the responses. This is a genuine concern and underscores the weakness of the book. The numerous examples of real-life

exchanges can tempt readers to resort to rote memory of the responses rather than discover the reason for using a particular line of questioning. At times the book appears to treat questions as tactics to lure or push non-Christians back into the arena of apologetics. Newman's thorough knowledge of apologetics has prepared him for spontaneous generation of provocative questions. A reader, inexperienced in Christian argument, might not know how to proceed. The book does a good job of expressing the "what and why" of asking questions. It falls short in expressing the "how" of developing good questions.

I would recommend this book to readers with a solid background in apologetics—particularly persons steeped in the classic approaches used by campus ministries or Evangelism Explosion. For individuals who have used prepared dialogues and have learned to brush aside questions during the witnessing process, this book provides a sobering alternative approach. The point that should not be missed is the need to engage postmoderns in sincere dialogue about what it means to be Christian.

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Communicating God's Word in a Complex World: God's Truth or Hocus Pocus?

By R. Daniel Shaw, and Charles Van Engen

New York, NY: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003. 258 pp.

Many readers will no doubt be attracted to this book out of curiosity–to find out what is meant by the words "Hocus Pocus" in the subtitle. However, the focus throughout the book is on the "dynamic process of making God known in particular contexts," or what the authors call "communication as mission" (xiv).

Each of the authors brings to the book strong academic credentials, as well as practical experience as missionaries and professors of missiology. R. Daniel Shaw holds a Ph.D. in anthropology, and previously served for twelve years as a missionary in Papua New Guinea. Charles Van Engen holds a Ph.D. in missiology, and spent twelve years as a missionary in Mexico. Both are

professors at the School of Intercultural Studies (formerly School of World Mission), Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California.

The book is divided into three sections of three chapters each. Part 1 speaks to the textual issues of intent, source, and message of faithful communication. Part 2 addresses the theoretical aspects of theology, communication and culture in appropriate communication. Part 3 focuses on the contextual issues of the receptors' understanding of God's intended message, i.e., seeking, enabling, and pursuing relevant communication.

"Hocus Pocus," as used by the authors, refers to the "transfer of meaning from truth to lack of truth" by some who attempt to communicate God's word. Shaw and Van Engen believe "those who would present God's communication must ensure, to the extent possible, that those who hear will receive truth, God's truth, rather than modified truth, or even untruth—hocus pocus" (xvii).

Shaw and Van Engen stress the importance of accepting the Bible as a closed canon to which nothing new needs to be added. However, they also affirm that God created all people in a multiplicity of cultural perspectives. Since communicators and receptors know God within the limitations of their culturally specific contexts, there is a continuing need to understand and speak the message of God in context. Each context is hidden from other contexts so that the presentation of God's message sheds new light on God that can only be seen within each particular context. Thus, according to the authors, communicators can learn as much from receptors as receptors can learn from communicators. Thus, Shaw and Van Engen's purpose is to "apply theological, communicational, and anthropological principles to the hermeneutical process in order to provide appropriate and relevant messages for the people who hear the word of the Lord" in particular contexts (xiv).

Throughout the book the authors weave a hermeneutical approach that seeks to interpret the New Testament in the same manner as New Testament authors adapted Old Testament passages to their first-century contexts. While Shaw and Van Engen express appreciation for a grammatical-historical hermeneutic, as well as for Nida's concept of dynamic equivalence, they suggest we need a hermeneutic that focuses not so much on the word of the biblical text as on the nature of God reflected in the text.

While readers will appreciate Shaw and Van Engen's desire to communicate God's word in a complex world of multiple contexts, some will think the authors are walking too thin a line hermeneutically. A fact that the

authors recognize when they note "we need to avoid two extremes: on the one hand an open canon to which we add our own self-styled revelation, and on the other a closed text that is static, untouchable, and without meaning for today" (52).

Readers will find *Communicating God's Word in a Complex World* both challenging and insightful. Numerous charts effectively illustrate the authors' concepts, and there is enough academic engagement and practical help to please most readers. Unfortunately, the book is likely to be read only by professional missiologists or serious students of communication theory. Professors of evangelism, church growth, and/or mission will find helpful ideas in the book that can be used in lectures and course notes. Everyday pastors and laypersons will find the book too complicated, scholarly, and drawn-out.

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Who Can Be Saved? Reassessing Salvation in Christ and World Religions
By Terrance L. Tiessen
Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004. 511 pp.

Two main questions drive this book: "How does God save people?" (part I) and "How do the world's religions reflect (if at all) God's purposes in the world?" (part II). Each chapter begins with the statement of one or more theses (thirty in all), making clear the author's aim and structure of argument. His biases are, first, those of the evangelical/Reformed tradition, which he calls "monergism" (a synonym for Calvinist "soft" determinism). He places this concept in contrast to "synergism" (which corresponds to evangelical Arminianism). Secondly, he is a critical realist. Tiessen thus sticks to a correspondence theory of truth while acknowledging that knowledge is always embedded in a particular context, such that truth is always colored by that context.

With these assumptions, Tiessen argues for the position he calls "accessibilism:" under God's sovereign grace, sincere God-seekers may have access – through remnants of special revelation embedded in non-Christian religions – to saving knowledge of God. Furthermore, there could be (and

probably are) some of God's Elect among non-Christian peoples. Explanations of how both effectual saving grace and common grace are operative run throughout the book.

Tiessen contrasts "accessibilism" with four standard views: (1) ecclesiocentrism – only those are saved who respond to the Gospel through the church; (2) agnosticism – nobody knows for sure whether they who have never heard the Gospel will be saved (attributed to John Stott, for example. Thus it is an evangelical agnosticism.) (3) Religious instrumentalism – some aspects of non-Christian religions are actually used by Christ the Word to make salvation available to people of non-Christian faiths. (Karl Rahner's "anonymous Christian" fits here.) (4) Relativism – more commonly known as religious pluralism," Tiessen explains his reasons for avoiding that usage. John Hick and Paul Knitter serve as well-known examples.

This book is closely-argued. Tiessen seeks to demonstrate how evangelical exegetical conclusions, in conjunction with reports from the mission field, support accessibilism. For example, he argues in chapter 14 ("How did the Covenant People Relate to Other Religions?") that God's people appropriated names of pagan deities and applied them to Yahweh without syncretizing (at least those who remained in the orthodox stream; see, e.g., pp. 346 ff.). Since religion is necessarily embedded in particular cultures, all religions are both (potentially) expressions of God's revelation as well as being humanity's searching after God (e.g. pp. 351-353). (The ambiguity of all religions is one of Tiessen's major themes.) Points of contact between Christianity and other religions, therefore, instead of being always oppositional, sometimes provides glimpses of how God has been graciously at work to save the Elect among peoples of other religions even though they have not explicitly heard of Jesus. Consistent with Tiessen's Reformed framework, he sees God's sovereignty here.

The book ends on a practical note. Tiessen offers three criteria for assessing how we can see God at work beyond the covenant community. He uses the terms "orthodoxy," "orthopraxy" and "orthokardia." To the extent that other religions' doctrines (1) fleetingly and partially compare favorably to biblical descriptions of the one true God, (2) stimulate efforts at justice and (3) provoke heartfelt love for God and neighbor, one can surmise (with great caution) that remnants of God's special revelation can be found therein. This conviction leads to ways in which we can dialogue with other religionists,

cooperate with them on projects to make the world better, and even, in a very limited way, engage in inter-faith moments of worship.

The structure, tone and comprehensive scope of this book is quite similar to Tiessen's earlier work, *Providence and Prayer* (InterVarsity, 2000). Tiessen's aim is to stay close to the biblical text in making his arguments and I think he accomplishes this purpose very well. The book is very thorough. It straightforwardly faces a number of complex theological and philosophical issues (not the least of which is the difference between Calvinism and Arminianism on the relevant issues; his irenic spirit is especially evident here) and, as one might expect, the answers do not always satisfy. But the work is a careful offering from an evangelical scholar who desires the church's maturity and effectiveness in evangelism and mission.

The book is too long. In Tiessen's efforts to show the range of scholarly opinion, he lapses into some redundancy, with too many quotes from other sources. This minor flaw is counterbalanced by the wealth of footnotes that demonstrate the breadth of scholarship and allow further reading. It could serve a range of uses in course settings, such as a class on Christianity and other religions or as a supplemental text in a variety of mission courses.

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The Unchurched Next Door: Understanding Faith Stages as Keys to Sharing Your Faith

By Thom S. Rainer

Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003. 271 pp.

Thom Rainer and his research team have written in order to inspire, motivate and even convict American Christians to evangelize their unchurched neighbors. Rainer is no stranger to readers familiar with the contemporary church growth movement. Rainer has contributed sixteen books to the field. He has conducted a national survey in order to both familiarize Christians with their unchurched neighbors and to supply helpful methodological approaches for the various responses to the Gospel in contemporary American culture. To accomplish this, Rainer and his team have created the Rainer Scale to identify

various types of unchurched men and women throughout the United States in an attempt to provide Christians a window into the world of the unchurched.

Upon interviewing numerous unchurched Americans, the Rainer research team examined their responses for patterns within the unchurched population. Based on the results, they have proposed five different levels of responsiveness to the gospel message. The Rainer Scale is presented to the reader not only to display both the diversity of the unchurched population but also to build evangelistic confidence within the Christian for the purpose of personal evangelism. "U1" identifies an estimated 17 million unchurched Americans who are highly receptive to hearing and believing the good news. They know something about the rudiments of Christianity and have a positive attitude toward the church. "U2" individuals are receptive to Christianity and represent more than 43 million people who are willing to listen to the Gospel. Those categorized as "U3" are identified as neutral and are subdivided into three distinct subgroups: the "apathetics" who were neither offended nor interested in Christianity, those who leaned toward "U2" and lastly, those who leaned toward "U4." "U3's" represent 57 million people and are designated as having no clear signs of interest in Christianity but are perhaps open to discussion. The "U4" group displays resistance to the gospel but no antagonism. Rainer subdivided this group of 33 million into two separate groups: those who stand in opposition to anything religious and those who are somewhat religious yet remained highly resistant to Christianity. The most unresponsive group in the population is identified as "U5" and account for some 8 million unchurched Americans. This group represents the most secular of those classified and is highly antagonistic and even hostile to the Gospel.

Rainer's works includes helpful charts and tables that assist in communicating the voluminous statistical information on each group. The reader benefits from the numerous dialogues that occurred while research was being conducted. These stories prevent the work from being a clinical and statistical book only and provide not only human interest narratives but also allow the reader to better understand the subjectivity of the unchurched person represented in the five categories listed above. Appendices are included that review the statistical methodology of the research as well as the survey utilized throughout the interview process. Also included are the results of Rainer's research where a percentage breakdown of the respondents' replies is shared including demographic information on the respondents themselves. Lastly, the

author also incorporates a helpful tool for Christian witnesses who are attempting to share their faith. The guide provides a series of questions allowing the reader to gain helpful information about a particular unchurched person before a witnessing encounter.

Laced with testimonials from the research team as well as unchurched persons themselves, the book admirably fulfills its primary aim to encourage and explain how Christians can best engage their neighbors in a meaningful conversation concerning the Gospel. The book offers helpful aids in addressing individual needs with thoughtful theological reflection as a guide in contextualizing the biblical message for the American unchurched population. The book is clearly designed for use in evangelistic practice as well as being an examination of evangelistic methodology. Rainer's work is best suited in the local church setting by both clergy and lay people alike. This book will also provide a helpful study aid in both strategizing evangelistic campaigns for denominational evangelistic efforts as well as classroom discussion upon the increasing secular audience the American church now faces.

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Raising the Bar: Ministry to Youth in the New Millennium
By Alvin L. Reid
Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2004. 207 pp.

Kristen, age 17, says, "We know how to be teenagers. We want [the church] to show us how to be adults." In Part 1 of his book, Dr. Alvin Reid illustrates that the Millennial generation that Kristen represents not only has the desire to grow in maturity, but the attributes to "recast the image of youth from downbeat and alienated to upbeat and engaged—with potentially seismic consequences for America." Dr. Reid builds a convincing case in chapter 1 for the potential, positive, and revolutionary impact that this generation could have on society. Chapter 2 reveals an issue that threatens to undermine the potential of this generation. Dr. Reid writes, "We [popular culture and the church] treat youth like children rather than young adults who are preparing for lifelong service to God." Dr. Reid theorizes that we need to combat cultural expectation by raising the bar of expectation for adolescents and their spiritual guides

which includes parents and church leaders. In chapters 3-6, his theory is further supported by contemporary and historical examples of adolescents who have responded to the expectation to be involved in evangelistic outreach. Part 2 of the book discusses how parents and the church must raise the bar of expectation in five areas, "prayer, Bible knowledge, evangelism, and worship," if Millennials like 17-year old Kristen are going to live up to their potential to evangelize their peer network.

Dr. Reid's understanding of youth ministry is similar to the "preparatory approach" described by Wesley Black in his book *Four Views of Youth Ministry and the Church*. Black defines the approach as "a specialized ministry to adolescents that prepares them to participate in the life of existing churches as leaders, disciples or evangelists." This model balances a combination of training with opportunities to practice living the Christian faith. Dr. Reid's book offers an important corrective approach to youth ministry that depicts adolescents as children who need to be entertained instead of discipled. Fellowship and entertainment can be important components of youth ministry programming, but must not become the cornerstone of a youth ministry approach if we are going to successfully train a generation of disciples.

My excitement and advocacy of Dr. Reid's text comes with two qualifications that should be entertained when seeking to utilize this approach:

1. Adult leaders in youth ministry must balance high expectations of youth with an understanding of their developmental needs.

Dr. Reid rightly holds the value of nurturing adolescents in tension with the need to raise expectations placed on young disciples. What concerns me is that this approach minimizes the importance of adolescent developmental theory by labeling the life stage of adolescence a myth. He does not deny that adolescence is a time of rapid maturation, but instead questions whether the changes taking place necessitate rebellious behavior experienced by adolescence. The reader may want to supplement Reid's claim with Dr. Chap Clark's arguments in Mark H. Senter III, ed. *Four Views of Youth Ministry and the Church*. Any youth ministry philosophy that is going to place potential spiritual, physical, mental, physical or relational stress on an adolescent must do so under the guidance of developmental theorists. Dr. Chap Clark states my concern poignantly when he writes,

When given too much authority, too loud a voice, and too much autonomy, the adolescent stage can be more harmful than healthy for a young person. Yes, I believe that leadership options and seasons of significant responsibility are a vital component of the youth ministry task, but only when contained within the protective embrace of adults (or congregations) who watch out for the young person's growth and development. Adolescents are not another type of adult needing to be included in every ministry of the church so much as they are trainees in life who need a congregation that is committed to their spiritual and personal development.

2. The evangelistic efforts of youth must connect with the evangelistic efforts of congregation.

Youth evangelism efforts existing independent of the congregation should be celebrated and supported by the congregation. When possible, adults and youth should participate in intergenerational evangelistic efforts. This emphasis acknowledges that a central goal in youth ministry today must be the incorporation of youth into life of the body of Christ.

Given these qualifications, *Raising the Bar* offers local church leaders, clergy and academics stimulating and useful information. Dr. Reid has written a challenging, yet accessible book that is sure to inspire discussion when assumptions regarding the capacity of adolescents to respond to the great commission are challenged.

Brent Seusy is Director of Youth Ministry, Southwestern College.

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