

GLEANINGS FOR EVANGELISM FROM SOCIOLOGY

Samuel Wilson

My topic reminds me of the comment by one of the British Prime Ministers, Anthony Eden I believe, about Winston Churchill's *History of the English-Speaking Peoples*. "Harummpf... he said, "it should have been titled: *Things that Have Interested Me in History*."

I hope I can keep the thoughts in this essay flowing with greater purpose than that. Nevertheless, it would stretch credulity to pretend to speak exhaustively about the contributions sociology might make in understanding the interplay of social processes and evangelism. Be warned then that I am clearly selecting, sometimes along the lines of personal choice and predilection.

Let me first exclude some things from this discussion, though not from lack of interest. Urban studies, demography and several other subdisciplinary areas are regularly used in relation to church planting and by specialized periodicals devoted to those areas. They are illustrations of types of studies and lines of thought that have been productive for evangelism. Here I attempt to weave together some threads of understanding from elsewhere that, as a sociologist, I have found helpful or provocative. They also tend to follow my lasting interest in the specialized area of the sociology of knowledge.

Basic Assumptions of Social Science

Every science chooses its preferred sources of explanation. The essential assumption of the social sciences is to seek explanation for social phenomena from social causes, that is from group-level explanations.

I am acutely aware that as Westerners we imbibe from our context a different preferred explanation. America recurs to explanations of behavior based on the individual. The individual psyche is all-important. College campuses everywhere have a high percentage of students whose first choice as a major is psychology. We live in a society that teaches that we should explain things psychologically. Individual choice is preeminent.

So powerful are the individualistic explanation and the "psychologization" of life that they have invaded a cardinal area of concern for us in evangelism. When we seek the removal of all doubt about an individual's conversion, we are most likely to be impressed with a story of stand-alone determination in the face of opposition. The greater the risk to a convert occasioned in deciding

for Christ, the more impressed we are likely to be. Our theological knee-jerk reaction to some one whose initial step of faith risks persecution or death betrays us into thinking "this, above all else, is a valid decision." Missiology has learned to temper such judgment, since its longer term consequences are most frequently a church of mavericks and pariahs, dissociated from its culture and unable to grow for one or two generations.

I carefully suggest that this thing we hold nearest and dearest, the theology of faith identified with individual conversion, may in some ways be the most infected with the central concept of secular humanism. I am speaking, of course, of the supremacy of the individual over the community and society.

Social Science and the Individual

Social science is not a total rejection of the individual as social actor. It rather seeks to explain individual behavior, among other things, from social causes. A whole host of examples might be given from older social explanations which illuminate the experience of the individual. From work on the diffusion of innovations,¹ one can focus on the individual to show the benefits of sociological thinking. For example, the decision to follow Christ could be viewed, first, as a choice, second, an exchange, or finally as a learning process. It might be a choice to try something new, or an exchange of something old for something new and better, or again as learning to try or employ new approaches.

Any of these three can be easily seen in evangelistic preaching. A rational choice model spawns appeals for individual conversion based on logical arguments for commitment. Some expected value must be maximized. It would be better for the hearer to accept than to reject. Weigh the options. Christ is better.

Or acceptance could be thought of as exchanging something old for something new. We have all heard or ourselves extended a hundred altar calls involving impassioned pleading to choose a new you, an exchange of an old, sinful, dissatisfying, unrewarding life for a cleansing, and a satisfying rewarding future in this or the afterlife.

A third option is to understand conversion as learning. When we allow discipleship to enter our thinking in presenting the Gospel, we amplify Matthew 11 and call for learning of the Christ. Less frequently we issue calls to learn to walk with Jesus, employing rules of life like "What Would Jesus Do?" (WWJD), with the accompanying bracelet sales. We might do well to expand our application of these three definitional insights about acceptance of innovation in a more thoroughgoing way to enhance both preaching and teaching.

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Against the context suffused with individualism the Christian social scientist dares to think that movements, whether social change in general, or such things as revival, renewal and church planting evangelism, can and should be illuminated by looking beyond the individual to group phenomena.

Identity and Culture

Sensitized reflection makes it evident that we have already recognized social influence. We have all associated identity and history with inability to consider the Gospel. "My ancestors have always been Catholic (Buddhist).... I am Italian, (Japanese)...." Even the old "texts" for evangelism isolated groups of people, and suggested appropriate sets of proof texts to frame witness based on commonalities of social experience or origin. The truth is that few individuals make decisions of lasting value in isolation, and practical evangelism has and should always recognize this.

We draw our collective identity from the social groups to which we belong, are bonded, or which we use as reference frames. The power of these groups lies in their capacity to steer behavior and decision. They define and mold identity. They give us the logic that frames our reasoning. That identity and the community from which it arises may favor or reject Gospel truth to varying degrees. The sets of issues that have to do with contextualization in a missionary setting, or user-friendly evangelism, all focus here.

The Need to Refine What We Mean by Culture

A peculiar thing is going on among social theorists, especially sociologists. Many are challenging long accepted "culturalist" explanatory perspectives.

Constellations of behaviors and attitudes were formerly thought of statically as holistic "culture". Missions, reinforced by apologetics, has been entranced with worldview. But the global half of that word lends undue weight to sweeping generalization. A single, cogent worldview held by an entire modern society is hard to find and define. In place of such holistic cultural analyses, many theorists seeking to explain influence toward change are turning to analyses of specific historical and institutional contexts, thereby moving from the sweeping generalization toward middle level explanation. Identity and "culture" are thought of as generated by these specific "middle level" institutional settings, rather than as the generalized worldview phenomenon so frequently posited in cultural anthropology.

The importance of middle level institutions is underscored further by some counter indication that the fragmentation we associate with post-modernism, especially as it impacts the individual psyche, is less than complete. I note this because at least

one author characterizes the situation as being one of "creative reception." She speaks, in terms of environing culture, as a "world not yet surrendered."² Cultural reception does not become nor has it ever been a process of choice in a vacuum, even though a single, sweeping, unifying culture no longer exists. Judgments by cultural authorities are still an intrinsic part of selections made by individuals. But after exposure to cultural materials, there is greater openness to resistance to singular cultural authority.

It would be a tremendous plus for evangelism if in a given setting or life situation we could figure out how to invade and influence the cultural authorities still in place, and then stimulate innovation. Here is an argument for contextualizing on the level of choice of medium. For example, seen or judged in this light, it ought to be a great boon for the Gospel to have every music group giving its rendition of *Amazing Grace*. But the process is not complete until the ways the messages are being processed by the receptor groups are also suffused with gospel content or at least predisposition to hear its truth.

Change in the Institutions That Generate Culture and Make Us Who We Are

Now look with me for a moment at the institutions and organizations which are currently thought to generate "culture." We will want to know how they themselves change, for if we can identify these processes, perhaps we can influence them to predispose their members to openness to Christ. These are of tangential special interest to us since they closely parallel, as middle level institutions, our most successful "mega-churches."

Three types of organizational change have been identified. They are coercive, normative, and mimetic.³

In coercive change, organizations can have changed structures or organizational rationalizations forced on them. The Association of Theological Schools (ATS) doesn't quite do this to seminaries, but with the right group of examiners can come close. The government certainly can force change on organizations, as in financial reporting, criteria for scholarships, and strict compliance with stated values. Denominational oversight can fall into this category for schools where evangelism is taught. We can feel our institutions coerced in ways not thought to further evangelism.

Normative change appears to be voluntary as institutions accept innovations that will give them legitimacy. Managerial models may be adopted because older companies in the field employ them. They may be chosen simply because they are there, although they are promoted as rational or efficient. A study of adoption of management practices was unable to correlate acceptance and implementation of available practices to any rationale. But one study

was able to distinguish clearly two types of employment programs adopted by companies to meet governmental requirements of fair practice. One they knew would result in no change, and the other type program would really produce equitable hiring. Companies made their choices knowing the outcome, thus frustrating the desired normative change. The difference was between symbolizing equality and achieving it.⁴

How much do we do at institutions of higher learning merely to have the name of seeking certain goals, when everyone knows no outcomes will change? Do our institutions support mission and evangelism, or merely appear to? How many parishes and judicatories went through the "evangelistic motions" during a decade of evangelism while decline continued?

Mimetic change is rife in evangelistic organizations and programs. Industrial studies showed that far from instituting systems of management because they had been shown to rationalize workplace relations, the vast majority adopted them because other companies in their industries had. Here is a whole segment of modern society, exporting its systems of "rational" management far beyond the arena of industrial production, and research shows factors other than rational choice as the basis for implementing the management systems. One suspects cases in which the choices relate more to public image than to effectiveness.

One social science question to pose relates to the effective social level which conditions behavior and choice mechanism. Indubitably, the groups that form authority and decision habits, or exert pressure to modify or change them are of interest to us. Do these derive from the society, its intermediate institutions, or from the face-to-face primary group?

The above suggests some research directions. If identity and culture is constantly being generated by mezzo or micro institutions, we ought to examine current Christian groups and expressions to discover where our institutions at this level make Christ and His message known, heard and seen. Are our structures similar to the secular situation, and are they of equal persuasive power? How and why do they themselves change?

One connection that suggests itself as a next step after identifying the fact of social influence and identity formation is to wonder about the effective ways in which identity is formed and behavior molded. These elements of a sociology of knowledge are surely of interest to anyone seeking an understanding of the processes related to the communication of the Gospel, and especially, a Gospel that goes beyond a one time, momentary decision for Christ to eventuate in a life respecting His Lordship. An easy beginning answer would be to reexamine how the community of faith inducts new members and teaches us to acquire character habits and life principles.

Most missionary anthropology still struggles to free itself from the essentially static notion of culture that inhered in structural functionalism. But newer sociologies of culture are recognizing that national identities and shared symbolic meanings are the result of or have power over individuals because they are being constantly reinvented by middle level cohesive community or communities. This gives a very different view of the aims of the development of the community of faith and the possibilities of contextualization. As the Church changes it inevitably gives new definition to what it means to be a Christian in any given cultural setting. It says something as well about the urgency of strengthening the bonds among Christians. It also opens the door to congregational experimentation. In this sense it becomes a new definition of New Testament Church and real fellowship.

Nationalism as a Source of Identity

Let's look for a moment at identity and behavior related to what we loosely call nationalism. I need offer no substantiation for the importance of this theme. Ethnic cleansing and bloody, tragic strife have already done that far better than I might. And they do so in spite of nominal Christian identity. Nationalism is one of the sources of identity that we most readily accept. Some of us still stand for the Star Spangled Banner, salute the flag and decry the low ebb of patriotism. Ethnic conflict rends what we thought were nation states, but on March 17th everyone in New York or Chicago is Irish. And need I remind us of the fact that roughly one half of the denominations that Niebuhr documented in *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* had linguistic and ethnic origins. But are there other sources that generate and inculcate and invoke the constellation of expectations and behaviors associated with nationalism and the identity that may flow from it?

I want to broaden the basis on which we think of nationalism. It is possible to discover a variety of foci for quasi-nationalism. The forces which produce nationalistic spirit are not only citizenship in a nation/state or birth of ethnic parents. For instance, a new kind of nationalism has become apparent that is related to sports. I suppose that the medal count has always been the foundation of some of this national pride, but national pride in an occasional contest has now led to the banning of English fans from soccer games in the Netherlands, or the French /English riots associated with the recent World Cup.

Notice that analogously in the general loss of Christian memory this nationalistic link is precisely the cultural advantage that has eroded or been lost to us for evangelistic purposes. The historical linkage of Christianity and nationalism existed of a piece in the civil religion and nominalism of years gone by. It may now be dissociated from Christian virtues and values, even if the notion of

being "Christian" persists. The evangelist has lost a tremendous advantage. But what new loyalties have displaced the old?

The Generation of Culture

If we can address helpfully the question of where culture is generated, we can begin to identify the social mechanisms that impart Christian identity, and the engines of behavioral change that produce Christian cultural leavening or even Christian cultures. Significant studies have focussed in on the sources and processes associated with generating culture. Curiously, these are, in the jargon of some of the literature, anti hegemonic; we might call them prophetic, or perhaps counter cultural.

These studies focus on the derivation of revolution or revolutionary attitudes and worldviews as clear instances of identifiable innovation in ideas. Change is almost always construed as criticizing the past. Needless to say, this is precisely the effect on environing culture that would result from Christian generation of alternative cultural influence. The secular studies identify and seek to explain the development of the counter cultural in a culture that exercises strong control over a local environment. Such a situation would not be unlike our current sense of what may be required for true renewal or sweeping revival or productive evangelism. Becoming a Christian to some degree requires counter cultural attitudes and behaviors. This in turn also requires institutional forms shaped from the context but capable of inculcating new "Christian" values and behaviors. The answer appears to lie in the "fit" between social context, political circumstances, and social actors. Our task will require specific rather than general historical and institutional analysis. And it will focus on smaller scale, shorter-term social life rather than macro analysis of society, nation/state and culture. Culture in practice may be mediated by class, ethnicity or gender, but consciousness is made and remade by intermediate level institutions which themselves are in constant change. Any light shed at the mezzo or micro level is helpful even we can't generalize to all our culture, or predict one hundred percent of all behaviors.

Culture Change, Creativity and Motivation

A further interesting question is to explore what social circumstances promote creativity and or productivity. I note first that at least one author⁵ claims empirical support for the generalization that reward systems for creativity are the same in the realms of art, science, and religion. These reward systems she classifies as independent, semi-autonomous, subcultural, and heterocultural. They will enable us to inquire about the reward systems motivating

evangelistic creativity, especially in our Academy and our institutions.

The independent reward system centers around a "self-perpetuating and self-evaluating group of peers." These peers avow a search for an ostensibly universal goal, such as salvation, knowledge, truth, or beauty.⁶ They each claim an equally universal method. This is recognizable in science, the humanities and theology. In this academy, let us at least be aware of the similarity of our statement of goals, and be warned by her conclusion that this type of reward system tends toward establishment and conservatism.

The semi-autonomous system of rewards is one in which symbolic rewards are allocated by creative producers, but consumers allocate material rewards. You will have noticed that all Leighton Ford received tonight was a plaque! A separate set of consultants in evangelism are collecting appreciable checks from the consumers of their valued services. The symbolically-rewarded work must be somewhat anti-establishment, but please ever more respected critics.

The subcultural is defined as making little distinction between the producers and the consumers and where largely symbolic rewards are allocated within the subculture. By analogy, this would describe an isolated, encapsulated church or Christian community. You must reach your own conclusion as to how aptly it describes us.

Finally, the heterocultural reward system operates where a few large corporations, whether artistic or religious, produce popular religion, movies, music etc. for an undifferentiated mass. The media conglomerates reward independent producers and specialty firms. I suggest you attempt your own applications, but obviously the production mechanisms and reward systems that operate for the generation of popular culture have not left the religious world unscathed. Evangelism and music can be analyzed through this lens. Some popular Evangelical artists who set out to give faithful witness have been coopted at least partly because of the structure of the reward systems. The issues raised step our analysis up to a different level from merely theological choosing up sides as to whether or not to be user friendly in worship.

There is work ahead to understand the insights provided, and to discover reward systems that stimulate structures of creativity without compromising theological convictions or ecclesial institutions.

There may be a special message here for the Academy for Evangelism. How do we continue to exist with most of our members ensconced in one of those intermediate level institutions (i.e. the seminary) that has become more and more conservative vis-a-vis the secular culture? As regards teaching evangelism, we must

be open to our institutions being or becoming culture generative, and accept the fact that that implies anti-hegemonic activity and creativity. All change, as a Philippine psychologist said, is experienced as loss.

Additionally, or perhaps as a less confrontive course, we might identify and co-opt the evolving media generating culture. Simply stated, it will be impossible to contribute to evangelism unless we become models for developing new institutions of evangelism. It is jargon-loaded, but we must develop "an acquired system of generative schemes objectively adjusted to particular conditions." This is really a sociological definition of incarnation. It is also a prescription for examining and modifying our institutions to respond to real challenges in our environment.

I cannot resist calling attention here, by the way, to significant and abundant research that clearly establishes the beneficial effects of competition in producing creative response. This is true in music and the arts, and in medical innovation, to mention a few. It is no less true in evangelism and its teaching. Vigorous fellowship promoting debate between and among institutions holding to different methods of doing evangelism sounds like a healthful atmosphere for creativity in this Academy. We can not afford not to model such interchange, and must promote not being too mimetic in this regard.

How are organizations influenced to change? Are there ways in which the conditioning of the environment and the dispositions that allow communication correspond for both non-Christian and Christian movements? Perhaps like the reward systems the same sorts of group resources and cultural schemas develop indirect anti-hegemonic power for both. This question initiates a line of inquiry about how to influence the structure and nature of middle level organizations themselves, i.e. our schools.

Media Research

Finally let us note some behavioral curiosities unearthed in media research. They are built on the general notion of readers or viewers as an "interpretive community." They are concerned with the reception accorded to various media, and are of interest to us because of so much writing dealing with receptor-oriented evangelism. They differ somewhat from the more mainstream mass communication research which is heavily market-oriented and reductionist.

The conclusions of the studies are of considerable interest to someone concerned to understand the mechanisms and conceptual ways in which media might work for evangelism. They generally indicate that middle level influences, i.e. the network executives determining themes and shows to air, are stronger on audiences' preference for material. Actual interpretation of content is freer of

such direct cultural influence. A further common thread seems to be that receptors are fluid and ambivalent, moving in and out of acceptance and use of cultural materials. Reception is tentative.

Consider the rich array of potential characters with whom the viewer might identify in the popular series *Dynasty*. The standard protagonist, antagonist, with background supporting set so commonly ground out was surpassed by an expanded array of characters offered for both sexes. A basic reason for the longevity of interest may have been that in this array of variously defined heroes and anti heroes, each of them themselves a mixture, the viewer encountered a wide choice of "try-on" identities, each interesting for the nuanced mixture of traits. You got to "be" over a period of weeks, alternately indulgent, kind, or wretched and cruel. The fact that it was TV that provided a realistic secondary experience of such "real" worlds and identities prolonged interest and the process of trial identification. Hence the series re-runs lasted for years, with immense public interest as the viewer "tried on" a series of identities.

I suggest that this is a good description of post-modern life. So many identities are proffered, that this feature of going through life with varying trial ID's is a fairly exact match to the personal experience of all too many of our hearers apart from the Gospel. It may be the regular stuff of daily experience.

Indulge me in a leap. Is this then, the genius of "seeker-friendly" approaches? Unanimously, they resolutely exert what seems, when compared with 13 verses of *Just as I Am* separated by some good old sawdust trail exhortation, to be less than specific calls to submit to Christ's Lordship. They regularly include drama, and characters styled to be like the researched audiences. Yet they fit exactly the processes outlined above. Now I know that the idea of inviting someone to a "try-on" identity as a Christian is about as reprehensible as one can imagine theologically. Yet I suggest that it may be a nearly perfect contextualization of the decision-making processes normal to the secular life that surrounds us. And almost all recent texts having to do with evangelism emphasize process.

Implications for the Academy and Our Seminaries

It is a long plus or minus one hundred years since Durkheim convincingly demonstrated clear correlations between the most individualistic act conceivable, suicide, particularly differential suicide rates across religious groups, and social analysis. We have made significant progress in identifying the levels of social interaction which affect such behavior, and yet very little progress in identifying the engines of change that generate such behavior. The almost uniform conclusion of the authors I have been reviewing is clear on this at least, that if we are to understand what is driving behavior currently, the direction of our inquiry must be middle level.

And for us, I would suggest the imperative of examining and being proactive in generating change in those same middle institutional levels.

How do we teach evangelism so that creative people leave our seminaries, imbued yes, with the classic tools of clear biblical understanding and the zeal for winning the lost, but also less wed to institutions which are unlikely to change opinion and make evangelism healthy in an ever changing future? I cannot escape the doleful conclusion that all too many of our outcomes contribute far too much to maintenance rather than mission.

What is intolerable either for the academic study of evangelism or for its fruitful prosecution is a rift between academic thinking about culture and how individuals think of themselves in a post modern world. The social sciences have their contribution to make to avoiding that rift.

NOTES

¹Charles A. Lave & James G. March, *An Introduction to Models in the Social Sciences* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), p. 384.

²J. Radway, "On the Uses of Serious Fiction" in *Critical Inquiry* (1988) 14: 517-538.

³Diana Crane, Ed. *The Sociology of Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).

⁴F. R. Dobbin, "Cultural Models of Organization" in Crane, Diana, Ed. *The Sociology of Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994)

⁵Diana Crane, "Reward Systems in Art, Science, and Religion" in Peterson, R.A. *The Production of Culture* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1976).

⁶R. A. Peterson, "The Production Perspective" in Crane, Diana, Ed. *The Sociology of Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).

Faith Outside The Walls.

By Ron D. Dempsey. Macon: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 1997. Pp. viii + 132.

One cannot deny the fact that the unchurched percentage of the American population is on the rise. Leaders of churches and denominations are grasping for resources that seek to profitably address this topic. Dr. Ron Dempsey's *Faith Outside The Walls* is a welcome addition.

The primary thrust of most of the books on this topic is on describing the distribution and the elements of the unchurched demographically. In contrast, Dr. Dempsey makes a serious attempt to help us understand the development pathways of the religiosity of the unchurched.

Dempsey carefully argues that the factors that have shaped the religiosity of the unchurched are not theological but strictly sociological. From this premise, he devotes the first two chapters on two major cultural changes in the United States – the secularization process at both the cultural and institutional levels and the privatization process at the personal religious level.

Using Richard Fenn's five-stage theory of generalization of religion in a society Dempsey illustrates how mainline Christianity disintegrated in American culture. That collapse began with relegation of religion to the private sphere, the limitation of religious influence in the public sphere, followed by the development of generalized beliefs and values for the larger society. In the process of cultural secularization, Christianity was dethroned from being the only source of absolute truth that brought cohesion to the nation with its values and beliefs. Thus the Church has become one of many choices for citizens to derive their meaning and symbols.

With the advancement of science and technology in the modern era, a rationalized, humanistic and pragmatic worldview had emerged. The supernatural had lost its social significance – Americans could seemingly survive without a "transcendent enchantment" and so the Church presenting a supernatural Savior and faith found itself without a ready audience.

Using Max Weber's terminology, Dempsey concludes that American churches had also secularized at the institutional level by routinization. They had petrified in their traditions and provided no relevant meaning and fulfillment for people. This resulted in the marked decline in church attendance in American mainline Christianity since the 1950s.

In chapter 2, drawing largely from the writings of Robert Bellah and Thomas Luckmann, Dr. Dempsey has provided an in-depth analysis of the cultural patterns and institutional structures to help us understand the reasons why privatized faith has

become a personal reality for so many Americans. The surprise omission was the author's non-reference to the impact of post-modernism on the Church.

The author's two roles of being both a strategic church consultant and a professor of sociology are evident throughout the book. Dr. Dempsey extensively uses past research. He borrowed the categories and characteristics of the unchurched from Russell Hale's *The Unchurched: Who They Are and Why They Stay Away* (Harper & Row, 1977). Several graphs are listed making comparisons of various aspects of religious faith among the unchurched from data of his personal research in 1993 with the Gallup surveys of 1978 and 1988. As an influencer of church leadership, Dempsey often employs the actual quotes from numerous unchurched individuals and personal anecdotes to undergird his conclusions.

After diagnosis, a good consultant provides prescriptions. This is precisely what the author does. The most important prescription Dempsey offers is hope. In the final paragraph of the book, the author expresses optimism because unchurched Americans have not abandoned Christianity though they have disengaged from the Church. They are looking for relevance, meaning and spiritual answers. In the growing environment of spirituality, the Church can and must transform itself to seize this opportunity to present the transforming message of Jesus Christ. Encouragingly the book provides some theologically-based approaches and suggestions for a more culturally contextualized ministry. Therefore, *Faith Outside The Walls* could be a seminary text in church ministry courses and would aid church leadership in re-engaging the unchurched Americans.

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Come to the Feast: Invitational Evangelism

by Roberto Escamilla. Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1998., Pp.80.

This volume contains the 1998 Denman Lectures given by Roberto Escamilla to the Congress on Evangelism, an annual meeting of United Methodists. In it he argues for a recovery of invitational evangelism not as a plan or strategy but as a recognition that the gospel is at its heart invitational. Thus invitational evangelism involves more than preaching—it ultimately has to do with the nature of the church itself. The church is envisioned as a place where persons can come to feast on the riches of the gospel, where invitation is conjoined with celebration, and where persons grow in maturity and reach out in joyful service to the world.

The book consists of an Introduction followed by three chapters. The first chapter develops a theology of evangelism which focuses on the love of God who continually seeks and invites persons to return home. Escamilla begins by describing the good news that evangelism proclaims: God offers us salvation as a free gift, through Jesus Christ. We, however, are reluctant to trust God, because it means letting go of all the other things in which we trust which give us a false security, whether these be money, power, class, race, nation, or anything else that gives us value by seeing others as of lesser value. Yet only Jesus Christ has truly overcome the loneliness, death, guilt, and meaninglessness which fuels this anxious self-centeredness. Through the Holy Spirit, who is the Evangelizer, we are offered not only forgiveness but a new life of joy and love which transforms the everyday life of the believer.

In the second chapter Escamilla addresses invitational preaching. Reminding the preacher that conversions are the work of God, he provides a brief yet rich description of preaching that calls for and expects a response. Invitation, he argues, only has integrity when it proceeds from prior acceptance; God's love is not conditional upon our response but makes that response possible. He reminds us that we cannot assume people understand traditional or biblical terms, and expands and enriches the idea of an altar call as well as a variety of other forms of invitation.

His final chapter deals with God's invitation to healing and wholeness, encompassing the entirety of a human life. Escamilla urges us to take seriously the interrelation of mind and body, so clearly demonstrated in the gospel accounts of Jesus' ministry. The gospel is not only addressed to the soul but to the body, and healing can be emotional or physical as well as spiritual. A great strength of his discussion is how he addresses the mystery of suffering. Not everyone is healed, yet all can know the joy of reconciliation with God and service to one's neighbor.

While the brevity of the book may make it useful as a supplementary text in a course on evangelism, it is primarily designed for teaching within the local church. It is a valuable resource for pastors and seminary students to use in laying the foundation for invitational evangelism in the local church.

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Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America

Edited by Darrell L. Guder. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998. Pp.280.

This book addresses the crisis faced by the church in North America occasioned by the collapse of Christendom. When the North American church presupposed a Christian culture, mission became one program among many. The church saw itself as the sender of a select number of persons into mission.

The authors of this book join a growing number of writers who insist North America is itself a mission field, and the church can no longer operate as it has in the past. What is distinct in their approach, however, is they understand the fundamental problem not to be simply a need for new methods but spiritual and theological in nature. The mission, they argue, is God's, and the church itself is sent by God into mission. Mission constitutes the church--it is central to the church's identity.

While contending this is a scriptural vision of the church, the more recent theological foundation for these authors is the work of Lesslie Newbigin. The book is one of a number produced by the Gospel and Our Culture Network, a research project which seeks to explore the implications of Newbigin's thought for the North American context. Contributors to this volume include Lois Barrett, Inagrace T. Dietterich, Darrell L. Guder, George R. Hunsberger, Alan J. Roxburgh, and Craig Van Gelder. While each chapter has a primary author, there was a process of reflection and discussion of each draft which makes this a single, coherent text rather than a collection of essays.

There are nine chapters which can be discussed in groups of three. Chapters 1-3 include the introduction, a discussion of North American culture (here meaning the culture of Canada and the United States), and how that culture has shaped the church. While the context of modernity has both shaped the church and the way the gospel is heard in North America, and the missional church must always take this into account, the culture must never be allowed to determine the identity and purpose of the church.

That, as Chapter 4 makes clear, can only be determined by the gospel. The church exists primarily to "represent the reign of God" on earth. That is, the church is first of all called and sent to be a sign of the Lordship of Jesus Christ, through its "being, doing, and speaking." (108) Chapters 5 and 6 develop this further, describing the church "as apostle to the world" and the ecclesial practices used by the Holy Spirit to form and empower the missional church. The final three chapters discuss in turn missional leadership (which consists more of equippers of people for ministry than professionals ministering to the people), the structures of the local church, and the connectedness of the whole church.

The entire volume is governed by the "centrality of the gospel as God's good news for all the world," (10) a gospel to be both proclaimed and demonstrated to the world by the church. The gospel is transformative of any culture in which it takes root; at the same time it is incarnational and must be translated into that culture. However, the authors do not believe the content and form of the gospel are easily separable, and argue throughout for the need for critical reflection and discernment regarding the interrelation of gospel, church, and culture.

This will be a fine text for courses exploring how to do evangelism in a North American context. The discussion of culture has depth and insight, and the revisioning of the church portrays a people of God called and sent to proclaim the gospel to North Americans. While its prescriptions lack the specific advice and practices of most evangelism books, it provides the cultural and theological foundation from which to assess and utilize them.

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GenXers After God: Helping a Generation Pursue Jesus.

By Todd Hahn and David Verhaagen. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998. Pp. 204.

Hahn and Verhaagen address the deep-seated spiritual hunger and subsequent Christian faith development of today's young adults, referred to as Generation X or GenXers (those born roughly between 1964 and 1980). As a follow-up to their previous work *Reckless Hope: Understanding and Reaching Baby Busters*, this book does not so much offer ways to reach GenXers with the gospel as it provides a useful framework to effectively disciple GenXers in their Christian faith.

While the authors are well aware of sociological studies on GenXers, their conclusions are based upon their own personal ministry experiences with and among this generation, adding a certain "insider" authenticity and authority to their findings and proposals. In addition, their focus is not so much upon generational data (often treated fleetingly as already assumed) as upon the implications for discipleship arising from it. The book is structured around three major differences Hahn and Verhaagen see between "traditional" Christian discipling and discipleship mentoring with and among this "first generation raised without religion" – differences in (1) faith, (2) hope, and (3) love.

Part One of the book (Chapters 1-6) introduces these differences by calling attention to the importance of *story* in postmodern discipleship. The authors claim that just as "narrative evangelism" has replaced "traditional evangelistic methods" (e.g., communication of theological facts, or beginning with "felt needs"),

so for GenXers "narrative discipleship" -- the telling of story (God's, ours, and others') -- will need to replace "traditional approaches to Christian discipleship" (e.g., communication of propositional truth). They describe the story of the Kingdom of God, then relate how the collision of that story with our own (and those of others) gives rise to Christian faith. Their contention is that further faith maturation occurs as that story continues to be fostered and developed. For Hahn and Verhaagen, the discovery of one's spiritual gifts is vital in this process, as attested by the inclusion of a short spiritual gifts inventory in the appendix to assist disciplers.

Part Two (Chapter 7-8) addresses how GenXers are different in *faith* through their preference for relationship over doctrine, and for relevance to concrete, life-struggles over "knowledge for the sake of knowledge." For them, three theological themes provide structure for the faith-vision of GenXers: community (based upon the concept of the Holy Trinity); reconciliation (based upon the concept of sin); and hope (based upon an eschatological vision of creation). Finally, the authors suggest that five spiritual disciplines can offer helpful models in the development of these themes: solitude and quiet; scripture; prayer; fasting; and worship.

Part Three (Chapter 9) addresses the difficult ambiguity of the GenX understanding of *hope* as a unique combination of hopelessness about the world in general with a sense of hopeful pragmatism about their own life-situation. For the authors, "a key task of a discipler of Generation X is to help her disciple see her story in the light of God's story... of hope" (pp. 121-122). Part Four (Chapters 10-12) addresses how GenXers differ in *love* through their understanding of and interaction with family, friends, and sexuality. The reality of GenX experiences with these three are compared and contrasted to the unique freedom found in the model of God's love. Finally, Part Five (Chapters 13-14) addresses the church's awesome and daunting task of building and creating "hopeful community" based in the hope given to us in Jesus Christ.

As a GenXer pastor of evangelism myself in a large membership church containing sizeable numbers of young adults, one of the most persistent frustrations with which I deal is the ineffectiveness of traditional "new member assimilation" ministries in dealing with new young adult Christians. Here Hahn and Verhaagen, both GenXers themselves, provide insightful and practical ways in which contemporary ministries may be shaped to accomplish this essential task of discipling and development of new Christians in the faith.

GenXers After God is especially appropriate reading for those (laity or clergy) who minister specifically with and among young adults, such as youth pastors and workers, leaders of college and/or young single adult ministries, mentors/disciplers of new GenX Christians, and pastors/leaders of GenX-targeted ministries and churches. While it is not as helpful as a general overview of the

background values and characteristics of Generation X (in that regard, it will be more useful *in combination with* other GenX resources), nevertheless Hahn and Verhaagen here provide a superb resource for the effective *discipling* of GenXers.

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Culture Shift: Communicating God's Truth to Our Changing World. By David W. Henderson, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998. Pp. 255.

David Henderson has given us an insightful, down to street level, practical tool for evangelism and preaching in our post-modern world. He succinctly identifies some of the most important reasons our traditional, modernity based, evangelistic efforts are becoming less and less effective. In part 1 of the book he lays down the gauntlet of making our preaching and witnessing relevant while remaining faithful to the Word of God.

In parts 2, 3, and 4 he describes trend in American culture toward consumerism, spectatorism and self-absorbed individualism. He clearly elucidates the problems and opportunities this cultural drift creates for today's Christian witness. He emphasizes the need for pastors and other church leaders to identify and understand the pitfalls this cultural milieu creates for evangelism and preaching. He also suggests ways we can communicate our message with relevance to the unreached portions of North American culture without being unfaithful to God and God's revealed word.

In the last section of the book, parts 5, 6, and 7, he speaks to those of us who have been trained in modernity. We have for so long been more concerned with certain ways of thinking than with feeling and doing. When we are face to face with a culture that does not recognize the authority of Scripture and the relevance of God or the Church, our traditional ways of thinking are challenged. Henderson provides some very insightful approaches for thinking with and appealing to these new generations of persons who often value feelings over traditional ways of reasoning. He identifies a number of problems we may encounter when we attempt to discuss absolutes with these generations. With each problem he introduces, he makes observations that should prove to be helpful to anyone who is serious about evangelism.

I found that Henderson's theological position was in harmony with my own. He is a Presbyterian minister and he writes, unapologetically, as an evangelical. Persons from other theological identities, however, should find his insights informative and

helpful. I did not find anything in the book that I would consider offensive to most Christian ministers in "Mainline" or "Mainstream" church groups who are concerned with evangelism in contemporary culture.

Although it is not written as a textbook for seminary classes, I would recommend that this book be utilized as required reading for every student of evangelism. Even though he does not deal specifically with senior adults I intend to make use of portions of the book in my courses on ministry with the aging. Courses in preaching would certainly find this book useful as well.

Henderson writes with clarity and there is a narrative flow in each chapter. Illustrations are interjected at strategic points. I found that he raised some significant questions in the text and then provided some very insightful suggestions for the resolution of the tensions he had introduced. He makes good use of his marketing background and experience on the product development staff of the Procter and Gamble Company.

Pastors and worship leaders in local churches will benefit from the observations and suggestions contained in this book. It could be useful in the training of lay evangelism teams. Judicatory officers who are concerned with the development of church policy and programs will likewise benefit.

My style of reviewing books of this type is to mine for jewels of insight that will be helpful to the students in my classes. I also look for limitations. This book is rich with helpful insights. When read from the vantagepoint of the intended reader, I find few limitations.

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The Lord's Harvest and the Rural Church: A New Look at Ministry in the Agri-Culture.

By Kent R. Hunter. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1983. 144 Pp.

When this book was published, Kent Hunter had already published ten books on church growth and edited *Global Church Growth* magazine (now *Strategies for Today's Leader*). It may seem strange that one of the world's leading church growth authorities should write a book about the rural church, but it may be his most important book precisely for that reason. It focuses attention on a type of church that has played a major role in American church history and still represents an important group. In many protestant denominations, the number of rural churches stands in dramatic disproportion to the national demographic figures.

Hunter explores the complexity of understanding "rural" in a changing American economic and sociological context. Hunter, who served as a pastor of a rural church, offers this definition: "A rural church is a congregation of Christian people who live an agriculturally oriented life-style" (p. 16). Reminiscent of Lyle Schaller, Hunter classifies rural churches by ten types: The cornfield church, The county seat church, The small town church, The solo church, The playground church, The shrinking church, The metro-satellite church, The suburban fringe church, The migrant church, and The nonchurch church. After exploring such issues as the rural church's wounded personality, finances, worship, and pastor, Hunter offers a design for growth. At a time when Leith Anderson has written off the rural church, Hunter offers hope for the future.

Hunter's design for growth includes discovering the rural church's purpose, visionary pastoral leadership, and the development of an attitudinal change among the members. The last element is not a small matter. Hunter identifies six steps that can help the attitudinal change occur: the use of an outside expert, the development of a philosophy of ministry, analysis of the church and its community, cognitive and affective learning, exposing church leaders to good models in other churches, and creating self-fulfilling prophecies that members could recognize.

This book uses a narrative case study approach to identify issues. It has a readable style easily appropriated by church members. It could be used in a seminary class or as a catalytic resource in a rural church with the leadership. It would be a good resource for denominational consulting with rural churches.

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How Will They Hear If We Don't Listen: The Vital Role of Listening in Preaching and Personal Evangelism.

By Ronald W. Johnson. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994. Pp. 194.

This book represents the first serious attempt to develop a witnessing philosophy for a postmodern age. It goes beyond merely relational evangelism which tends to (1) relate to people but never talk about Jesus, or (2) relate to people in order to make a traditional presentation about Jesus. Jesus presents a model for dialogical evangelism. Evangelism involves more than the transmission of information; it involves communication. In a society that has less and less connection with churches, Christians can no longer operate out of the enormous cultural assumptions upon which most formal presentations of the gospel are based.

Johnson develops his model out of the firm conviction that everyone needs to hear the gospel. He also operates out of a historical, orthodox Christian theology. He insists, however, that a cookie cutter, one-size-fits-all approach to the gospel does injury to the profound truth of the gospel and ignores the fundamental issues which the gospel addresses. The cultural fact is that most non-Christians do not have the background to even understand the terminology. Johnson observes, "Even the phrases we use, 'accept Jesus Christ as personal Savior,' 'ask Jesus into your heart,' 'invite Christ into your life,' or 'make a decision' are terms that are foreign to many people" (p. 47).

Johnson believe the way out of the cultural impasse is through learning the arts of listening and conversation. In his chapter on "Listening with Both Ears," Johnson lays out an overview of the dynamics of listening and offers ten practical steps to practice to improve listening skills. Jesus demonstrated the art of listening in his important encounters with people like the Woman at the Well, the Woman Taken in Adultery, and Nicodemus. Those encounters represented entirely different "presentations" of truth which emerged from what people said or the situation in which things transpired. Jesus could present as much truth with a question as he could with a statement.

Johnson draws an important distinction between dialogue and monologue. The traditional form of witnessing involves a monologue presentation that often sounds more like a lecture. Johnson suggests that the dialogue approach provides that greatest intentional openness to cooperation with the Holy Spirit. This approach recognizes that God wants to do something through the witness as well as in the life of the non-Christian during the witnessing experience. The Christian has less obvious control in a situation like this, but it seemed to work well for 1800 years before American Christianity developed ways to make witnessing "more efficient." Johnson believes that this approach allows a Christian to listen for what a person does not say as much as for what they do say. It allows a Christian to "cut through the fog" of different belief systems and cultural assumptions.

Johnson writes from his experience on the staff of the Evangelism Section of the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, as Director of Evangelism for the Georgia Baptist Convention, and as Professor of Evangelism at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and the McAfee School of Theology of Mercer University. This book has proven to be a helpful text for seminary students.

Harry L. Poe

Vision Bearers: Dynamic Evangelism in the 21st Century.

By Richard Kew and Cyril Okorochoa. Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Morehouse Publishing, 1996. Pp. 147.

Suffering on many fronts from membership decline and loss of spiritual vitality, the Anglican Communion, along with many other denominational families, committed itself late in the 1980s to a "Decade of Evangelism." The goal was to recapture a vision and a passion for this primary task of the church before entering the new millennium. Mid-way through the decade the Global Conference for Dynamic Evangelism Beyond the Year 2000 (G-CODE 2000) was held in North Carolina. Delegates from 54 countries gathered and shared their stories. The Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey, participated fully in the conference and contributes the Foreword to this record of the work of the Holy Spirit around the world.

The authors, Richard Kew—Coordinator of the Russian Ministry Network in the Episcopal Church, and Cyril Okorochoa—Director of Mission and Evangelism for the Anglican Consultative Council, are active priests, evangelists, authors, and lecturers. Their text focuses on the critical difference that is made when bishops and others lead the way as champions of evangelism—becoming vision bearers. "People follow and the whole church is mobilized."

This wonderfully inspiring little book no doubt will be ignored by most Christians outside of the Anglican Communion—and perhaps by most inside—but it deserves our attention. In a day when many denominational families are struggling with the same problems, we need to be reminded of the difference it makes when men and women full of the Holy Spirit lead forth boldly in witness to the risen and reigning Christ. The need for such vision bearers is always urgent, and especially so as enter an era when multitudes surround us as sheep without a shepherd.

The authors are well read in the fields that inform their reflections on the world wide evangelistic task. Names familiar—Diogenes Allen, Leslie Newbiggin, David Barrett, John Naisbitt, Alister McGrath, Michael Green, Peter Wagner, David Watson, Robert Wuthnow, Lamin Sanneh, Loren Mead, George Barna, Raymond Fung, John Wesley—and names unfamiliar fill the pages with illustrations of how contemporary theory and theology are wed with courageous dreams and visions. Each of the eleven chapters concludes with a fine collection of points made—"What we have said"—and questions raised for discussion—"Thinking it over." The endnotes are rich with both references and expanded discussion of ideas and programs.

The text would serve well as an up to date survey of what is happening in holistic mission and evangelism around the world—Africa, Asia, Latin America, Europe, North America, Australia,

Middle East—and a reminder of our common ground, regardless of denominational heritage, as we face the challenges of the new century. The authors repeatedly demonstrate that “growing churches are led by vision bearers rather than problem solvers.” And they raise important questions regarding the approach to theological education needed for the world pastors, evangelists, and missionaries face today. “Are yesterday’s methods going to raise up and deploy imaginative visionaries, whose churches are moving forward in the power of the Spirit?”

There is both a spiritual depth and a holistic approach to the evangelistic task that give credibility and energy to this book. The reader can’t help but identify with and be challenged by the stories of courage, dedication, and transformed lives drawn from West Malaysia, Tanzania, Nigeria, New Zealand, Sudan, Borneo, Singapore, Myanmar, New Mexico, South Carolina, Connecticut, Fiji, Uganda, Mozambique, Argentina, Chile, Honduras, Peru, etc. Along with reporting on the success of such new gifts to the church as the “Jesus” film and the Alpha Course from Holy Trinity Church on London’s Brompton Road, the authors remind us that the Christian church has always been just one generation from extinction. Likewise, they acknowledge that in many places profound renewal is the only hope—but hopeful they are. And their effort to document the move of God’s Spirit and the power of the gospel in every corner of the world stirs in even a cold academic’s heart the reason we all first responded to the call to follow Christ and join in the “great adventure of making Christ known to the ends of the earth.”

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A Future for Truth: Evangelical Theology in a Postmodern World
By Henry H. Knight III. Nashville: Abingdon, 1997. Pp. 253.

Modernity gave scholars a plethora of subjects to discuss with the church and with each other as they debated evangelical theology. Volumes poured off the presses. By the closing days of modernity it seemed that most evangelical theologies were nothing more than a rewriting of previous arguments. For the most part, books offered on the subject of evangelism had been reduced to little more than rationalistic methodologies. Then came a shift in world view. Postmodernism, with all its uncertainty and fragmentation, brought a strange wind blowing across the theological landscape. That wind has stirred the thinking of many serious theological scholars like Hal Knight.

Henry (Hal) Knight has taken the issue of postmodernity seriously in terms of the challenge now offered to Christians who care about sharing their faith in the postmodern world. He has paid careful attention to the kind of wind that is blowing across the theological landscape neither dismissing it nor embracing it. He chooses rather to listen to the concerns of the postmodern world and to offer some constructive ways to engage it as an evangelical.

Knight's book begins with a tracing of the family roots of evangelicalism. He looks at its unity, diversity, and tensions within the evangelical movement thus setting the stage for the weighty discussions of modernity and postmodernity's impact upon evangelical thought.

Chapter Two helps to remind readers of modernity's impact upon the search for truth. Knight calls attention to the major scholars who shaped modernity's view of the truth. He points out that modern evangelicals sought to base theology on revelation and scripture but argued their case on terms set by Enlightenment modernity. His reminders set the stage for Chapter Three's discussion of the collapse of modern foundations and the challenges of postmodernism. Again, Knight uses a plethora of scholars to buttress his observations. His discussion of the suspicion of meta-narratives or the Ultra Critical Approach led by Derrida, Foucault, and others is contrasted with the Post-Critical Approach or the critique of criticism led by Wittgenstein, MacIntyre, and Polanyi. What makes this discussion helpful is Knight's summation regarding postmodernism's challenge. He suggests that we must listen with care to the concerns that motivate postmodern thought and utilize postmodern resources when they enable us to more faithfully and effectively understand and communicate revelation. These observations lead Knight to the final section of the book in which he sets forth a postmodern theology for evangelicals.

Chapter Four knits together Knight's earlier discussion of the shift from modernity to postmodernity to his later discussion of a proper theology for postmoderns. Chapter Four concentrates on the issue of the resurrection which as a truth claim he finds eminently personal. It is not that the issues around Jesus are true, but that Jesus *is* the truth that makes all other discussions vital.

Chapters Five and Six contrast one another. Chapter Five probes the inadequacies of propositionalism while discussing the truth of Jesus. Chapter Six offers to postmoderns the more hopeful promise of narrative in discussing the truth of Jesus. But it is Chapter Seven that helps to put it all into perspective as Knight explains the importance of context in discussing truth in Jesus. His treatment of cultural issues is most helpful. He adequately identifies the issues of a proper contextualization of the gospel so necessary in a postmodern culture.

The final three chapters focus on the Love of God, the Power of God, and the People of God. In these chapters Knight

tries to characterize the truth of the gospel in ways that fulfill what Lesslie Newbigin has said, "the only hermeneutic of the gospel is a congregation of men and women who believe it and live by it." He admits that such communities will not be free of ambiguity nor immune from conflict, but they will manifest the truth that the Jesus who was crucified is risen from the dead. What it means to say Jesus is Savior and Lord in the varied contexts and situations of life, for Knight, may help postmodern people be persuaded that He can be their Savior and Lord as well.

One of the most helpful portions of the book can be found in the selected bibliography of evangelical theologians. It is a repository of leading scholars grouped by their tradition and is helpful when doing further research into evangelical thought. The book is full of copious notes that makes the researcher's heart glad.

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Generating Hope.

By Jimmy Long. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997. Pp. 235.

Generating Hope is a study of how the church can reach the present generation, often referred to as the X Generation. It is the product of Jimmy Long's research done during his doctor of ministry studies at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. The motivation for this research grew out of twenty years of campus ministry and a joint consultation and evangelism seminar cosponsored by InterVarsity Christian Fellowship and Leighton Ford Ministries in 1993 and 1994.

In his introduction Long outlines the threefold purpose of his work as follows: (1) "To encourage the church to seriously consider the changes currently taking place in society by examining the connections between postmodernism and Generation X." (2) "To present a theological foundation advocating that community, shame and adoption, plus hope, are theological terms that speak to the postmodern era." (3) "To advocate a reconsideration of strategies for ministry in the postmodern era." (p.14). The subheadings of the major sections of the book further articulate this purpose: "A Sociological Analysis, A Theological Foundation, and A Framework for Ministry."

Sociologically, Long suggests five ways in which the contemporary church relates to culture and proposes the "influencing church" as the model which will be able to best reach the X Generation. He helps the reader understand the X Generation by describing the changes they embody and argues that these changes flow from the shift from Enlightenment to Postmodern thinking in

our society. He rejects the notion that changes in the new generation are just a reaction and correction of excesses in the previous Baby-Boom Generation.

Theologically, Long suggests that to reach the X Generation we must correct the theological influence of the Enlightenment that emphasized the self to the neglect of the community. Because many in this generation have experienced the breakdown of their families, they yearn for the sense of belonging "which Scripture recognizes as the foundation of all interrelationships" (p. 82). Being adopted by a loving Heavenly Father out of shame is suggested as a way to present the gospel to Xers that is both attractive to them and theologically sound. Long defines shame in this context as the "effect on self-worth or self-identity" (p.102) that humanity experiences as a result of the Fall. It is suggested that "our shame causes us to feel unworthy of God's presence" (p.103). The X generation feels unworthy of God's love because of the neglect and/or rejection they feel from their families and society as a whole.

Upon the basis of sociological and theological analysis, Long logically concludes that the best way to reach the X Generation is to provide an intimate community that offers hope and a sense of belonging. Long's insights into this generation, I believe, are very helpful. He has done a very thoughtful analysis that seeks to find sociological, philosophical, and theological reasons for change in our society which he has experienced in ministry. He concludes each chapter in his book with an "Implications for Ministry" section, so the book is not only a theoretical analysis, but also gives practical suggestions for ministry based on that analysis.

Long concludes that the "influencing church," who seeks to understand culture and then influence it, will be more effective in reaching the X Generation than the "battling church," who might be perceived as being an adversary to culture, fighting a "cultural war." This conclusion, although controversial, is persuasive and compelling. Long argues that because members of the X Generation have often felt personal rejection and neglect, they will tend to shy away from a church that they perceive as being rejecting or acting in a domineering manner. Thus it is very important that the church presents itself as an inclusive community of grace with its arms wide open to all.

Church leaders and seminary classes on evangelism will probably find this book provocative, stimulating, and helpful. I suspect, however, that individuals from the Baby-Boom Generation might appreciate this book more, than those who are a part of the X Generation. The author of this book is a Baby-Boomer who has done an excellent job of analyzing the X Generation and explaining why they approach life as they do. Students, who are a part of the X Generation, however, often resent being analyzed and scrutinized, especially by those outside their generation. These students might prefer the descriptive style of Kevin Ford's *Jesus for*

a *New Generation*, which is written by someone from their own generation.

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Make Room for the Boom... or Bust: Six Models for Reaching Three Generations.

By Gary L. McIntosh. Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, 1997. Pp. 189.

In very practical ways, Gary McIntosh sets forth essentially what his book's subtitle suggests: "six models for reaching three generations" with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Building upon his findings addressed in a previous book (*Three Generations: Riding the Waves of Change in Your Church*, Fleming H. Revell, 1995), he moves past much current two-dimensional discussion of "traditional" versus "contemporary" ministry styles and articulately argues that the latter can refer to at least six very *differing* models of ministry. His basic contention is that effective evangelism for churches today must take account of the very differing ways that Builders (those born prior to 1946), Boomers (those born between 1946-1964), and Busters (those born since 1965) relate to and interact with spirituality and "church." While he begins with concise descriptions of each of these three generations and their spiritual needs (complete with excellent comparison charts, graphs, etc.), anyone looking for an *in-depth* treatment of these needs to look elsewhere, as these descriptions are quite brief.

The majority of the book sets forth the characteristics and strengths of six models that McIntosh has uncovered in his own ministry experience, as well as cautions to consider in the use of each one. These six are: (1) the Seeker-Centered model, in which ministry is focused primarily upon the needs of pre-Christians (e.g., "unchurched non-Christians"); (2) the Seeker-Sensitive model, in which ministry is focused primarily upon Christians, but with a keen awareness of ministry with pre-Christians; (3) the Blended model, in which traditional and seeker-oriented styles are combined *within a single worship setting*; (4) the Multi-Track model, in which a variety of styles are attempted by the same congregation, but at differing *times*; (5) the Satellite model, which accomplishes the same as #4, but at differing *locations*; and (6) the Rebirthed model, in which a congregation utilizing one ministry style is closed completely and restarted again with a new one.

Following the description chapter for each model is a second chapter describing a "real-life" example of that model "in action." I

found this especially helpful in seeing how each "theoretical" model might look *in practice*. Furthermore, as a pastor of evangelism myself of a church currently experimenting with various "contemporary" ministry styles to more effectively reach our community (we currently utilize a "Multi-Track" model), I can attest to the essential accuracy of how at least some of these models can and do effectively reach younger generations with the gospel message.

Still, in at least a certain sense, the title of the book is a bit misleading, in that the six models discussed do not focus equally upon ways to reach the three generations set forth. As McIntosh rightly notes, "most existing churches in the United States were established to evangelize, assimilate, and disciple the Builder generation" (p. 16). Consequently, the focus of this book is not upon ways to reach Builders, but upon *new* styles and models that reach Boomers and Busters -- in my opinion, the book could more properly be subtitled "Six Models for Reaching *Two* Generations (Boomers and Busters) Without Forgetting the Needs of a Third (Builders)."

Furthermore, since McIntosh does not connect any of the six models to any specific generation, the impression is given (intentional or not) that any of these models will reach Boomers and Busters with *equal* effectiveness -- an assumption which may or may not be accurate, since one cannot necessarily presume that *everything* effective in reaching Boomers will also be effective in reaching Busters. Such a caveat -- found in several of McIntosh's previous books -- would be helpful here, as well. In addition, the relationship between these models and the upcoming young adult generation *following* the Busters (those born since 1982, variously termed as "Millennials" or "Generation Y") is not addressed at all. Again, while these six can certainly provide a framework for evangelism with Millennials, it may be too sweeping to assume that what reached their Boomer parents and their older Buster siblings will reach them, as well.

Overall, while the content itself is not academically deep, *Make Room for the Boom... or Bust* nevertheless provides invaluable practical materials for ministry with and among generations born after 1946. As such, it will prove most helpful to pastors and leadership of churches interested in how to more effectively reach these generations, as well as to denominational agencies and other ministries geared towards church planting and church development or redevelopment.

Brian E. Germano

C. S. Lewis: Lightbearer in the Shadowlands (The Evangelistic Vision of C. S. Lewis).

Edited by Angus J. L. Menuge. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1997. 399 Pp.

The Pilgrim's Guide: C. S. Lewis and the Art of Witness.

Edited by David Mills. Grand Rapids: Eerdmanns, 1998. 297 Pp.

The year 1998 marked the centenary of the birth of C. S. Lewis. Lewis stands alone on the landscape of twentieth century Christianity. He may not have been the greatest, most influential, most brilliant, or most Christ-like of twentieth century Christians, but he certainly stands out from the rest. He was an unlikely man to have had such a broad influence that seems to grow rather than diminish nearly forty years after his death. Some would say he led a dull life. Critics (and friends) said his fiction was ordinary and his apologetics were nothing new. Yet, he had the genius to communicate with people that resulted in enormous numbers of them converting to faith in Jesus Christ.

Two important new books explore the contribution of C. S. Lewis to evangelism. It is striking that these two edited collections of essays explore Lewis as witness and evangelist when his work could be explored from other perspectives, including his dreaded "personal heresy." Both of these books explore the effectiveness of Lewis as a witness to Jesus Christ.

Angus J. L. Menuge, assistant professor of science and philosophy at Concordia University in Wisconsin, has divided *C. S. Lewis: Lightbearer in the Shadowlands* into four parts. Part one, *The Motivation: The Influence and Potential of Lewis's Evangelism*, explores Lewis's influence in the past and present, as well as a suggestion of why he has the potential to speak powerfully to future generations. Part Two, *The Explanation: Why Was Lewis Such an Effective Evangelist*, explores why Lewis spoke so effectively to *tous exo* [those outside]. Part Three, *The Technique: Making Christianity Plausible*, explores the strategy Lewis developed for making a reasonable case for Christianity without the traditional methods of overt evangelism. Part Four, *The Argument: Defending the Faith*, explores the primary philosophical arguments Lewis used for faith.

David Mills, associate editor of *Touchstone: A Journal of Mere Christianity* and director of publishing at Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry, has organized his collection of essays under two headings, *The Character of the Witness* and *The Work of the Witness*. On the work of the witness, however, Mills identifies a further grouping. This section explores the sources of his thought, how he went about presenting Christian truth to those on the outside, and his response to the major alternative world views that challenged Christianity in the twentieth century. The appendix

includes an extensive (19 p.) time line of the life of Lewis in relationship to the Inklings and others, world history including letters, English history and letters, and science and technology. The appendix also includes a valuable annotated bibliography of the major works about Lewis, including new resources on the world wide web.

For those who teach evangelism on the edge of the twenty first century, a few selections from the books will help to illustrate their practical value. An essay in Mills' book by Michael MacDonald and Mark Shea contains these thoughts:

Many evangelists in the modern world begin, thought Lewis, in the wrong place. They begin with the offer of grace and forgiveness in Christ. However, this call to repentance and forgiveness necessarily presupposes that their hearers have a consciousness of sin, the very thing to which countless English people in his day and even more Americans in our day are oblivious. Thus he believed that it was, as it were, essential to address the problem, "If Jesus is the Answer. what is the question?" (pp. 43-44).

In the book edited by Menuge, Reed Jolley writes:

If we desire to reach Generation X for Jesus, it will not be through a modem. E-mail will make few disciples of Jesus Christ. Only a more personal model will suffice. In spite of our busy lives, we have something to learn from the C. S. Lewis who didn't quite fit into the twentieth century, the Lewis who personally answered every letter he received, the Lewis who served Mrs. Moore from their first meeting in 1917 until her death in 1951, the Lewis who found time for evangelistic crusades and wartime preaching to the RAF. Xers who yearn for human relationships in the wake of their parents' divorce would appreciate Lewis's rhetorical question to Dom Bede Griffiths: "Is any pleasure on earth as great as a circle of Christian friends by a good fire?" We can almost hear them asking, "Is there a place by that fire for me?" (95-96)

Both volumes contain thought provoking passages for anyone seriously interested in effective evangelism.

Harry L. Poe

The C. S. Lewis Index: A Comprehensive Guide to Lewis's Writings and Ideas

Compiled by Janine Goffar. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1995. 678 Pp.

Simply C. S. Lewis: A Beginner's Guide to His Life and Works.

Thomas C. Peters. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1997. 270 Pp.

Here are two important reference works for those interested in studying C. S. Lewis. The Index is a list of topics arranged alphabetically, referencing passages in Lewis's writings where he discusses various theological ideas. It is useful not only for researching his thought but also for finding half-remembered statements one wishes to cite. The Guide is indeed for beginners. After three opening chapters, there are six chapters which introduce the reader to categories of Lewis's writings. The final chapter suggests the implications of Lewis for the next century.

Henry H. Knight III

The Gospel and Its Meaning: A Theology for Evangelism and Church Growth.

By Harry L. Poe. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996. Pp. 334.

Harry Poe has accomplished a formidable task. Although no single or simplistic gospel formula exists in the New Testament, a consistent pattern emerges from both the proclamation and teaching concerning the gospel. Thus, Poe's thesis proposes that "different elements of the gospel speak to different levels of spiritual concern in different cultures at different times." To support this premise of substantial diversity, Poe lays a foundation for his approach by first offering a complete historical review of the theological debate concerning the core elements of the gospel. Arguing that the good news requires both *kerygma* and *didache*, he devotes a complete chapter to each of the nine aspects seen as essential to the historical *kerygma*. A comprehensive biblical theology (complete with hundreds of scripture citations and index) is synthesized with a thorough "theological treatment in historical prospective." Thus providing a biblical, historical, and theological foundation for each of these gospel elements, Poe then moves this dialogue toward the practical component by addressing the implications of his observations for evangelism.

While Poe, in a very concise and penetrating Epilogue, is concerned about scholarly reaction to his reducing "extremely complex dynamics" to "rather simple narratives," I found this to be

one of the core strengths of the book. Without being overly simplistic, he is able to pinpoint the key issues of the theological debate, succinctly explain the historical context (complete with names and dates), and refine the arguments to their most salient concerns based on his schema for the *kerygma*. From there, the author most effectively bridges the gap between these past traditions and their contemporary applications, relating the immutable truths of the gospel to genuine human needs specifically expressed in both religious and cultural contexts. Moreover, as a practicing "equipping evangelist" from a Pentecostal faith orientation I am mostly in agreement with the author's Southern Baptist, evangelical interpretations and applications. His extensive understanding of the historical development of the nine theological elements addressed and his ability to communicate it cogently discloses an exceptional command of historical theology.

The style is engaging, the arrangement of chapters consistent, and the scripture and subject indexes extensive, making this work an excellent library resource. My complaint with the book, however, is that it attempts too much, not too little. By committing the self-confessed sin of "crossing disciplines," Poe's ambition presumably exceeded his space limitations. The result is that some of the treatments, especially in the area of the implications for evangelism, seem somewhat superficial. But how can one attempt in a single book to address all cultures and all religions, with all the manifold ramifications of the gospel? This dilemma, in fact, helps to demonstrate Poe's thesis concerning the diverse nature of the gospel. The problem is not a lack of insight on the author's part, but the very nature of such a gargantuan task.

Additionally, the scripture citations, while helpful evidence of copious research, are so ubiquitous that they inevitably make for cumbersome reading. I also found the end of the subtitle a misnomer. Unless Poe equates evangelism with church growth (which some errantly do), advocates of the church growth discipline might be disappointed. In this volume they will find a rich store of theological wisdom for proclaiming the gospel message to particular cultures, but little that addresses specific methodologies for churches seeking to enhance growth.

Nevertheless, as a student of Practical Theology, I found Poe's book to be a meaningful resource which provides a substantial biblical foundation for a discussion of the gospel, a keen understanding of its implications for conversion, a thorough overview of the historical development of key doctrines in the church, and abundant provocative assertions for its application in reaching unbelievers with the good news. Pastors, students, and teachers of evangelism should all find the book accessible and ample for use in preparing Bible studies, understanding theology from a historical perspective, and enlivening the discussion of how the gospel can be shared with many diverse groups.

Poe is right. The gospel, and its implications for evangelism, are so diverse in meaning and application that it respectfully deserves the kind of comprehensive and reverent treatment he gives it in this scholarly yet reader-friendly book.

Brian M. Kelly, has been an "equipping" evangelist for over 14 years and has received a Ph.D. in Practical Theology from Fuller Theological Seminary.

Evangelism in Everyday Life: Sharing and Shaping Your Faith.

By Lyle Pointer and Jim Dorsey. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1998. 135 Pp.

Books on personal evangelism tend to be of two kinds. They either focus on the mechanics and presentational dimension of witnessing, or they focus on the process and the relational dimension of witnessing. Though both types of book will usually make appropriate reference to the other, few people who write such books are wired in such a way that they are skilled in both dimensions. This book represents a "third way" because of the way Lyle Pointer and Jim Dorsey have approached it. Pointer and Dorsey have written different chapters, and they have identified themselves at the beginning of each chapter.

Lyle Pointer, former pastor and present professor of practices at Southern Nazarene University, deals with the more analytical, cognitive, and methodological dimensions of witnessing one would normally expect in a book on presentational witnessing. Jim Dorsey, pastor and church planting coordinator, deals with the more subjective, personal growth, introspective dimensions of witnessing one would normally expect in a book on relational witnessing. Pointer's chapters include such topics as, "Where Is God in the Work of Evangelism?", "How to Get Started Talking about God," "How Do We Pray for Someone?", "How Should I Approach People?", "What Am I to Say When There Are Lots of Ways to God?", and "Welcoming Newcomers into Fellowship." Dorsey's chapters address such topics as, "Do Unchurched People Want to Talk about God?", "God's Been Talking to Me About Witnessing," "I've Prayed - Now What?", "Who Should I Talk To?", "How Do I Become a Spiritual Advisor?", "Who's Going to Help Me with My Family?", "Shouldn't the Church Be Doing Something Different?", and "How Is Faith Formed in Us?"

The book includes several intriguing chapters, including one on family relationships. Family members represent, perhaps, the most difficult group to evangelize. The book is written in a style that would be readily accessible to the lay audience or as a text in a

personal evangelism class. The material could easily be adapted to a class in a church.

Harry L. Poe

Where the Nations Meet: The Church in a Multicultural World

By Stephen A. Rhodes. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998. Pp. 240.

Migration of peoples around the world is a growing phenomenon. It is happening due to both positive and painful reasons. The urban centers are experiencing mushrooming growth in diversity with ethnic, cultural and linguistic plurality. Culmore United Methodist Church in Falls Church, Virginia reflects such a diversity since it embraced multiculturalism 20 years ago.

This book is the product of the author's seven years of ministry in this invigorating church, a year of sabbatical interacting with numerous pastors of 14 other multicultural or ethnic congregations across the nation and a couple of years of writing in the midst of pastoral duties. Stephen A. Rhodes presents a convincing invitation to intentionally embrace the diversity of God's people from many nations and make multicultural congregations work under the Lordship of Christ.

Rhodes is convinced that the post-modern world has created a new opportunity for the church to engage the culture. The ideal plausibility structures for the believability of the Gospel are multicultural churches. What would impress even a casual reader are the biblical and theological underpinnings Rhodes provides to emphasize that the multicultural church is the normative model for a postmodern world.

Where the Nations Meet unevenly divides into three sections. In section one (chapters one through four) Rhodes develops a trinitarian ecclesiology of the multicultural church. This is followed by section two (chapters five through eleven) which focuses on the ministry-related issues in such a congregation. The concluding chapter is rather brief and it constitutes section three which "presents the eschatology of hope that the multicultural church embodies" (p. 20).

The material in each chapter is well-organized. Below each chapter title, a principle for a multicultural church is boldly stated followed by a supporting biblical text. Throughout the book, the works of Walter Brueggemann, Stanley Hauerwas, Lesslie Newbigin and William Willimon are profusely quoted. Moreover, the breadth and depth of research reflected in the Notes and Bibliography are commendable. Well-prepared subject and scripture reference indices add to the value of this paperback volume.

The author's lucid writing style brings much clarity and understanding of the relationships and distinctions between popularly used concepts in an increasingly multicultural world e.g. "diversity and pluralism", "pluralism and plurality", "segregation and desegregation", "unity and uniformity" etc.

In three chapters (two, three and six), Rhodes explores the role, significance and limits of culture and ethnicity in the Bible. Employing the perspectives drawn from Lesslie Newbigin, Willowbank Report of the Lausanne Committee and Thom Hopler, the author comes to five value-neutral conclusions about culture (p.114). Biblically speaking, there are some good and some bad aspects of culture. One can agree with Rhodes' affirmation that God values culture and has used culture for revealing His universal purposes. Rhodes calls us to adopt Newbigin's two conclusions about culture: "God accepts human culture" and "God judges human culture". Though the Christian Church embraces a variety of cultural traditions and encourages cross-cultural interaction, the Christian's full identity is discovered only as a child of God and the Christian's goal remains not cultural conformity but transformation into the likeness of Christ.

In chapter seven, Rhodes masterfully exegetes Leviticus 19 and demonstrates that Israel's quality of holiness is intrinsically related to the hospitality shown to the stranger(s) among them. Using Ephesians 2:19 to link holiness and hospitality, Rhodes contends that hospitality is the most important virtue for any church. Though everyone may not agree with that bold assertion, the warm hospitality described of Culmore United would tempt a visit from anyone in the nation's capital region.

It becomes unmistakably clear to any reader that the author writes from the crucible of cross-cultural ministry. Rhodes has woven throughout the book actual stories and experiences of several immigrants from various nations to illustrate his points. He even addresses the challenges and the stages of cultural assimilation of Generations 1, 1.5, 2 and 3 in chapters 10 and 11 and provides solutions from passages like Psalm 137 and Daniel 1.

Where the Nations Meet is worthy of serious consideration by every student preparing for ministry. Being biblically sound, theologically engaging and pastorally sensitive, it provides practitioners the missiological template for "doing church" in a postmodern and multicultural world.

T.V. Thomas

Conserve the Converts: A Manual to Help Conserve the Results of Personal and Mass Evangelism.

By Charles "Chic" Shaver. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1998. 104 Pp.

The sub-title of this book reflects Chic Shaver's concern in writing it: "A Manual to Help Conserve the Results of Personal and Mass Evangelism." The book gives practical steps a pastor can take to foster spiritual growth and incorporation into a church. Shaver writes from a background as a pastor, vocational evangelist, and professor of evangelism at Nazarene Theological Seminary in Kansas City.

Shaver uses case studies to explore the many issues related to conservation of converts which he addresses. The book features a Bible study plan to use with new Christians, a number of administrative forms and products to organize and facilitate the work, and practical suggestions for each step of the way in follow-up. This book is designed to be used with Shaver's study book, *Basic Bible Studies for New/Growing Christians* from Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City.

This book was first issued in 1976. Its reissue reflects the continuing need for helpful resources like this one in the local church. Despite the book's age, it contains valuable insight and guidance for a new generation of pastors. Shaver has identified the basic issues in an American context and offered a logical, easily transferable plan which pastors can use to fit their own situation. It is ideal for use by a pastor or as a resources in a seminary class.

Harry L. Poe

Searching for Seekers: Ministry with a New Generation of the Unchurched.

By Mary J. Scifres. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998. Pp. 177.

Like other successful pastor/writers, Mary J. Scifres offers this timely text for reaching the Next Generation of the unchurched out of her own yearning to welcome many of her friends into the fellowship of Christ's church. Scifres has written extensively in the area of worship, and currently serves as pastor of Fircrest United Methodist Church in the Seattle-Tacoma area.

Her own experience indicates that many of today's "unchurched" young adults are in reality "religious," "seekers," and "previously churched." The problem many of them face regarding church participation is identifying with those who seem to hide from the great questions of life and who emphasize a "quick fix" and "right answers" rather than an honest journey of faith. The solution is to offer such seekers a safe place for asking questions and

exploring doubts. This requires authenticity and integrity on the part of Christian communities, as well as a deep commitment to the belief that God is able to encounter seekers and followers alike. The natural place for such encounters is in the worship life of the church.

The book is a refreshing combination of theory, theology, and practical suggestions for worship design. The theory is drawn from generational studies. The theology is a unique combination of liberal-evangelicalism aimed primarily at mainline churches. The practical suggestions emerge from actual congregational experience and range from what an "Investigating Team" must do for successful planning to what goes in the bulletin. Through it all, the author's passion for shaping worship services that allow the Spirit of Christ to touch the lives of both seekers and followers is present on every page.

One new and very helpful offering to the now well-worn "Seeker" material is the realization that not all seekers are cut from the same cloth. Scifres identifies four groups--Unchurched Seekers, Anti-Church Seekers, Sunday School Seekers, and Converted Seekers--each requiring a different set of strategies and approaches in order to make them feel welcomed and wanted. In Chapter 3 separate designs for worship--including sample bulletins, timing, job descriptions for the worship team, guidelines for sacraments, and outlines of the entire flow of the services--are offered for each group.

Chapter 4 presents guidelines for weaving together the newest tools of media technology and the oldest tools of prayer, music, and symbols. Chapter 5 illustrates how the biblical text (usually from the lectionary), secular stories, and narrative preaching can combine to convey relevant and profound opportunities to invite seekers to "join us on the journey." One approach actually includes opportunities at the end of the message for questions and answers using note cards gathered during the service. Chapter 6 serves as a reminder that it takes a team to "go ye into all the world," and clarifies several steps needed to bring all members of the team on board.

Notes are provided at the end of each chapter. One appendix summarizes the basic themes of the seeker services and a second contains the text of a dramatic dialogue of "Turning to Christ" based on the healing recorded in Mark 5:25-34.

For pastors, seminary students, and interested lay people this book offers a very practical approach to enabling a congregation to "Search for Seekers" through intentional transformation of traditional worship services into good news events for all of God's children who seek to know the truth that sets us free.

I liked it.

Ronald K. Crandall

Compassionate Ministry: Theological Foundations

By Bryan P. Stone. Maryknoll: Orbis Press, 1996. Pp. 168.

Bryan Stone's marvelous book begins with a simple story to highlight both his critique of how ministry in the church today is done and his proposal for its renewal, the story of Jonah and the worm. As Stone interprets the biblical story, we catch a glimpse of both the tone and the direction for what he will name in the final chapter, compassionate evangelism.

Jonah, however, was far from pleased with the results of his ministry among the Ninevites and went off to the suburbs to pout. He had secretly hoped that Ninevah would disregard his message and that God would go ahead and zap a few of those godless foreigners! In fact, Jonah admitted that this was why he didn't want to go to Ninevah in the first place. He knew that God was a 'gracious and compassionate God' who was 'slow to anger and abundant in loving-kindness.' Jonah was a persuasive evangelist with effective preaching and revival skills, but he felt nothing for the people themselves. Jonah practiced what we might call *oppressive evangelism*. (p. x)

Compassionate ministry is, for Stone, not another ministry fad in the church. It is rather an insight into God's very nature. God is fundamentally compassionate. There should be, consequently, a link between God's compassion, on the one hand, and the kind of ministry to which God calls the church, on the other. Compassionate ministry is not, therefore, just one type of ministry alongside others. It is the first and last word in any ministry that understands itself as an authentic response to a compassionate God. This response leads naturally for Stone to a call for compassionate evangelism, that is, a practice of evangelism that is a more holistic and historical approach than current practices in the church reflect. This chapter on evangelism is as blunt as it is insightful. Stone attacks what he sees as the prevailing evangelism consensus in North America. The entire event of salvation has been reduced to a single momentary decision and experience. The phrases used to describe it are basically dualistic, individualistic, private and other-worldly. The question surrounding evangelism is no longer about the content of Jesus' message. Nor is the most important question about the particular allegiances which participation in the God's kingdom demands. Instead, what finally and eternally matters is what anyone can do in a matter of seconds, namely getting saved and accepting Jesus as personal Savior. In short, Stone states that the prevailing practice of evangelism in North America today is inconsistent with compassionate ministry.

What is the alternative vision of evangelism? Stone sets out to describe the breadth and diversity of a more biblical understanding of evangelism. To accomplish this goal, Stone builds on a "action-reflection" model of ministry that is committed to the poor and suffering and draws out the dimensions of a humanizing ministry that participates in restoring the "image of God" in people. This image reflects the dimensions of freedom, humanity and community. Understanding God as all-compassionate, and Jesus as the compassion of God, this book provides a model of a compassionate church as a "liberating community." Compassionate evangelism proceeds from the Christian community as it provides a creative and liberating channel between the suffering of the world and our individual responses to that suffering.

One of Stone's primary goals is to get theology and ministry "on speaking terms." Mission accomplished! His book is a sharp critique on current evangelism programs and demands a response. One could easily use this book within an evangelism course as a counter-point to many "how to" evangelistic materials. Its deep theological tone would add a richness to the discussion on how to bring theory and practice, theology and ministry back together (although his discussion on how "justification by faith" plays a theological role in the liberating community could be strengthened). But whereas many "how to" books on evangelism are short on theology, Stone's theological book is short on practical issues. Each resource needs the other. In fact, that is Stone's central argument.

It has often been said that there is no true theology without practical engagement. Theology must both issue from engagement and lead back to a renewed engagement. Stone's book assists us in how to visualize this dialectic, and how it applies to evangelism within the Christian community. For those who want more out of an evangelism book than a "how to" recipe for programs, Stone's compassionate evangelism will be breath of fresh air.

Richard Bliese is Augustana Heritage Professor of Global Mission and Evangelism at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

They Walked in the Spirit: Personal Faith and Social Action in America.

By Douglas M. Strong. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997. Pp. xvii + 128.

A widely accepted thesis of Martin Marty among religious historians since the early 70s provides the launching pad for this unique book by Dr. Douglas Strong, Professor of History of Christianity at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington DC.

Marty suggests that since the late nineteenth century, a two-party system has existed within each of the major mainline Protestant denominations in America. One religious party is made up of the theological liberals who are "committed to the social gospel and concerned with the impact of religion in the public square" (p.ix). The other religious party consisting of theological conservatives is "concerned with private faith, individual morality, and personal evangelism" (p.ix). This is a book on life stories of individuals who had courageously bridged the chasm between the parties who "stress personal piety and those who stress social justice" (p.x).

In this volume, Professor Strong attempts to present a narrative history of religious biographies of eight individuals who had transcended the public/private split in American Protestantism and exemplified holistic spirituality over a span of 150 years. They include William Goodell (1792-1878), Julia A. J. Foote (1823-1900), William Seymour (1870-1922), Charles Stelzle (1869-1941), Vida Scudder (1802-1954), E. Stanley Jones (1884-1973), Clarence Jordan (1912-1969) and Orlando E. Costas (1942-1987).

To be representative of American culture, the author has produced an anthology that is broadly inclusive. Gender, economic backgrounds, ethnic heritage, denominational affiliation and theological persuasion were the major criteria in choosing the individuals. It was the author's expressed purpose to highlight the ones who are not been discussed frequently – the non-well-known heroes who have modelled "a holistic gospel within our culture" (p.xii). Both E. Stanley Jones and Orlando E. Costas do not exactly meet that criteria because their ministries and influences were far beyond the United States.

Each of the eight chapters provides a succinct biographical vignette of the theme of one person's ministry and its connections to the broader theological and social context. Each person's ministry is contained in the subtitle of each chapter e.g. Charles Stelzle (1869-1941) – The Presbyterian "Apostle of Labor": Promoting A Social Service Revival. Each chapter is equal in length but concludes with short excerpts from the person's larger writings reflecting his or her integration in holistic ministry. Such primary sources and detailed documentation in the footnotes of each chapter encourages further research and study.

The book's Introduction and the Conclusion are invaluable to anyone interested in American religious history. Dr. Strong gives a balanced and candid history of evangelical social concern in the United States during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In his concluding chapter, Strong extracts three common marks of these eight chosen heroes who understood the essential nature of contemplative life in the work of social justice: (1) experienced a biblically-grounded and Christ-centered spiritual regeneration which produced fervency in personal faith (p.121); (2) acquired a vision of mutual human inter-relatedness which overcame ethnocentric

parochialism and supported the common good of all (p.123); and (3) maintained a healthy critique of the prevailing culture and challenged the religious and secular institutional status quo (p.124).

The author has certainly accomplished his primary goals – exposing integrators of personal faith and social justice who do not fit into the historical and religious stereotypes, encouraging social activists and private pietists alike to pursue an integrated spirituality and invoking Christians of various faith traditions within American Protestantism to recognize each other's unsung heroes. This book both stimulates and rebukes readers like the present reviewer who yearns to embrace a more holistic spirituality.

T.V. Thomas

11 Genetic Gateways to Spiritual Awakening.

By Leonard Sweet. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998.

This is a book that is more than a book. It is the first book of its kind, one that is linked directly to a Web site.

Sweet writes about the core themes of the Wesleyan revival and succeeds in translating these themes into practical ways to revitalize mission and ministry for the contemporary church. Stressing the urgent need "To face the truth about where we are before we are to face the truth about where God wants us to be," Sweet unlocks the spiritual dynamic of Wesleyanism in order to orient the church to the future.

Besides providing us a series of net notes which are helpful for linking directly to the Web site, Sweet uses a question and answer format and discussion questions to involve the reader and encourage creative thinking. The book includes copious endnotes which are indeed highly useful references for further reading. The endnotes alone are worth the price of the book.

At a time such as ours, a transitional period when something seems to be dying and something else is struggling to be born, Leonard Sweet has made yet another significant contribution to our thinking. I highly recommend the book for both pastors and lay persons who care about revitalizing missions and ministry in the 21st century.

Roberto Escamilla is Associate Professor of Evangelism at Methodist Theological School in Ohio, Delaware, Ohio.

The New Apostolic Churches: Rediscovering the New Testament Model of Leadership and why it is God's Desire for the Church Today.

Edited by C. Peter Wagner. California: Regal Books, 1998. Pp. 288.

New churches are sprouting up today across the country. They are adopting new names, new methods and new worship expressions. These churches belong loosely to a movement that has been referred to as "the postdenominational churches." Peter Wagner calls these changing churches The New Apostolic Churches. Whereas many have declared traditional denominations dead, Wagner points to these new denominations that, like embryonic seeds planted to replace dying trees, are becoming a major part of the ecclesiastical landscape in North America. These new denominations are really movements or, to describe them in postmodern business terminology, they are like franchises. They are Willow Creek Associates, Calvary Chapels, Vineyard Fellowships and many others. These churches are about change. They claim that they are as committed to the fundamentals of the faith as past denominations. They are merely changing the methods of evangelism, worship, Bible study and leadership. More importantly, however, they are changing the very way in which "church" is understood and practiced.

The book begins with an initial essay by Wagner outlining the nature of these churches and why he characterizes them as both "new" and "apostolic." Together with the growth of American independent charismatic churches, Wagner identifies this cluster of new churches as a pattern much like the African Independent Churches, The Chinese House Churches, and the Latin American grassroots churches. The book proceeds by allowing the pastors (i.e. leaders, bishops, apostles) to tell their own stories. Each chapter is dedicated to a different church or association of churches both inside and outside North America. Nineteen chapters include: John P. Kelly, John Eckhardt, Bill Hybels, Larry Kreider, Wellington Boone, Roberts Liardon, Billy Joe Daugherty, Rice Boocks, David Kim, John Kelly, Bill Hamon, Dick Iverson, Paul Daniel, Eddie Villanueva, William Kumuyi, Joseph Wongsak, Ralph Moore, Michael Fletcher, Lawrence Khong.

What makes this book indispensable is that it introduces new congregations and movements to clergy and students from the "older denominations." Although many clergy and students don't know these congregations well now, they will. These churches are no longer candles hidden under bushes. This volume allows each church to introduce itself and its ministerial association. Unfortunately, Wagner gives us no critical angle to evaluate these churches. American churches, for example, have always been entrepreneurial. What makes Wagner think that these movements

will remain either effective or faithful or apostolic? But as an overview to the brave new world of independent churches, the work is invaluable.

Richard Bliese

ACADEMY FOR EVANGELISM IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Twenty Sixth Annual Meeting
Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry
Ambridge, Pennsylvania
October 8-10, 1998

MINUTES

Thursday, October 8, 1998

- 6:00 Supper with the members of the Academy and the Board of Trustees of Trinity Episcopal School of Ministry
- 7:30 Welcome by Dr. Peter Moore, Dean/President, Trinity Episcopal School of Ministry

Dr. Moore described the role and contribution of this Anglican evangelical seminary to the Anglican community and the broader church. Now twenty-two years old, this young school has grown to be the third largest of the eleven Episcopal seminaries in the United States. Its commitment to the orthodox faith coupled with a devotion to ministry continues to attract students.

Introduction of Speaker by Dr. Sam Wilson, President, Academy for Evangelism in Theological Education

"The Academy and Evangelism"

Dr. David Hester, former President, Academy for Evangelism and retired President, Memphis Theological Seminary

George Sweazey was the pre-eminent leader in evangelism in education in the United States in the early 1970's. Sweazey gathered with Robert Coleman, Lewis Drummond and several others to begin an Academy for their discipline in 1973. The date for the annual meeting was established for the benefit of Canadian professors around their Thanksgiving observance. The *Journal* of the Academy was established in 1985.

The academy serves three major functions: camaraderie, academic support, and the publication of the *Journal*.

"Renewal and Evangelism: The Episcopal Experience" Alden Hathaway, retired bishop

Hathaway presented a challenge for the development of a missions vision at TESM based on the missions heritage among Episcopalians. While he was growing up, missions was a part of the ethos of the church, but by the time he finished college, he realized that no one was encouraging missions involvement anymore. During his seminary training in the 1960's, 1) the authority of Scripture was qualified by form critical studies, 2) involvement in Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) created the impression that the real power of ministry lay in the psychological realm, and 3) the political activism of the campuses directed attention away from the spiritual toward the social. Missions came to be regarded as mutual relationship or partnership rather than going to preach the gospel.

During the 1960's, something else began to take place through the Charismatic Movement. People trained as evangelicals in England began to enter Episcopal life in the United States. John Guest had the leading influence beginning in 1971 when he became rector of the most prominent Episcopal church in suburban Pittsburgh. The Charismatic Renewal generated the energy of the soul and the Evangelical Renewal provided the mind. These two combined for a powerful influence.

The power structure of the denomination was largely liberal to radical, and the denomination was committed to a social agenda. In due course, Hathaway became bishop in Pittsburgh in 1985 following a conversion experience to faith in Christ after a period of despair in his parish. The national church was becoming more radical with relation to sexual issues.

Hathaway was appointed to the standing committee on evangelism. In 1988, the committee proposed that the decade of the 90's be dedicated to evangelism. The report was approved with a further elaboration in 1991, but nothing ever came from it at the national level. The conventions were pre-occupied with sexual issues, and the national church began to experience financial cuts. As a result, the national group began to scale back the foreign missions enterprise. At the same time, a number of mission societies began to appear.

Lambuth 1998 has spoken clearly and powerfully about the need for the gospel and the false direction of the sexual conversation in the United States. Yet, the Episcopal church in the United States does not have a vision for missions. Hathaway's last year as bishop included a change in the curriculum for seminary students that requires competency in missions.

8:30 Break

8:45 Free discussion time among the members in response to Bishop Hathaway's talk

9:30 Adjournment

Friday, October 9, 1998

8:30 Joint worship with the students and faculty of the Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry

9:15 Convening by Sam Wilson

9:20 **"Evangelism with a Postmodern Generation"** Todd Hahn

Hahn identifies Generation X and Millenials with "Postmodern People," but there are differences. Xers are more cynical and dark while Millenials are more happy-go-lucky. Xers were the latch-key kids while Millenials have experienced more nurture. They still represent the first two Postmodern Generations.

Evangelism with Postmodern people is a missionary enterprise. A variety of forms and methods are emerging rather than a single approach.

Immersion and identification - the ability to maneuver in a Postmodern environment with grace, and maybe even like the Postmodern culture with its paradoxes in order to contextualize the gospel.

Primacy of relationships - the loss of a metanarrative breeds alienation which screams for meaningful relationships and community which the gospel can supply.

Process of change - structures which allow for process will have more success than event evangelism.

Values - governing values that provide for integrity will be necessary: creation, covenant, and community.

Operational Values

Creation - presupposition of what kind of universe exists, what kind of God exists, and how people relate to these two.

Covenant - the honoring of personal relationships involving someone who will love me and not go away.

Community - Postmodern are often converted to community before conversion to Christ.

10:00 Response by Ron Crandall

10:20 Break

10:45 Period of Discussion with Todd Hahn

"Leadership Development and Discipleship with Postmodern People"

How do you disciple people who are not propositional and linear in their orientation? Postmodern people have a hunger to re-connect with the ancient spiritual disciplines like fasting which are more mystical and less linear. Relational investments rather than propositional instruction have a tremendous impact. This approach might be considered "re-parenting." The concept of "hope" is a particularly important issue. Leadership development takes place in the context of Narrative Discipleship in which people begin to see how their story fits into God's story. Several important principles are present in Leadership Development which rely upon Narrative Discipleship:

1. Flexibility
2. Process
3. Relationship
4. Coaching
5. Mentoring

11:30 **"The Contribution of Lausanne to World Evangelization"** Leighton Ford

The Lausanne Congress took place in 1974 with 2700 people in attendance. It was a time of the oil embargo, the

ending of the Vietnam conflict, great missions advance, and at the same time a moratorium on missions by the mainline churches. The leaders had vision and breadth: Billy Graham, Bishop Jack Dane, John Stott, Ralph Winter, René Padilla, Bill Bright, and Tom Zimmerman. The issues involved biblical authority, Holy Spirit, social responsibility, culture, unreached peoples, and cooperation. Outcomes included the cooperative "spirit" of world evangelization (the exiled Chinese groups met together), the Lausanne Covenant and working groups.

What would it look like today? Who would come? What would they look like? Who would be the leaders under 50? Where are the Billy Grahams and the John Stotts? What are the issues? What kind of process would emerge? What outcomes would we pray for?

12:00 Recess for lunch

2:00 **"Strategy and Evangelism in Pittsburgh"** - Reid Carpenter, Executive Director, Pittsburgh Leadership Foundation

Carpenter came to Pittsburgh in the 1960's and was influenced by Sam Shoemaker shortly before he retired. His ministry was rooted in the youth culture through Young Life. Shoemaker had a vision for Pittsburgh and used to say that he hoped one day Pittsburgh would be as famous for God as for steel. Shoemaker found Don James, a suicidal ex-marine, whom he led to faith. James became an Episcopal priest and took over the visionary leadership when Shoemaker died. James and Carpenter committed themselves to Pittsburgh and to each other for the rest of their lives. Their strategy involved a ministry to kids, following them into college, and mentoring them into business life, and these kids would change the city. Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry is one of the products of that vision. Eighty-seven Pittsburgh clergy are the product of this vision.

2:45 Break

3:00 **"Narrative Evangelism: A Story to Tell, A Journey to Make"** - Leighton Ford, author of *The Power of Story*

Ford explored the "good spel" which is as singular as Jesus, but as plural as there are people in the world. The deepest

longings of people are related to faith. The stories of people are related to their journeys, and the evangelist cannot tell a story of the gospel and invite someone to join the journey unless they are in the journey themselves. Only people travelling authentically on the journey can tell the story so compelling to others. This journey calls for an embodied apologetic so that people can see the "so what?" of faith.

4:30 BUSINESS SESSION

1. Financial Report - Ron Johnson
The *Journal* has initiated a policy of selling ads, but these will not begin until next year. We may need to consider raising the dues because fewer institutions are willing to pay the \$150 institutional dues. We have 108 libraries that subscribe to the *Journal*. If we move away from institutional dues, then membership dues will need an increase.

Motion by Ron Johnson - That the president send a letter to the President of the institutions with a copy to the members from the institution with a rationale for institutional membership. Second. Pass

Motion to receive treasurer's report as printed and kept in the records of the treasurer. Second. Pass

2. Ken Gill announced that the Billy Graham Center at Wheaton will publish the Directory of Schools and Professors of Missions and Evangelism. The Academy will be a sponsoring organization, and Bob Coleman has raised the money for the Academy's portion of support.
3. Ron Johnson asked that members notify the Academy of changes of addresses.
4. David Hester reported that the Lilly Foundation has turned down our request for a grant. Dr. Hester also reported that Lyle Schaller is recovering from a serious bout of kidney failure and resuming a busy schedule.
5. Motion to approve minutes of last year as printed in the *Journal*; by Roberto Escamilla. Second by John Nyquist. Pass

6. The secretary reported the new members of the Academy.
 1. Kenneth D. Gill - Wheaton College
 2. Sherron Kay George - Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary
 3. Richard Bliese - Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago
 4. Scott Jones - Perkins School of Theology
7. Hal Knight presented his first report as editor of the *Journal*. He asked for significant articles for consideration for inclusion in the *Journal*. Articles must be reviewed by the editorial board. The deadline for publication is May 15. The *Journal* also requires book reviews. These should also be sent to the editor.
8. Ron Crandall gave an overview of his new book based on a fifteen year study of how people became Christians. His database has over 10,000 people. His working title is *Carriers of the Good Infection*, but the current title is *The Contagious Witness*.
9. Robert Radcliff of Abingdon gave a brief overview of what Abingdon is doing and what they are looking for. We are in a neo-pagan North America and pastors are looking for help in how to reach the changing culture.
10. Adjourn

Friday Evening, October 9, 1998

- 6:30 Annual Banquet
Blessing - Roberto Escamilla
- 7:30 Presentation of The Charles Grandison Finney Award to Leighton Ford by Sam Wilson for his work with the Lausanne Committee and many other contributions to evangelism.
- 7:50 "**Sociological Gleanings for Evangelism**"- the annual address of the President of the Academy by Sam Wilson

Wilson suggested that too much stress on individualistic conversion reflects an influence of secular humanism and the stress on the individual. The evangelistic invitation often

appeals to humanistic values: choice, exchange, and learning.

8:35 Adjourn

Saturday, October 10, 1998

8:45 Morning Worship led by John Nyquist, Vice President of the Academy

9:30 **"Evangelism and Apologetics"** by David Mills author of *The Pilgrim's Guide: C.S. Lewis and the Art of Witness* and Director of Communications at Trinity Episcopal School of Ministry

Mills described the intellectual tradition of disbelief from Chesterton to the Postmodern scene. Some commentators suggest that the apologetics of C.S. Lewis are outdated in a Postmodern setting, but Mills argues that though Postmoderns do not have a single absolute, they do cling to multiple absolutes that are important to them. The "educated" unbeliever of today has much in common with the educated unbeliever of his day. Lewis wrote his formal apologetics for educated unbelievers who were actually asking questions. He wrote his fantasy for people who were not asking questions in order to help them begin to ask questions.

10:30 Break

10:45 Discussion with David Mills about Lewis and his writing.

11:30 BUSINESS SESSION

Future Meetings:

October 7-9, 1999 McAfee School of Theology
Mercer University
Atlanta, Georgia

October 5-7, 2000 Princeton Theological Seminary
Princeton, New Jersey

Book Reviews Hal Knight circulated the list of books to be reviewed for the *Journal* with the request that members sign up to review books.

Charles G. Finney Award Sam Wilson reminded members of the nomination process and accepted nominations.

Future Program Ideas Leonard Sweet

Terry Mattingly on the media
Walter Bruggeman
Include formal responses to major presentations
Model churches of renewal
Relation of evangelism to practical theology
Visit to local ministry/church/denominational office
The Alpha Course

12:00 Adjourn

Respectfully submitted,

Harry L. Poe
Secretary AETE

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