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**Journal of the Academy for Evangelism in  
Theological Education**

**Editor: Richard Stoll Armstrong**  
Princeton Theological Seminary  
CN 821  
Princeton, NJ 08542

**Book Review Editor: George R. Hunsberger**  
Western Theological Seminary  
86 E. 12th Street  
Holland, MI 49423

**Managing Editor: Marigene Chamberlain**  
P.O. Box 840  
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Richard Stoll Armstrong

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## Editorial Introduction

As the new editor of the *Journal* I should like to express on behalf of all my colleagues in the Academy for Evangelism our deep appreciation to the person whose vision and organizational ability were predominantly responsible for the creation of this publication, and whose editorial skills have brought it to its present level of journalistic excellence. A distinguished former president of the AETE and the *Journal's* first and, until now, only editor, David Watson deserves our admiration as well as our gratitude for his tremendous contribution to the Academy. We wish him Godspeed in his new position as Professor of Theology and Congregational Life and Mission at Wesley Theological Seminary, and we look forward to our continuing fellowship with David at our annual meetings. With heartfelt thanks for what he has meant to all of us, we dedicate this seventh edition of the *AETE Journal* to David Lowes Watson.

It has been the editorial policy of the *Journal* to publish some of the major addresses delivered at the annual meetings of the Academy. In keeping with that policy we are including as the opening article Dr. Malan Nel's keynote address at our 1991 meeting in Fresno. All of us who heard Dr. Nel's informative first-hand account of the situation in that beleaguered country were immensely impressed by what he had to say about the role of the churches and the task of evangelism in South Africa today.

Unfortunately we were unable to obtain a manuscript from our other South African guest at last year's meeting, the Rev. Elijah Maswanganyi, who spoke on the same theme from a black perspective. Mr. Maswanganyi called for the churches of South Africa to address the sin of *apartheid*, which he declared had been "constitutionalized and legalized as Group Selfishness." After listing the historical, political, economic, ideological, cultural, and other obstacles which will have to be overcome in the struggle to establish a non-racial, democratic society, Mr. Maswanganyi offered numerous suggestions regarding the role of the churches in the shaping of a new South Africa. For his impassioned presentation we were joined by the entire student body and faculty of Mennonite Brethren Theological Seminary, our host institution.

Deciding on a last-minute change in format for our closing session on Saturday night, I departed from my prepared address as the out-going president in order to provide an opportunity for personal reflection and sharing in small groups. The original address is included here, however, since it provides one more viewpoint on the major theme of the Fresno meeting, "The Role of the Church in the Shaping of a New South Africa."

Readers should be interested in the two articles dealing with the content of the gospel, Prof. Hans Kasdorf's paper entitled, "Imperatives of the Gospel in a World of Change: A Missiologist's Reflections," and the

article by Dr. Milton Rudnick, "Critical Gospel Issues Confronting Us." In his thought-provoking article Prof. Jerry Handspicker makes an intriguing case for a "Postliberal Apologetics," and Dr. Timothy Beougher's well-researched paper introduces us to the evangelistic thought and practice of the famous Reformed pastor, Richard Baxter.

Thanks to the dedicated labors of our Book Review Editor, Prof. George R. Hunsberger, and the submissions of our members and others, we are able to include in this issue of the *Journal* a helpful number of book reviews. This is a most important and much appreciated feature of the *Journal*. I hope our members will continue to respond positively to Dr. Hunsberger's requests for book reviews, and will also let us know of any books which they think should be reviewed in the interest of our AETE members and other *Journal* readers.

On a sad note, the *Journal* records the death in the past year of two highly revered colleagues, Dr. George E. Sweazey and Dr. David Bosch. Dr. Sweazey was one of the founders of the AETE and served as its first president, 1973-1975. In 1985 he became the first and until his death remained the only honorary Life Member of the Academy. The first edition of the *Journal* was dedicated to him. Prof. Bosch, a well-known and outspoken critic of *apartheid* and champion for justice in South Africa, appreciated receiving our *Journal*, and shortly before his death had arranged with David Watson for an exchange relationship with his own South African publication, *Missionalia*. We extend our sympathy to the families and friends of our two departed colleagues, but rejoice in the conviction that each has obtained his unfading crown of glory.

Richard Stoll Armstrong

## THE TASK OF EVANGELISM IN SOUTH AFRICA TODAY

Malan Nel

### Introduction

First of all, I should like to express my sincere appreciation for the invitation and privilege of presenting this paper on such a vital issue as the task of evangelism in South Africa. I consider this a great honor and wish to thank your president, Prof. Armstrong, and the executive committee for inviting me here.

What does it mean to do the work of evangelism in the post-*apartheid* "new South Africa"? In the first section of my paper I shall attempt to clarify the main concepts in my theme. These are (1) the implied agent of evangelism, namely the Church, (2) the task of evangelism, and (3) South Africa today.<sup>1</sup> In the second section of my paper I want to consider what churches, and more specifically the Dutch Reformed Church, are doing. I shall also touch on the viewpoints of a few prominent church leaders in the Republic of South Africa. Finally, I shall try to point out some guidelines that, theologically speaking, might be crucial for doing the work of evangelism in South Africa today. In the terminology of my principal field of study, namely practical theology, this means reflecting on the new praxis which is to be created and cultivated.

### I. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

#### 1. The Church

In principle most Christians agree that there is but one Church of our God and Father in Christ Jesus. Though there are many, many

Dr. Malan Nel is a member of the Department of Biblical Studies at Vista University, Pretoria, South Africa. His paper was presented as the keynote address at the nineteenth annual meeting of The Academy for Evangelism in Theological Education at the Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary in Fresno, California, in October, 1991.

denominations, we confess "I believe in one holy catholic Church..." What I mean by the concept "Church" in this paper is, in the first place, the body of believers in Christ Jesus, our Saviour and Lord, and through him and the work of the Holy Spirit, in God our Father. As one of the confessions in the Reformed tradition states: "We believe and profess one catholic or universal Church, which is a holy congregation of true Christian believers, all expecting their salvation in Jesus Christ, being washed by his blood, sanctified and sealed by the Holy Spirit" (Belgic Confession, Art. 27).

Second, I refer to the different denominations that make up the body of Christ, the Church, in South Africa. Some of these denominations (or churches),<sup>2</sup> as part of the total Church, may have a greater task than others, perhaps because of a historical situation, or because of numbers, or because of a certain heritage of training for pastors. Each and every one of these denominations has an evangelism task in South Africa, but they also have a huge task within and among themselves. The ecumenical process is part and parcel of the task of the Church in South Africa.

A third important point regarding the concept "church" concerns a theological position on the Church as God's instrument for reaching the world. It is not my intention, of course, to argue a specific ecclesiological position, but I feel it is important that I state, in broad terms, my own point of view.<sup>3</sup> Although there are many "models" of the Church, it can be said that three dimensions of being the Church are often played off against one another. Not only is this unfair but it is also false. The Church has a "clerical" dimension; it does not function effectively without the offices. They are in more than one way the "joints" (Eph 4:11,12,16) that equip the body for its functioning. On the other hand, the Church is more than its offices. The "ecclesiastical" dimension is of critical importance. It is, after all, the body itself that is doing the work of its own "building up," and in the Ephesian context this explicitly means reaching out to those outside the church. The third dimension of being the Church is the "*gesellschaftliche*" (Bäumler). Often, especially in evangelical circles, there is a great deal of suspicion about the social involvement of the Church. At a time when more and more people perceive the Church as being "sacrament, sign and instrument,"<sup>4</sup> there is growing agreement that this is a valid dimension of being the Church. All three dimensions are not only valid, but are equally important. It is true that they exist in a certain tension with one another, but this should be a creative tension.

In a discussion of the *missio Dei*, it is important to view the Church as being sent into this world. "The church changes from being the sender to being the one sent."<sup>5</sup> The Church stands in the service of God's turning to the world.<sup>6</sup> "The *missio Dei* is God's activity, which embraces both the church and the world, and in which the church may be privileged to participate."<sup>7</sup> Moltmann is correct when he states: "The church's final word is not 'church' but the glory of the Father and the Son in the Spirit of liberty."<sup>8</sup> When you take all three of the above-mentioned dimensions into account, you cannot but view the Church in kingdom perspective. Church people therefore ought to be known as and call themselves "kingdom people." In the words of H. A. Snyder, "kingdom people seek first the kingdom

of God and its justice; church people often put church work above concerns of justice, mercy and truth. Church people think about how to get people into the church; kingdom people think about how to get the church into the world. Church people worry that the world might change the church; kingdom people work to see the church change the world."<sup>9</sup> This has nothing to do with the centrality of the Church in the coming of the living God to this world, but it does emphasize the centrality of viewing the Church according to the kingdom perspective. The Church not only loses its place, but denies its reason for being, when it does not serve the coming of the kingdom of God.

A last remark regarding the Church concerns the empirical situation of the Church in South Africa. Table 2.1 in Addendum 1 shows the overall picture of the religious composition of the total population. This shows that 77% of South Africans claim, at least nominally, to be Christian.<sup>10</sup> In terms of numbers, only two denominations have more than 10% of the total population, namely the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) and the Methodist Church. The largest group is the independent black churches (19.9%). This group is made up of some 3,500 different, smaller and larger separatist and Zionist churches.

## 2. Evangelism

Every scholar in the field of evangelism knows that there is no clear-cut definition of evangelism that is internationally accepted. There is, however, a growing consensus regarding the main "ingredients" of an evangelism description. It may well be that the magisterial work of David Bosch will help to bring about even greater consensus.<sup>12</sup>

Most of us would agree that the task of evangelism is essentially the communication of the gospel (*euangelion*) of Jesus Christ, whom we proclaim to be the Son of God and the Saviour of the world. This affirmation determines not only the attitude or spirit of evangelism (it is a good news business) but also the content of evangelism. The church that does not take this task seriously is betraying both the Lord whose gospel it is and the world for whom the gospel is intended.

A second point of general agreement (although the differences of opinion start here) is that evangelism is mainly, though not exclusively, an "out-reach" ministry. The Church, being the people who have already received and accepted the gospel (cf. Eph. 1:13,14; 4:20-21), is commanded to communicate the gospel to the world. Most agree that the target area for evangelism is the world, the world apart from Christ, or to put it differently, the world not yet in Christ.

While there is growing consensus that the Church is being sent as the evangelist, that the gospel is the content, and the world is the target area, there is still much discussion about the means, the purpose, and the limits of evangelism. The almost never-ending debate between "ecumenicals" and "evangelicals" is much calmer than earlier on, but it has not been settled yet. To go into the details of this debate would be to digress from my topic. Because it is of tremendous importance to this paper, however,

I want to offer two "definitions" of evangelism, which I feel try to hold on to both the personal and the social dimensions of the gospel. I am convinced that evangelism, as commissioned by our Lord, can be served well only when we are true to both the word and deed aspects of ministry.

I feel very much at home with Richard Armstrong's description of service evangelism: It is "reaching out to others in Christian love, listening to them, identifying with them, caring for them, and sharing faith with them in such a way that they will freely respond and want to commit themselves to trust, love and obey God as a disciple of Jesus Christ and a member of his servant community, the church... The word 'service' is intended to imply a style of evangelism that is caring, supportive, unselfish, sensitive and responsive to human need." (*Service Evangelism*, p. 53.)<sup>13</sup> Armstrong's "textbook definition" is: "Evangelism is proclaiming in word and deed the good news of the kingdom of God, and calling people to repentance, to personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, to active membership in the church, and to obedient service in the world."<sup>14</sup>

For Bosch, as well as for Armstrong, mission is the broader term. Bosch speaks of "mission as evangelism." Armstrong sees evangelism as "part of mission." Mission includes, simply put, almost everything the Church is commissioned to do in the name of the Triune God. Bosch explores what evangelism is in 17 well-formulated and well thought out statements.<sup>15</sup> He summarizes evangelism as "that dimension and activity of the church's mission which by word and deed and in the light of particular conditions and in a particular context, offers every person and community, everywhere, a valid opportunity to be directly challenged to a radical reorientation of their lives, a reorientation which involves such things as deliverance from slavery to the world and its powers; embracing Christ as Savior and Lord; becoming a living member of his community, the church; being enlisted into his service of reconciliation, peace, and justice on earth; and being committed to God's purpose of placing all things under the rule of Christ."<sup>16</sup>

To summarize, evangelism is in essence the communication of the gospel of Jesus Christ, as given to us in Scripture, by the Church by means of the *kerugma*, *marturia*, *koinonia* and *diakonia* in word and deed. Thus the Church is reaching out to everyone, especially to those still outside the body of believers.<sup>17</sup> By whatever means the gospel is communicated evangelism is "the powerful proclamation of the good news, the impartation of *soteria*."<sup>18</sup> This *soteria* is nothing less than the dawn of the Messianic kingdom.<sup>19</sup> It is comprehensive, integral, and total in nature. The impartation of *soteria* is the purpose of the total mission of the Church; but because of this, it is especially true of the ministry that is primarily concerned with the proclamation of the good news of salvation.<sup>20</sup> Salvation means more than merely "getting to heaven" when we die, although that is an important part of being saved. It is also being part of the Church, the people of God, whom God has called to renew and redo creation as his representatives, and who should proclaim the message of salvation in Christ Jesus. Thus *soteria* is being called into a relationship of obedient service to the King in all spheres of life.<sup>21</sup> We are not only being saved from a sin-full and senseless past; we are being saved for kingdom service

and for the shaping of a new future, a future based on the policies of the coming King!

My final point in this section on clarifying the task of evangelism: If and when the Church accepts that this task is about the communication of the good news about Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Saviour of the world, then it is almost compulsory to accept what may be called a true Christlike "evangelistic sensitivity."<sup>22</sup> The task of evangelism, no matter how or under what circumstances it is done, should be carried out in a spirit of Christlike compassion. It is part and parcel of this task. It is unacceptable to say and do the correct thing, however prophetic, without having the attitude of a servant, filled with Godly love for a world still outside of Christ.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, even though it is true that one church, being part of the body, should be able to talk to another church in a straightforward and confrontational way, it is equally important to remember that this interchurch dialogue also has evangelistic implications for the outside world. And they, the non-believers, should always sense, even from outside, our Christlike compassion. This is what so often draws people to Christianity and to Christ. When denominations take this principle into account, the ecumenical dialogue and process becomes something more than window-dressing. It is a crucial aspect of the task of evangelism. Jesus taught this and prayed about it in no uncertain terms: "May they be one, so that the world will believe that you sent me" (John 17:21). Working for unity and for better relationships among churches wherever possible is an important duty (commission) of the Church, for the sake of the communication, acceptance and credibility of the gospel.<sup>24</sup>

To my mind both internal, ecumenical dialogue and outreach to others demand the same evangelistic, Christlike attitude and approach.

### 3. South Africa Today

The word "today" presupposes a yesterday. Though a great number of wonderful "new" things may have been part of the "old" South Africa, the new and old in recent times refer to the so-called *apartheid* and post-*apartheid* eras. Everything that happened and is happening is, as it were, reduced to what happened and is happening in the political arena. Though this reduction is to a large extent understandable, it is rather too simplistic. If a political system were to determine whether everything in a country was either good or bad, then the Church would be in great trouble. Any New Testament scholar would agree that the governments under which the early Church operated were not at all "church-friendly." In spite of, and in some cases maybe even because of that, the Church was alive, growing, and winning ground for the kingdom. This is in no way an attempt to ignore or cover up for the *apartheid* system. What I do want to state, however, is that some wonderful things happened in South Africa during and despite the *apartheid* system. For one thing the number of Christians in South Africa grew tremendously. Education, however limited it may have been in some cases, was provided for thousands and thousands. The 1950s and 1960s produced large numbers of missionaries and

among the spin-offs were the many hospitals and schools started by churches. Most of these institutions are now run by the government. In retrospect it appears that God has kept his Church alive and has blessed the communication of the gospel, even if some of the messengers did not have clear and sincere motives. However dark the past 43 years may have been for many millions of people, the growth of God's Church remains a testimony to his grace and mercy.

Having made that point, I want to say thank God for February 2, 1990, when politically speaking, South Africa was put on a new road. Now, just twenty months later, there are no *apartheid* laws left on the statutes of our country. The process of shaping a new South Africa is irreversible. Our State President, Mr F. W. de Klerk, has reiterated this on many occasions. Even at a stage when right wing fanatics were shouting and shooting outside the hall, he could say that the onus is now on the ANC to declare whether their commitment to the peace and negotiation process is irreversible. We seek a non-racial democratic South Africa where justice and freedom are secured in a bill of human rights and in a new constitution.

The road is a bumpy one. The birth of the new South Africa is painful, very painful. Many hundreds of people have died and may yet die in the violence. We have to cope with an unbanned Communist Party that persists in its viewpoint that although communism has failed everywhere, it will succeed in South Africa. It is also influencing one of the major role players, the African National Congress (ANC), in a very direct way. About 40% of the ANC's new executive consists of outspoken members of the South African Communist Party (SACP). On the other hand, we have to cope with a revival of a neo-nazism among right wing parties. Conflict is a reality and a part of our every day life. For reasons of its own (some which we as South Africans understand and others which we do not) the international community has not yet become involved in an economic rescue mission to our country. Urbanization creates a growing demand for job opportunities, which have been created at a rate of only 1.9% between 1985 and 1987, whereas the annual growth rate of the black labor force is 2.9%. An additional 1,000 schools must be built each year to cope with the anticipated population growth up to the year 2000. This means the training of some extra 17,400 teachers. It is also estimated that by the end of the century there will be a shortage of 1,540,000 dwelling units.<sup>25</sup> As far as the Church is concerned, there is a crucial need for the further training of pastors across the total spectrum of denominations. A prominent black leader in an organization comprising 888 indigenous independent churches, representing some 4.5 million members, told me that 95% of its pastors have only a fifth grade (Std. 3 in our country) level of education, and almost all of them have never had a single day of formal theological training. On the other hand, there are also thousands of well-trained Christians in South Africa. They are one of the many signs of hope, which I shall mention later.

The day is dawning for a new South Africa. There are still numerous indications that we are only at the break of day. Many thousands on both sides of the political spectrum are still in the dark, unwilling and seemingly unable to see the light of dawn. Some are blinded by an inability

to forgive, others by naked racism and discrimination. Neither camp is purely white or black. Some have even been identified as the "criminals" in this process. Although one cannot ignore the twilight and the night, or call it day already, there is no option but to move ahead responsibly and in Christian faith, hope, and love. The new South Africa is in many senses a hope for all its people, a country that we have not seen yet, but for which we hope. For many black South Africans there probably, and understandably, remains a fear that the process may be reversed to something similar to or even worse than before. Their hope is for something new, even spectacularly new. For many white South Africans, for whom, as well, South Africa is their birthland, there is fear that we may become another one-party, increasingly poor dictatorship, or even worse, a communist-ruled African state with all the foreseeable consequences.

We Christians have our fears, too. But we also have hope, not only because there are so many hopeful signs, nor just because 77% of the population claim to be Christian, but, most importantly, because we believe in the living God. God is our hope! God has promised never to let go of his own. The future of the Church and indeed the part of God's world called South Africa are in the hands and plans of the sovereign Lord of the universe. Was it not prophetic that when our beautiful land was first discovered, it was called The Cape of Good Hope?

## II. THE RECENT PRAXIS

In a sense this heading is presumptuous. It is impossible to encapsulate in one paper what churches are doing in the field of evangelism. I shall try to touch on just a few general things and be more specific on what the second largest church, namely the Dutch Reformed Church (the largest among the whites and so-called "Coloured" churches) is doing. I shall also refer to the points of view of a few church leaders.

### 1. Signs of Hope

As I have already mentioned, there are many signs of hope amid all the turmoil and seemingly insoluble complexities. Here are but a few of the signs of hope:

- a. To my knowledge never before in any other African country have all the major denominations met together as they did in Rustenburg in November, 1990. More than 90% of the Christian community in South Africa was represented at Rustenburg. It was at this meeting that Prof. Willie Jonker confessed *apartheid* to be a sin.<sup>26</sup> Here new ground was broken not only for interchurch relations but also for the role of the church in the new South Africa. A co-chairman, Dr. Louw Alberts, and another prominent South African, Michael Cassidy, have rightly

described this as a miracle. The now well-known "Rustenburg Declaration"<sup>27</sup> and the public statement by the DRC delegation have been widely publicized.

b. Since then individual church leaders from different denominations and leaders in the business world have joined forces in an attempt to facilitate peace talks among the three major players in the negotiations process, namely the Government, the ANC, and the Inkatha Freedom Party. This process is well underway and on September 14, less than a month ago, a document was signed by 23 organizations, setting out several milestones for stopping the violence and for constructively addressing the main issues, such as the hardships being suffered by ordinary people, while the leaders, often in the interests of their own hidden agendas, refuse to move ahead.

c. In the ecumenical arena there is progress, but there is also reason for concern. The Dutch Reformed Church is involved in several bilateral talks with a great number of churches (more than 16 in total). "The Dutch Reformed Church is really taking its ecumenical responsibility seriously, especially at this time of a changing South Africa."<sup>28</sup> As many know, however, the DRC withdrew from the South African Council of Churches in 1942. The Cape and Transvaal Synods were founding members of the Council in 1936. During this past year the DRC (National Synod) applied for observer status, but was turned down until such time as the DRC complies with several conditions laid down by the SACC.

In a very open and frank comment on all this in the presence of a group of Anglican bishops David Bosch criticized the SACC for being uncompromising regarding their "rightful" conditions, for the sake of the unity of the body of Christ in South Africa. Indeed, there always has been a kind of open invitation to the DRC. In making his point Bosch referred to two of Archbishop Tutu's reactions to the confession of Willie Jonker. I quote them as if they were one comment: "I believe that I stand under the compulsion of God's Holy Spirit to say that...when a confession is made, those of us who have been wronged must say, 'We forgive you.' I cannot, when someone says, 'Forgive me!' say, 'I do not.' For then I cannot pray, 'Forgive as we forgive!' There are no guarantees in grace. When Jesus looked at Zacchaeus, he had no guarantee that Zacchaeus would respond to the grace of his forgiveness and love. Only after Jesus had accepted him unconditionally could he say, 'I shall make amends for what I have done wrong.' We are people of grace who have to have the vulnerability of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ on the cross."<sup>29</sup> This last section was added by Archbishop Tutu in response to an attitude and viewpoint shown at Rustenburg that the whites first must show forth proper

restitution and until then the rest (the black contingent) should "adopt a wait-and-see attitude."<sup>30</sup> As stated in the declaration this point of view was not accepted at Rustenburg. The Spirit of Christ prevailed.

What may be of greater importance and a reason for concern is that the SACC views the Rustenburg follow-up committee and its activities "as constituting an alternative ecumenical forum" in competition with the Council: "Hence it was resolved that the leadership of the SACC would not participate in any follow-up activities without the explicit support of the SACC member churches."<sup>31</sup> One can only hope and pray that Bosch will be proved correct, when he writes: "Still in the end it will, hopefully, not be the failure of the DRC and the 'hardline' approach of the SACC that prevail, but the infinite grace of God."<sup>32</sup> During and after the conference there were frequent references to "the spirit of Rustenburg."

## 2. Christians for Truth

One small but to my mind noteworthy part of the recent praxis is the establishment of what is called "Christians for Truth" (CFT). A young man, Fano Sibisi, is the national president of CFT. He is a member of the well known Kwasizabantu team under the leadership of Pastor Erlo Stegen, a former Lutheran missionary. What is happening at Kwasiza is more than amazing. It is in itself a miracle. The staff members, who are mainly Zulu and are working in schools all over the province of Natal, have been exposed to so many of the realities of violence and intimidation against Christians, that they have decided to co-ordinate CTF on a national basis. In their newsletter they publish letters from readers telling of hardships and brutal acts of intimidation against Christians. They try to encourage Christians to stand firm for Christ, and they take a very hardline attitude against communism and violent acts that are most probably influenced by communist and Marxist ideologies and leaders.

## 3. Recent actions by the Dutch Reformed Church

In October, 1990, the National Synod took several more bold steps in tidying up its own house, as far as the apartheid ideology is concerned. It is only fair to mention that there have always been people in the DRC who have disagreed with the formal policy of the Government and the DRC right from the beginning of the apartheid era in 1948. It is also fair to state that to a large extent it was these people who, over the years, tried from within the structures to move the leadership into biblical research and a rethinking of their position. The DRC has a very evangelical and missionary heart. The mission history of this church reads like a dream-come-true story. God also granted that the DRC has always been in contact with international theological thinking and influence. Whatever and whomever God used is not the question. The fact is, God's Spirit has

convinced and has led unflinchingly. Step by step the Church since 1974 has rid itself of the baggage of *apartheid* and more specifically of a theological justification for the policy of separate development.

In accepting the new policy on church and society the DRC has addressed a number of issues relating to mission, evangelism and the social calling (ministry of compassion) of the Church.<sup>33</sup> In some other decisions equally important issues were addressed, such as the acceptance of an ecumenical charter and a report which was forwarded to church councils on the task of the Church for peace in South Africa.<sup>34</sup> All of the eleven regional synods of the DRC are to be held in 1991. Three of them had finished their sessions when I left the country on October 2. All three have accepted the decisions taken by the National Synod. Though there will continue to be a long and sometimes bitter struggle at the local church level, at least the denomination has made a 180-degree turn.

A decision by the DRC, so important that it should be mentioned separately, is "a declaration of Christian principles" that the church thinks should be taken into account when considering a new constitution and a bill of rights. The danger is not at all imaginary that the DRC might take a hands-off attitude regarding political systems in the future, being afraid to repeat its mistake. Many inside the country have already not only warned but accused the DRC of exactly that. In my opinion this danger is real, but by stating its set of biblical principles I think the DRC has paved the way to deal with whatever government, on whatever political policy. Church leaders with whom I have spoken confirm that to be the case.<sup>35</sup> You can imagine that the direct consequences of all these decisions are not all "moonlight and roses." It is estimated that about one-third of the members of the DRC (formerly called the "white DRC church") belong to the Conservative Party. These members still consider almost all these decisions as treasonous to the tradition and calling of the DRC. A group calling itself the *Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk* has already broken away. Though many members of the DRC have not yet determined their membership, no one knows what will actually happen if all eleven synods accept the decisions of the National Synod as final and the new direction turns out to be a fact. On the one hand, while it might be better to be rid of these "baggages," they are people, many of whom claim to be committed and sincere Christians with a different view of the South African scene. On the other hand, if we accept that some of them are living in sin (the sin of racism), then the church has a tremendously important evangelistic task regarding them.

#### 4. Overview of Viewpoints of Some Leaders

There is an amazing consensus among leaders regarding the Church's role in bringing about reconciliation in South Africa, although they may differ slightly as to how it should be done, depending on their theological heritage.<sup>36</sup> Some, like Erlo Stegen, are convinced that it is no use to try to reconcile people if they are not, first of all, reconciled to God in Christ. Once that is a reality, human relationships will be rectified as a result.

Stegen's missionary endeavour in Natal proves him to be correct in principle. Even so, many others think, in the light of *apartheid* history, that the Church must do more. Reconciliation implies working for new relations at a local level, bringing people together, helping them to understand and to get to know one another. No one I talked to used the term "forced integration," but they all stressed the need to cross borders because of our common humanity, birthland, destiny and above all, if we are Christians, because of our *koinonia* in Christ Jesus. Many Christian leaders also agree that the Church may even now have a "structural" responsibility. There are structures that should be challenged by the gospel. There are political policies that contradict Scripture. There are economic policies that may prove to be detrimental to the course of a democratic and just society. What these leaders mean, in theological terms, is that the task of evangelism in South Africa now involves a prophetic proclamation of the gospel to all involved in the process of creating a new South Africa, irrespective of race or creed.

Another common concern is a commitment to peace. I have already referred to the involvement of individual church and business leaders in the peace process. As time passes, church leaders are becoming increasingly convinced that churches should distance themselves as far as possible from violence and silent approval of violence as a means of change. Some of the leaders with whom I have spoken have been more outspoken about this than others, but I sense a basic agreement among them that a political future with communist and Marxist influences holds nothing good for the Church and the future of South Africa. Most are deeply concerned about what is happening regarding intimidation in schools and black townships. In a democratic election one can hardly imagine something like that happening, but on the African continent the term "democratic" has too often been used only to get money from truly democratic nations and as a cover-up for socialism or new dictatorships.

### III. MOVING TOWARDS A NEW PRAXIS

As promised in the Introduction, I shall now point out a few important practical theology principles that the Church in South Africa should take into account in accomplishing its task of evangelism. Because of the limited time I shall touch on only three issues, the third being the most important from the perspective of this paper.

#### 1. Winning People to Christ

For many years the major denominations, as far as evangelism is concerned, have usually been involved in the following familiar ways of spreading the gospel:

- a. Rallies and/or campaigns with a well-known preacher and

trained counselors to help the "seekers" to "find assurance of salvation" (often understood as "going to heaven when you die"). This is called mass evangelism, or crusade evangelism.

b. Outreach programs in local churches, either spontaneous or intentional, carried out by trained lay people.

c. Well-developed "streetwork" programs, coupled with a coffee-house ministry. In some cases this is well integrated with socio-psychological help.

d. Programs where mainly young people commit a year of their lives to inner-city evangelism, by visiting schools throughout the country. In 1974 I was the co-leader, for the whole year, of a team of 60 well-trained young people who travelled throughout the country, visiting more than 300 schools, training some 23,000 fellow young people in personal evangelism and preaching and witnessing to more than 500,000 people.

e. Many ad-hoc programs, such as the well-established annual "mission week and evangelism week" on the campuses, mainly at Afrikaans-medium university campuses. I feel that most of these programs should continue, provided they focus on people in their totality. The time has passed when we can afford to separate word and deed, spirit and body. I sense a new willingness among South African people to listen to the gospel. Proclaimed as it was intended by Christ, who made his own news good by his incarnational ministry, the gospel is to a country such as ours like water to the desert.

## 2. Confronting Our Ideologies

David Bosch is correct when he states that "the real trauma caused by *apartheid* is only now coming to the surface, particularly in the areas of education, housing, unemployment and violence."<sup>37</sup> No political transformation can change this critical situation. The reaction of some to this is what Bosch calls the "ideology of entitlement."<sup>38</sup> To follow this ideology may prove to be disastrous for all of us. Some black South Africans may then reason: "You whites have created this mess. You better clean it up, and until you do, we are entitled to sit back, hate, and destroy." Some white South Africans may then reason: "You destroy everything anyway, we have pumped millions of Rand into schools and other projects, and now we are entitled to protect what is left of what was built through our creativity and capital."

This is, of course, a dead-end road. Yet some still want to travel it! The Church has a major task in addressing this ideology and calling people to accept their responsibilities as citizens and, those who are Christians, as Christians. We desperately need what has been called a "paradigm shift,"

an exchange of one world view, one frame of reference, for another. In a multifaceted and multicultural country such as ours, there is, at least broadly speaking, a "Western" way of thinking and an "African" way of thinking. Bosch calls these our "inherited anthropologies," a term he borrowed from an unpublished manuscript of Adrio König.<sup>39</sup> The *apartheid* anthropology emphasizes the presupposition that God has divided humankind into collective units that are separated from one another. The Anglo-Saxon anthropology emphasizes liberal values such as inalienable rights, freedom, and equality, and the African anthropology emphasizes relationships, as expressed in the Zulu saying: "*Umntu ngumuntu ngabantu*" (a human being is a human being because of [other] human beings).

While we all are probably aware of the weaknesses of the Western anthropologies, we often know little about the African weaknesses. Bosch points out that while this view of humanity is almost idyllic, we should keep in mind that "the solidarity of African traditional anthropology is a restricted solidarity, limited mainly to family and clan. Furthermore, even within the intimate circle there are manifestations of jealousy, suspicion, and accusations. Often this leads to scape-goating, particularly in the form of accusations of witchcraft."<sup>40</sup>

The task of evangelism will be to speak to these anthropologies in a bold and prophetic way. As Christians we are not at all clean-cut, stripped from our heritage, brand new people. We are "on-the-way" people. We will always have to confess our racism, our "in-groupism," and our "entitled-to-rightsism." And more than preaching is needed to change this. We should work on a "culture of tolerance and dialogue."<sup>41</sup> While we encourage leaders and governments to get to work on rectifying the shortcomings in education and housing, we, as the Church, should also work on fostering a new understanding among people in order to help them share life.

## 3. Becoming and Being What We Claim We Are

For the churches of South Africa the challenge of being faithful to the Gospel is greater today than ever before. In many cases in the past Christians were almost brainwashed to believe that there was nothing wrong with being apart from other Christians, apart from everyday socio-economic realities (such as in a pietistic way of thinking), and even being apart when doing the work of evangelism.

As far as the white churches were concerned it was almost a utopian situation. The mission fields were far, far away, and the folks on the home front gladly prayed and payed for the missionaries "out there." When the churches established by the missionaries became independent (at least in name), the situation deteriorated. In some cases the churches almost ceased to pray and only continued to pay the local pastor of the new congregation.

It may be because of the anthropology mentioned above that many members of black churches also do not have a missionary urge. Regarding whites, some or many black people (understandably) struggle with feelings of revenge. Some explain the current spate of black-on-black violence

as frustration and aggression toward whites.<sup>42</sup>

Anger and aggression are understandable. These are, after all, emotions resulting from frustration. And yet we know that "deep and long-lasting change is not brought about by revolution but by reconciliation and reconstruction."<sup>43</sup> To stay apart would be wrong and to hate does not help anyone. To change is the only option, the only option for Christians, anyway. We cannot merely stay as we were.

Theologically speaking, not to change would be unfaithful to the very being or nature of the Church of God. When we claim that we are God's people because we believe in Jesus Christ, we are by definition commissioned to take part in the task of evangelism. Even in Ephesians 4, the well-known chapter on building up the body, the outreach dimension is obvious. According to verse 13 the body is being built up as new converts are added and the believers become fully grown, mature persons, referring back to chapter 2 where the church, now including both Jews and non-Jews, is called the new humanity. To be the Church is to be caught up in this creative bipolar tension between the missiological and consolidating dimensions. Turning an ingrown church inside out, however, is in many cases more difficult than leading an unbeliever to faith.

This is what Furet calls the "agogic moment"<sup>44</sup> in the coming of God through his Word to the Church and through the Church to the world. Change of any sort, and especially in a situation of conflict, needs to be facilitated. We all believe that God changes people through the proclamation of the Word (the mode of the *kerygma*).<sup>45</sup> But in a congregational situation it is equally true that God facilitates change through the modes of the *didache* and the *paraklesis*.<sup>46</sup> Two very important issues should be stressed in this regard:

a. Change in this long-lasting sense does not mean changing other people into "my own likeness." That would be the case in an authoritarian society and for authoritarian personalities. What we should aim for, however, is to help people in the process of "personality formation."<sup>47</sup> In doing this there are many factors to be taken into account, such as the person's contextuality and "equihuman address."<sup>48</sup> Of major concern is the creating of a pastoral relationship within which the true agogy can take place. To Furet the specifically agogic element can be described as the change in mental and spiritual functioning of persons (X) in virtue of their active involvement (F) in a relationship which is directed toward producing this change (Y). Expressed as a formula this is:  $X = F(Y)$ .<sup>49</sup>

The importance of a pastoral relationship is thus crucial for bringing about change. According to Furet this kind of relationship, which aims at change (long-lasting conversion) and is vital in bringing about change, calls for pastors who function, to use his terminology, "with objective realism, in pure (unhindered) receptivity, discernment, and creativity."<sup>50</sup> What is basic for bringing about change is a pastoral relationship facilitated by an "adult" pastor in the above-mentioned sense. To bring about

this kind of change in pastors themselves is to my mind crucial in fulfilling the task of evangelism in South Africa. This has tremendous consequences for the training and continuing education of pastors: training in good, solid theology that can stand the test of conflict and of very difficult challenges; training in listening; training in what L. O. Richards calls, "self-revealing patterns of response";<sup>51</sup> training in leading people through times of change and conflict; and training to be "pastor-evangelists."<sup>52</sup> This will not be easy, but our challenge is through better trained pastors to reach the masses who have to be changed for the sake of the coming kingdom, for the sake of our Lord and Saviour, and for the sake of the new society we hope to build. We have several advantages in this regard. A recent three-year research project showed that in South African Christianity, preaching, Bible studies, involvement in Church ministries, and the nationwide ecclesiastical debate still have a great and positive influence upon "ethnocentrism." The core members are less ethnocentric than the modal and marginal members.<sup>53</sup>

b. Training pastors to develop a pastoral relationship that will enhance change in a biblical sense, calls for real incarnational evangelism.<sup>54</sup> This approach is multifaceted, but it at least asks for a genuine exegesis of the Bible text as well as the "text" of the situation, the context of the people we want to serve in ministry. In South Africa this demands much wisdom. We have to take culture, language, and history into account, but above all we are challenged to be God's people in this given situation. On the one hand, we cannot serve the South African complexity without taking its diversity into consideration and, on the other hand, we are challenged to overcome this very diversity. It is also time to realize that untrained coaches cannot coach a team to victory. We simply cannot hope for a chance victory. The challenges in the cities,<sup>55</sup> the suburbs, the townships, as well as the rural areas (where right-wing parties are extremely strong) are so complex and multifaceted that simplistic answers will not help the cause.

Change calls for not only a solid, well-established pastoral relationship, it also demands training and nurturing. Pastors and other leaders in churches should know how to train people for their "self-reliant spiritual and mental functioning"<sup>56</sup> in this challenging and complex society. Leaders should be informed about the shift in values in the South African society.<sup>57</sup> Even at the local church level there is a "need for facilitation and mediation services in conflict in South Africa."<sup>58</sup> Many pastors do not know how to cope with conflict, let alone how to lead people through conflict and change in such a way that it turns out to be a learning experience in self-reliant spiritual and mental functioning.<sup>59</sup>

It is quite clear that there is a great need for a well-coordinated continuing education program for pastors in order to help them teach and train members how to be faithful to what we claim we will want to be in the years ahead. The challenge will be not only to build, but also to rebuild this country according to the gospel, healing the wounds caused by apartheid, revenge, and violence. Our task is to proclaim and to teach the "shalom Jahweh": "an entire state of well-being, health, happiness, material security, harmony with neighbours, justice, economic equality and spiritual integrity."<sup>60</sup>

## Conclusion

In order to serve the task of evangelism the churches in our country will have to be: "a sign of pro-existence, a symbol of diversity in unity, a 'pentecostal laboratory', a temple of dialogue, a clinic for public exorcism, a broadcasting station for the voice of the poor and a motel for pilgrims."<sup>61</sup>

There are no guarantees in grace. All ministry, including evangelism, always stands in what may be called the "vulnerability" of the suffering Christ. But, equally, all ministry draws upon the power of the risen Christ, the coming King. It is exactly because of this that we hope and we serve in hope, proclaiming and teaching the gospel.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Clarification on the first two concepts will be theologically oriented and in the case of the third one, more socio-economically.

<sup>2</sup> At a very important congress on practical theology held in Tübingen, Germany, it was said that the practical theologians in the U.S.A. understand "Kirche" differently from those in Europe. "In den USA könne von Kirche nur gesprochen werden, wenn zugleich das jeweils gemeinte denominationelle Verständnis von Kirche mitgenannt werde" (Schweitzer, 1991: 56).

<sup>3</sup> For further reading see R. S. Anderson (*Theological Foundations for Ministry*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979); H. Küng (*Was Ist Kirche?* Freiburg: Herder, 1970); A. Dulles (*Images of the Church*, Garden City: Image, 1978); and many other well-known works in systematic theology.

<sup>4</sup> Dulles, pp. 58-70.

<sup>5</sup> Bosch, D. J., *Transforming Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991), p. 370; 389ff.

<sup>6</sup> Schmitz, J., *Die Weltzuwendung Gottes: Thesen zu einer Theologie der Mission*. (Freiburg: Imba, 1971), p. 25.

<sup>7</sup> Bosch, p. 391.

<sup>8</sup> Moltman, J., *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology* (London: SCM, 1977), p. 19.

<sup>9</sup> *Liberating the Church* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity, 1983), p. 11.

<sup>10</sup> HSRC, *Religion, Intergroup Relations, and Social Change in South Africa* (Pretoria: HSRC, 1985), pp. 19-21.

<sup>11</sup> Kritzing, J.J., "n Statistiese beskrywing van die godsdienstige verspreiding van die bevolking van S A (Pretoria: ISWEN, 1985), p. 6.

<sup>12</sup> For a number of "definitions" I refer to J. F. Havlik (*People-Centered Evangelism*, Nashville: Broadman, 1971); A. C. Krass (*Beyond the Either-Or Church*, Nashville: Tidings, 1973); J. R. Hendrick (*Opening the Door of Faith*, Atlanta: John Knox, 1977); J. C. Macauley and R. H. Belton (*Personal Evangelism*, Chicago: Moody, 1956); J. D. Douglas (*Let the Earth Hear His Voice*, Minneapolis: World Wide, 1975); L. A. Drummond (*Evangelism—A Counter Revolution*, London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1972); G. E. Sweazey (*The Church as Evangelist*, San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978); Margull, 1962. R. S. Armstrong lists twenty or more representative definitions in *The Pastor as Evangelist* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984), and D. J. Bosch in his book *Transforming Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991) includes Barrett's list of 79 definitions.

<sup>13</sup> *Service Evangelism* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1979), p. 53.

<sup>14</sup> *The Pastor-Evangelist in the Parish* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1990), p. 13.

<sup>15</sup> Op. cit., pp. 411-420.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p. 420. One other description of the subject "Evangelistiek" is that of J. Verkuyl. Freely translated from the Dutch: "It is the scientific study of the communication of the gospel of the kingdom of God by the whole congregation in its neighbourhood through the proclamation of the gospel, through koinonia, through diakonia and by way of participating in the struggle for justice" (Inleiding in de Evangelistiek, Kampen: Kok, 1978, pp. 50-51).

<sup>17</sup> For a discussion on the distinction still made in Reformed circles I refer to some Dutch literature: J. Verkuyl (op. cit.), J. J. De Klerk, *Evangelistiek* (Pretoria: NGKB, 1979); M. Nel, *Jeug en Evangelie* (Pretoria: NGKB, 1982). Also compare Board of Home Missions, CRC and Bosch (op. cit., p. 409).

<sup>18</sup> G. Friedrich, "Euangelizomai" et. al., in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. II, G. Kittel, ed. Translated by G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), p. 720.

<sup>19</sup> Verkuyl, p. 17.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Bosch, p. 399.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. R. S. Armstrong, *The Pastor-Evangelist in the Parish*, p. 13.

<sup>22</sup> Armstrong, *The Pastor as Evangelist*, p. 77; *The Pastor-Evangelist in the Parish*, pp. 13-14.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Armstrong, *Service Evangelism*, p. 38ff.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Bosch, pp. 381-389.

<sup>25</sup> D. J. Van Vuuren, N. E. Wiehahn, et. al., *South Africa in the Nineties* (Pretoria: HSRC, 1991).

<sup>26</sup> Addendum 2 gives the wording of the confession as well as the statement of the DRC issued after the meeting (DRC NEWS, Dec., 1990, p. 5).

<sup>27</sup> DRC NEWS, Dec., 1990, pp. 5-8.

<sup>28</sup> DRC NEWS, June, 1991.

<sup>29</sup> Bosch, D. J., "South Africa—The Way Forward and the Church's Role: The Rustenburg Declaration." Unpublished paper presented at Diocesan Conference, CPSA, Pietermaritzburg, August, 1991, pp. 7,8.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, p. 5.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, p. 1; cf. Chikane, F., "From Egypt to the Wilderness: The Ecstasy and the Agony—Challenge to the Churches in a Time of Transition." General Secretary's Report to the 23rd National Conference of the SACC, 1991, pp. 21, 22 and annexure K. Prof. David Bosch, Mr. Michael Cassidy, Dr. Louw Alberts, and Prof. Johan Heyns, all prominent church members at Rustenburg, expressed their concern about the stand taken by the SACC.

<sup>32</sup> "South Africa: The Changing Scene," p. 9.

<sup>33</sup> Copies of this document can be ordered from DRC office, P.O. Box 4445, Pretoria, South Africa, 0001.

<sup>34</sup> DRC/NEWS, 1991, pp. 1-11.

<sup>35</sup> I spoke with several leaders in and outside the DRC such as Prof. Johan Heyns, vice-president, National Synod; Dr. Louw Alberts, co-chairman, Rustenburg Conference; Prof. David Bosch, missiologist and well-known for his critique of apartheid over the years; Dr. Pierre Rossouw, director, ecumenical affairs, DRC; Dr. Manas Buthelezi, Lutheran Bishop; Pastor Erlo Stegen, Kwasizabantu, independent missionary ministry; Mr. Michael Cassidy, African Enterprise, and staff. Dr. Buthelezi told me that he hopes that the white DRC will continue to speak out boldly for the gospel, as it has done in the past. The DRC should not let the past quieten its tongue. Now that it has confessed, it is time to move on and to put into practice its call for ministry in this country.

<sup>36</sup> Unfortunately, I could not speak to the Rev. Frank Chikane, general secretary of the SACC. I have tried in vain for several weeks to contact the staff member to whom the Rev. Chikane referred me.

<sup>37</sup> Bosch, "South Africa: The Changing Scene and the Role of the Church." Unpublished paper presented on recent visit to the U.S.A., 1991, p. 2.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., pp. 17-18.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>43</sup> O. Guinness, *The Dust of Death, A Critique of the Counter Culture* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1973), p. 188.

<sup>44</sup> J. Firet, *Dynamics in Pastoring* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), p. 99.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., pp. 50, 68. For a detailed discussion on the theological verification of these modes, see Firet, 1986: 43-134. Also compare M. Heymel, "Wie Gott in der Welt zur Sprache kommt. Bemerkungen zum Verhältnis von Verkündigung und Lehre." *Pastoral Theologie* 80(6), 1991, pp. 288-306.

<sup>47</sup> Firet, pp. 171ff.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., pp. 138, 156.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 195.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 230. For a detailed discussion of what is meant by these very important qualifications for facilitating real change see pp. 212ff. His full definition is: "Agogy is the act of functioning, with objective realism, in pure receptivity, discernment, and creativity, of one person in relation to another for whose humanization the agogue bears responsibility, in order that the other may learn to function humanly in the same way. The core of all agogy is life that begets life; being a concrete and relevant human being serving the concretization and actualization of the humanness of another" (p. 230).

<sup>51</sup> Youth Ministry, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978, p. 139.

<sup>52</sup> R. S. Armstrong has devoted many years of research and three volumes to answering the question, "What does it mean for a pastor to do the work of an evangelist?" For further valuable reflections on the training of pastors in South Africa, see J. C. Müller's "Pastoral Care in Post-Apartheid South Africa" (*Praktische Theologie in South Africa* 6(2), 1991); C. Villavicencio's "The Kingdom of God and People's Democracy. Towards a Nation-Building Theology for Africa" (*Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 74, 1991), pp. 3-13; W. Huber's "The Role of the Church in Situations of Transition" (*Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 74, 1991), pp. 14-20; and D. J. Louw's "Versoening in Geweld" (*Stellenbosse Teologiese Studies* 15, September).

<sup>53</sup> J. A. Van der Ven, P. L. Scheepers, and H. J. C. Pieterse, "Religious Beliefs and Ethnocentrism: A Comparison between the Dutch and White South Africans" (*JET* 4(2), 1991).

<sup>54</sup> Cf. S. Southard (*Pastoral Evangelism*, pp. 11ff); J. C. Aldrich (*Life-Style Evangelism*); and C. G. Kromminga (*Bringing God's News to Neighbors*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976).

<sup>55</sup> See P. Meiring, P., "Johannesburg by Day - Soweto by Night. Reflections on the Role of the Churches in the Twin Cities in a Time of Rapid Social and Political Change." *NGTT XXI*(4), 1990, pp. 589-601.

<sup>56</sup> Firet, p. 211.

<sup>57</sup> See H. Boshoff's *Politieke Veranderinge en Waardeverskuiwings: Kerklike Implikasies* (Potchefstroom: ITS, 1991) and the results of his research on political change and the shift in values: implications for the church.

<sup>58</sup> H. W. Van der Merwe, "Die behoefte aan fasiliteringsen bemiddelingsdienste in konflik in S.A." *Acta Academica* 22(2), 1990, p. 1.

<sup>59</sup> See A. R. Booth's reference to the Celtic Church's establishing "centres of true learning and devotion across the continent." The need to be filled was not just "restoring political order and economic prosperity, but by enabling Europe once again to find its soul" ("Christian Witness in the New Europe," *Theology* XCIII, 1990, pp. 444-448).

<sup>60</sup> R. S. Kraybill, *Repairing the Breach. Ministry in Community Conflicts*. Scottsdale: Herald, p. 8.

<sup>61</sup> Meiring, pp. 600-601 (quoting van der Heuvel).

Table 2.1

Religious composition of the total population (percentages and numbers in thousands)

Religion	Cape	Natal	OFS	Transvaal	Ciskei	Gazankulu	KaNgwane	KwaNdebele	KwaZulu	Lebowa	Qwaqwa	Transkei	Bophuthatswana	Venda	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Dutch Ref.	28.1	4.7	30.6	14.8	3.8	1.0	1.9	5.8	1.0	4.0	24.1	1.8	9.2	2.6	1878
Ref.	0.3	0.9	0.7	1.1								0.2	0.5	1.4	140
Herv.	0.2	0.4	0.6	2.6								0.1	0.1		249
Angl.	11.0	7.1	5.2	5.2	5.3	0.4	0.6	1.9	5.0	1.5	5.7	12.3	8.8	0.6	2040
Melb.	10.3	8.1	13.9	7.7	28.8	0.4	2.5	1.3	6.5	1.5	6.9	26.8	12.4	0.3	2878
Presb.	2.0	2.3	2.5	1.8	0.2	2.5			1.8	1.9	4.4	6.4	0.8	0.3	646
Congr.	4.1	0.3	0.3	0.3	4.3				0.6	1.0	1.5	0.2	3.9	0.0	467
Luth.	2.9	2.6	1.1	3.8	1.0	0.9			1.9	4.9	7.1	1.4	12.4	7.2	1045
R-Calh.	7.5	12.0	10.4	9.9	4.7	3.3	3.7		5.1	14.4	7.4	9.5	7.7	8.9	2701
A.F.Miss.	1.1	0.2	1.6	0.7	0.6	0.8			1.3	0.3	0.2		0.4	0.3	191
Other Apost.	0.4	0.3	0.8	1.0									0.1	0.2	132
Independent Black	9.7	14.7	17.1	22.2	23.3	22.2	55.3	53.2	31.9	24.7	16.4	11.4	23.6	15.4	887
Other	12.1	7.9	4.9	9.9	7.5	10.7	9.5	12.2	4.4	4.6	9.5	7.3	10.7	6.4	2475
Total Christian	N 4439	1638	1728	6744	537	207	121	132	2487	913	139	1968	1432	130	22603
	% 86.8	61.1	89.4	80.8	83.6	40.3	75.2	84.6	72.1	52.3	88.0	75.0	94.6	37.7	77.0
Jewish	0.7	0.3	0.1	0.9											119
Hindu	0.1	17.5		0.4						0.1					512
Islam	3.1	3.4		0.8									0.1		319
Other	0.8	1.2	0.3	0.6	0.3	0.6			0.6	0.8	0.6	11.2	1.9	8.4	622
Unknown (including Black Traditional)	8.5	10.7	10.2	16.5	16.1	59.1	23.6	15.4	27.2	46.8	9.5	13.8	3.2	53.6	5285
Total Non-Christian	N 672	1041	204	1607	111	307	40	24	955	834	19	655	79	215	6782
	% 13.2	38.9	10.6	19.2	16.4	59.7	24.8	15.4	27.9	47.7	12.0	25.0	5.2	62.3	23.0
TOTAL	N 5091	2678	1932	8351	678	514	161	156	3422	1747	158	2623	1511	345	29365
	% 100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Kritzinger, 1994:9

The Confessions of Prof Willie Jonker\*

I confess before you and before the Lord, not only my own sin and guilt, and my personal responsibility for the political, social, economic and structural wrongs that have been done to many of you and the results of which you and our whole country are still suffering from, but vicariously I dare also to do that in the name of the NGK of which I am a member, and for the Afrikaans people as a whole. I have the liberty to do just that, because the NGK at its latest synod has declared apartheid a sin and confessed its own guilt of negligence in not warning against it and distancing itself from it long ago.

STATEMENT: NG KERK DELEGATION

It became clear to us that there was at least some doubt in conference on the official position of the NGK regarding the confession of guilt by Prof Jonker in his paper yesterday morning.

The delegates of the NGK want to state unambiguously that we fully identify ourselves with the statement of Prof Jonker on the position of this church. He has in fact precisely reiterated the decision of our General Synod in Bloemfontein two weeks ago.

We would like to see this decision of synod as the basis of reconciliation with all people and all churches.

\*Note: The punctuation, spelling and capitalization are those of the drafters of the various statements.

The issue of restitution after confession has also been raised. From the minutes of our Synod it will be clear that we did embark on a process of restitution, both in our relationship to our own family of NG Churches and to South African society in general. We could, for instance, refer to the adoption of a Declaration of Christian principles by synod which includes a bill of human rights.

## THE RUSTENBURG DECLARATION

November 1990

### PREAMBLE

We, 230 representatives of 97 denominations and 40 organisations participating in the National Conference of Church Leaders in South Africa, have come together in Rustenburg in the belief that it is under the authority of God's Word and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We have been convinced anew of God's amazing grace by the way in which, despite our wide variety of backgrounds, we have begun to find one another and to discover a broad consensus through worship, prayer, confrontation, confession and costly forgiveness. We have sought a spirit of patience, mutual care and openness as we have tried to discern the mind of Christ and have often been surprised how our views on many issues have converged. Some of us are not in full accord with everything said in this conference, but on this we are all agreed, namely the unequivocal rejection of apartheid as a sin. We are resolved to press forward in fellowship and consultation towards a common mind and programme of action.

Coming from diverse Christian traditions, histories, political persuasions and cultural backgrounds, we engaged midst joy and pain, love and suspicion, in a process of soul-searching and wrestling with the theological and socio-political complexities of our country. In the process, we had a strong sense that God was at work among us. We became aware that He was surprising us by his grace which cut through our fears and apprehension. We give praise to this liberating God who is forever faithful in visiting His people in their hour of need.

### 1. CONTEXT

1.1 The conference has met at a critical time of transition in our country. We thank God that we are already in a period of gestation with the hope of a democratic, peaceful and just dispensation emerging for our nation. Yet many people are continuing to suffer immensely under ongoing structures of injustice. Recent months have also seen the upsurge of violence in many areas and much brutalizing of innocent people. There is also extensive alienation among young blacks and a seemingly interminable crisis in black education. Unemployment has reached alarming proportions. The crisis in our land has also been aggravated by grossly inadequate housing in the black community. All this is leading to the social and economic disintegration of our society.

1.2 We believe, however, that we stand on the threshold of new things. There appears to be the possibility of a new dispensation and the promise of reconciliation between South Africans as some of our black and white leaders prepare to negotiate together for a new and liberated nation of equity and justice. In this context Christians are called to be a sign of hope from God, and to share a vision of a new society which we are prepared to strive for, and if needs be, suffer for.

1.3 We acknowledge that this hope will elude us unless we can break completely with the past. Accordingly we make the following confession.

### 2. CONFESSION

2.1 While in this document we focus attention on apartheid, we recognise that there are many other sins in our society which call for repentance.

2.2 As representatives of the Christian Church in South Africa, we recognise that the South African situation owes much to the content of western colonialism, to the stifling of conscience by inherited social attitudes which blind communities to the wrong they reflect and to a weakness common to the world-wide church in dealing with social evil. Now, however, we confess our own sin and acknowledge our heretical part in the policy of apartheid which has led to such extreme suffering for so many in our land. We denounce apartheid, its intention, its implementation and its consequences, as an evil policy. The practice and defence of apartheid as though it were biblically and theologically legitimated is an act of disobedience to God, a denial of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and a sin against our unity in the Holy Spirit.

2.3 We remember with sorrow the victims of apartheid who have suffered and continue to suffer humiliation, dispossession and death. We pay tribute to those who have stood resolutely for justice and cared for the oppressed.

2.4 We know that without genuine repentance and practical restitution we do not appropriate God's forgiveness and that without justice true reconciliation between people is impossible. We also know that this process must begin with a penitent church.

2.5 We therefore confess that we have in different ways practised, supported, permitted or refused to resist apartheid:

2.5.1 Some of us actively misused the Bible to justify apartheid, leading many to believe that it had the sanction of God. Later, we insisted that its motives were good even though its effects were evil. Our slowness to denounce apartheid as sin encouraged the Government to retain it.

2.5.2 Some of us ignored apartheid's evil, spiritualizing the Gospel by preaching the sufficiency of individual salvation without social transformation. We adopted an allegedly neutral stance which in fact resulted in complicity with apartheid. We were often silent when our sisters and brothers were suffering persecution.

2.5.3. Some of us were bold in condemning apartheid but timid in resisting it. Some churches failed to give effective support to courageous individuals at the forefront of protest against evil. We spoke out for justice but our own church structures continued to oppress. We blamed other churches and were blind to our own inconsistencies.

2.6 Those of us who have perpetuated and benefitted from apartheid are guilty of a colonial arrogance toward black culture. We have allowed State institutions to do our sinning for us. In our desire to preserve the Church we have sometimes ceased to be the Church. We have often been more influenced by our ideologies than by Christ's Gospel. We have continued to move in separate worlds while claiming to be one Body. We have insulated ourselves from the pain of black Christians. By failing sufficiently to challenge the violence of apartheid and its enforcement, we have permitted a culture of violence in which our people believe that force is the only way to deal with any dispute. Human life has become cheap. By our faltering witness we have allowed families to be broken, children to go uneducated and millions of people to be denied work. We have erected economic systems based on race. By our disunity and disrespect for other people's beliefs and opinions we have encouraged a fragmented and intolerant society. Most of all, we have been unwilling to suffer, loving our comfort more than God's justice and clinging to our privilege rather than binding ourselves to the poor and oppressed of our land.

2.7 Those of us who are the victims of apartheid acknowledge our own contribution to the failure of the Church. While colonialism and oppression have damaged our self-esteem

and eroded the fibres of "ubuntu" (humanness) which held our communities together, we acknowledge that many of us have responded with timidity and fear, failing to challenge our oppression. Instead we have acquiesced in it and accepted an inferior status. Some of us have become willing instruments of the repressive state machinery. Others have reacted to oppression with a desire for revenge. Many of us who have achieved privilege have exploited others. An indifference to suffering has crept into our communities, often leading to ostracism of those who have stood courageously for justice and truth. Some of us have failed to be instruments of peace in a situation of growing intolerance of ideological differences. Others of us have also neglected our calling to contribute to the theological renewal of the Church.

2.8 Those of us who are male confess that we have often disregarded the human dignity of women and ignored the sexism of many of our church, social, political, economic and family structures. By limiting the role and ministry of women—as was reflected in this Conference—we have impoverished the Church. We have been insensitive to the double oppression suffered by black women under sexism and apartheid.

2.9 We confess that we have prevented youth from full participation in the life of the church and have ignored the issues facing youth. We acknowledge with sorrow that apartheid has brutalised young people and turned youth against youth in conflict.

2.10 Therefore in these and other ways, all the representatives at this Conference confess that we have often let the world rather than the Gospel mould us and we have served our selfish interests rather than Christ.

2.11 With a broken and contrite spirit we ask the forgiveness of God and of our fellow South Africans. We call upon the members of our churches to make this confession their own. We call upon the Government of South Africa to join us in a public confession of guilt and a statement of repentance for wrongs perpetrated over the years.

### 3. DECLARATION

3.1 To the Church of Jesus Christ in South Africa we address an appeal to adopt our confession and pledge itself to restitution. We call for an end to racial disparities in clergy remuneration; to deploy clergy without regard to colour or social status; and to end all discrimination within the church on the basis of sex or race. We call on church leaders to carry the confessions and commitments of this Declaration into the life of every congregation in the country.

3.2 To the Nation we declare the compelling necessity for all to renounce and turn from personal, economic, social and political sin, most especially the sin of racism in both our souls and our structures. We call every South African to be positively involved in nation-building.

3.3 To Political Leaders, we express appreciation for the progress made thus far and we address an appeal that you meet urgently to negotiate a new and just order for our country. We call on the Government to repeal as a matter of urgency all apartheid laws, such as the Land Act and the Group Areas, Population Registration, Homelands, Black Local Authorities, Black Education and Internal Security Acts. We also call for the granting of unconditional indemnity to political exiles, the immediate release of all political prisoners and for the return of property confiscated from previously banned organisations. We assure all leaders of our prayers in these historic and demanding tasks.

3.4 To the World-Wide Church we declare gratitude for loving care, confrontation, prayer, support and solidarity over many years. We ask you all to continue to stand with us.

### 4. AFFIRMATION

We affirm and highlight the following:

#### 4.1 Justice

4.1.1 The Bible reveals God as a God of compassionate love who has a special care for the sinner, the downtrodden, the poor and all who suffer injustice. Obedience to Christ therefore requires that we develop an economic system based on justice, compassion and co-responsibility, so that those in need benefit more than those who have more than they need. More equitable wealth distribution must go hand in hand with economic growth.

4.1.2 After decades of oppression, the removal of discriminatory laws will have to be accompanied by affirmative acts of restitution in the fields of health care, psychological healing, education, housing, employment, economic infrastructure, and especially of land ownership. For many years, greed has led to the taking of land from the poor and weak. Both church and state must address the issue of restoring land to dispossessed people.

#### 4.2 Church and State

4.2.1 In the past we have often forfeited our right to address the State by our own complicity in racism, economic and other injustice and the denial of human rights. We also recognise that in our country the State has often co-opted the Church. The Church has often attempted to seek protection for its own vested interests from the State. Our history compromises our credibility in addressing Church-State issues.

4.2.2 We therefore commit ourselves to the struggle for a just, democratic, non-racial and non-sexist South Africa so that our witness may carry greater credibility when we address Church-State relations in the new dispensation.

4.2.3 Our highest loyalty as Christians is always to God. The State is always under God, its power is limited and it is a servant for good, firstly to God and then impartially to all the people it represents. We therefore ask that the separation of Church and State, the necessity for the freedom to believe, practise and propagate religion, and freedom of association be guaranteed equally to all.

4.2.4 On the basis of biblical and ethical values, we call upon those negotiating a new South African constitution to respect the following principles in the Constitution:

4.2.4.1 The preciousness and value of human life created in the image of God.

4.2.4.2 The exclusion of all racial, gender, class and religious discrimination in the implementation of justice.

4.2.4.3 The acceptance of the Rule of Law under an independent judiciary.

4.2.4.4 The entrenchment of a Bill of Rights subject to the judiciary alone, noting the Christian conviction that basic human rights are God-given and not therefore conferred or removable by any State.

4.2.4.5 The establishment of a democratic elective process based on one-person, one-vote on a common voters' role, in a multiparty democracy in a unitary state.

4.2.4.6 The sincere commitment to employment, housing, education, health and welfare for all South Africans.

4.2.4.7 That the power of the security machinery of the state, including the police, be limited for the protection of the population.

4.2.4.8 The embodiment of the right of individuals or religious groups to preserve and protect the moral values that affect marriage, family life and particularly moral norms. We express particular concern for the protection of children from abuse. This should be available to all religious groups in terms of their life and world view.

4.2.5 Further we call for the negotiation of a new constitution by a body clearly and fully representative of all South Africans. We ask the Government to discuss with other political parties the setting up of a form of administration or government which will ensure that the interests of all South Africans are adequately represented in the transitional period until a new constitution has been agreed upon.

#### 4.3 Peace

4.3.1 In both Old and New Testaments God's Peace or Shalom speaks of a comprehensive wholeness and rightness in all relationships, including those between God and his people, between human and human and between humans and creation. In South Africa Peace and Shalom are shattered, not only by personal but also by social and structural sin. The consequences are devastating: racial alienation, mistrust, humiliation, exploitation of humans and the environment, privation of basic needs, denial of self worth. Perhaps most devastating has been the emergence of a social climate in which violence and death rather than cooperation and life have become the norm.

4.3.2 The causes of violence include inter alia:

- Decades of exploitation of black workers leading to the creation of desperate economic inequities,
- The denial of full political rights to most South Africans,
- The resulting struggle by black South Africans against an oppressive white political system, culminating in violence becoming the norm for political response.
- The apparent emergence of "third forces" dedicated to sowing confusion,
- Poverty, inter-group rivalry and competition for limited resources,
- Power struggles between some political parties,
- The uprooting of families from their traditional homes, leading to the breakdown of family structures and parental authority,
- The resulting spiritual problems,
- Spiritual principalities and powers of evil active across the human spectrum.

4.3.3 We need to respond to the violence by:

- Mobilising church agencies to help collect evidence about violence and present it to the authorities and political organisations,
- Condemning the perpetrators of all forms of violence,
- Supporting victims materially and spiritually,
- Encouraging all South Africans to enter the process of negotiations, with conditions of safety to facilitate this being fully ensured,
- Praying for the cessation of violence and the speedy social, economic and political transformation of the land,
- Convening a task force to coordinate church strategies,
- Calling a peace conference to bring together leaders who can help end violence.

#### 4.4 Spirituality, Mission and Evangelism

4.4.1 The Church's work of mission is a consequence of its worship, prayer, fellowship and spirituality. We commit ourselves to deepen these aspects of the practise of our faith. We resolve to fulfill the Great Commission and by evangelistic faithfulness to bring men and women to repentance and personal faith, new birth and salvation and to help them to work this out in a witness which engages the world. We recognise our need for the equippingfulness of the Holy Spirit's fruit and gifts and we call on God's people to pray for spiritual renewal in the land.

## 5. RESTITUTION AND A COMMITMENT TO ACTION

5.1 Confession and forgiveness necessarily require restitution. Without it, a confession of guilt is incomplete.

5.2 As a first step towards restitution, the Church must examine its land ownership and work for the return of all land expropriated from relocated communities to its original owners. "White" schools must be opened to people of all races and programmes of affirmative action embarked upon at all levels of black education.

5.3 We call for a National Day of Prayer for the purpose of acts of intercession, confession, forgiveness and reconciliation. We urge that these be accompanied by a declaration of intention to engage in a common witness to God's love and justice. Conference requests the formation of a Liaison Committee to plan such a day of prayer and to consider the recommendation of the "Silent Minute" concept.

5.4 Conference asks churches which own private schools to review their policy on such schools with a view to making them accessible to the underprivileged.

5.5 We request the liaison committee to provide study material for use by the churches seeking to equip members with a better understanding of their mission in a new South Africa.

5.6 Conference asks churches to make available financial and human resources to enable the work of reconstruction and renewal of South African society. Conference asks churches to co-operate in programmes for the welcoming and rehabilitation of such people.

5.7 Conference requests churches and organisations present to place on their agendas as a matter of urgency the following:

- The need to work towards a new economic order in which the needs of the poor can be adequately addressed.
- Provision of work for the unemployed.
- Provision of adequate homes and essential services for the poor.
- The need to work towards parity in standards of living between black and white people.
- The need to eradicate poverty and hunger.
- Affirmative action to enable transfer of some of the economic power presently in white hands.
- Affirmative action in relation to women's rights.
- Consideration of major health issues, e.g. AIDS.

5.8 Conference authorises the steering committee to pass any information it considers might be of interest to community organisations.

## 6. CONCLUSION

We give thanks for God's past grace and faithfulness, by which He has seen fit to use so many of His people here, in spite of our many weaknesses and sins, to bear witness to His Name, to proclaim His Saving Gospel and bring blessing to many, to labour for justice and to care for the poor, oppressed and needy. We give praise in our belief that in wrath He has remembered mercy. This being so we are enabled by His Spirit to move forward together in His Name and call others to do likewise so that the Kingdom of our God and His Christ may be extended far and wide both in our land and beyond. And so to that Name which is above every name, the Name of Jesus, we ascribe all might, majesty, dominion and praise. Amen.

## PRESS STATEMENT BY THE DRC DELEGATION AT THE END OF THE CONFERENCE

1. The National Conference of Church Leaders in South Africa (Rustenburg 5-9 November 1990) was utilised by the delegation of the DRC as a special opportunity for closer acquaintance with the leaders of almost all churches in South Africa.

2. The delegation found the various addresses and group discussions illuminating. The world of those calling themselves the victims of apartheid also became much clearer.

3. As a part of his address—Understanding the Church situation in South Africa, Prof Wilhe Jonker, who was not a member of the official delegation, on his own initiative confessed his guilt for his own share in apartheid and also for that of the DRC in view of the policy document Church and Society 1990 adopted at the last synod.

The official delegation of the DRC identified itself with the confession of Prof Jonker in respect of the DRC and apartheid because it is in harmony with Church and Society 1990. It is not the understanding of the delegation that they took it on themselves to confess on behalf of the DRC because that was already done by the General Synod.

What Synod said in this regard was actually conveyed to the Rustenburg conference by the delegation.

4. The delegation accepts the Declaration of Rustenburg issued at the end of the conference as an indication of the opinion of most churches on the issues raised, and endorsed it in as far as Church and Society 1990 leaves room to do so. There are some formulations in the Declaration with which the delegation cannot agree because of being too one-sided and the delegation voiced it during the conference. The opening paragraph of the Declaration *inter alia* states it clearly that all the delegates to the conference do not agree with all the detail of the Declaration.

5. The conference was an enriching experience for the delegation of the DRC and we really desire to be involved in a follow-up of this kind of meeting. This is our conviction because we believe that in this way the Lord, his church in South Africa and also the DRC may be served and that the church may fulfill its calling in a changing South Africa.

## GENERAL SYNODICAL COMMITTEE

At a special meeting 4 December 1990 the General Synodical Committee took note of the uneasiness of some members and church councils because of certain decisions of the General Synod in October, and especially because of what happened at the conference of churches in Rustenburg.

After a thorough discussion the General Synodical Committee calls attention to the following:

1. The General Synodical Committee is content with the decisions of the General Synod in Church and Society 1990 and urgently calls on members and church councils to understand them in context.

2. The General Synod, linking up with former pronouncements on apartheid, deemed it necessary to more clearly formulate its views on apartheid.

3. The General Synod pointed out that there were also honest and noble intentions to achieve the optimal development of all population groups within their own cultural tradition, and that it would be unreasonable to brand as wrong and bad everything which took place within the political system of apartheid and to deny the positive elements achieved in various fields.

4. The General Synod pointed out that apartheid eventually became a system:

4.1 experienced by the largest part of the population as oppressive;

4.2 in reality favouring one group by a forced separation of peoples unfairly above the others;

4.3 adversely affecting the human dignity of fellowman;

4.4 in conflict with the principles of love and justice;

5. On the strength of this judgement the General Synod declared that apartheid, and any system which in practice functions in this way, is unacceptable in the light of the Scriptures and Christian conscience and must be rejected as sinful.

6. The General Synodical Committee calls attention to the fact that the General Synod judged apartheid in a qualified context and denounced this defined apartheid as sinful.

7. By saying this the General Synod did not deny the right to love your people and own cultural values. The freedom to fully realise themselves in their own cultural milieu, must be granted to all.

8. On what happened at Rustenburg the General Synodical Committee pointed out:

8.1 Prof Jonker's confession of guilt must be seen and judged against the background of the decisions of the General Synod.

8.2 Prof Jonker was no official delegate of the DRC, but was invited by the organisers as a speaker.

He was quite at liberty to personally make a confession of guilt on apartheid. However, he had no mandate to do it on behalf of the DRC.

8.3 In his confession on apartheid Prof Jonker appealed to decisions of the General Synod though he did not mention the whole context of the Synodical decisions.

8.4 The General Synodical Committee is of the opinion that the delegation of the DRC to the Conference of Churches adhered to the decisions of the General Synod when they declared that Prof Jonker in his confession of guilt on apartheid relied on the inter-church discussion, through their representatives. This can occur between two or more churches on an ad hoc or a permanent basis.

The Dutch Reformed Church maintains ecumenical relationships with other churches of Reformed confession and church polity through correspondence and/or official delegations.

In terms of Article 71.3 of the Church ordinances, in accordance with the church's calling in obedience to Holy Scripture to strive to promote and perpetuate the unity of believers in a practical way, the Dutch Reformed Church seeks liaison with churches who, generally speaking, have a Protestant-Christian confession.

Informal dialogue in respect of biblical-theological matters is also possible with those denominations and religious groups with whom the Dutch Reformed Church has no official ecumenical relationships.

The Dutch Reformed Church strives for membership of ecumenical bodies whose constitutional basis, aims, and practical expression thereof are consistent with its own confessional basis.

## A DECLARATION OF CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES

1. The Dutch Reformed Church, on the authority of the Bible and its own confession, declares its conviction that when a new constitution is drawn up for South Africa the following basic Christian principles must be incorporated:

2. the acknowledgement of the supremacy and guidance of the Almighty, Triune God, without whom no government can rule and no nation can continue to exist;

2.1 the maintenance of religious freedom which gives the church freedom of worship, the right to proclaim the Gospel, exercise its witness and to strive for a Christian ideal and lifestyle. It assumes mutual respect for religious values, practices and traditions of different religious communities and the fulfilling of their religious obligations, tuition and the rendering of service to each other;

2.2 the acknowledgement of the preciousness and the value of human life created by God. It is expressed when the quality of life of both individuals and groups are promoted by Christian convictions and attitudes to life which results in the following:

2.2.1 respect for the person and life of all people;

2.2.2 love and compassion for all people;

2.2.3 the maintenance of law, order, justice and peace whereby all forms of violence can be opposed and prevented.

2.2.4 Seeing that wrong attitudes which result from the sinfulness of man lead to the impairment of human dignity, a comprehensive bill of human rights, based on biblical principles, is needed. In this, the basic rights of the individual will be protected and it will serve as a barrier against total domination by the state. The upholding of the content of this manifesto must be tested by the courts. The basic rights which must be incorporated are the following:

2.2.4.1 the right of the individual to a full dignified existence;

2.2.4.2 the right to the preservation of one's own marriage and family life;

2.2.4.3 the right to a free and responsible participation in the political and legal processes;

2.2.4.4 the right to an education, tuition and training, according to one's own philosophy and outlook on life;

2.2.4.5 the right to participate in a free economy;

2.2.4.6 the right to protection against exploitation and victimisation by other people, groups, structures and the state;

2.2.4.7 the right to an impartial, fair trial by an independent judiciary;

2.2.4.8 the right to protection and personal safety;

2.2.4.9 the right in a multi-cultural society to freedom of movement and speech, free association, private ownership and a community life wherein one's own religious, cultural and educational beliefs can be practiced;

2.2.5 By virtue of its duty to ensure a stable society and a peaceful coexistence, the state, on the basis of the norms of reasonableness, justice and righteousness, is responsible for ensuring:

2.2.5.1 that laws will not be discriminatory on the grounds of race, colour, sex, culture or religion;

2.2.5.2 that all people are treated equally with regard to the content, application and execution of the law.

# QUESTIONS FOR THE DUTCH REFORMED CHURCH OF SOUTH AFRICA

Richard Stoll Armstrong

## Introduction

Members and associates of the Academy for Evangelism in Theological Education, let me say at the outset what a joy and privilege it has been to serve as your President for the past two years; a joy because I have come to think of all of you not only as respected colleagues but as valued friends; a privilege because I have treasured the opportunity to work in this capacity with the dedicated members of the executive committee and with all of you. I am immensely grateful for the wonderful support and cooperation I have received from you, and I know that each of my fellow officers feels the same way.

I pledge my support of President Elect Anderson, as under his leadership we look forward to celebrating next year at Lancaster Theological Seminary the 20th Anniversary of the AETE. What we have accomplished in the nineteen years of our existence is tremendously impressive, thanks to the vision of our founders, the strong and often sacrificial leadership of the officers, the creative contributions of all of you and many others, and the financial support of our members and contributing institutions.

The establishment and growth of our *Academy Journal*, for which David Watson deserves the bulk of the credit; the publication of the course syllabi notebook, for which we have Dick Peace as the primary person to thank; the solid and varied programs at our annual meetings, at which we have been continually blessed by the shared expertise and experience of so many; the opportunity to gather on the campuses of our contributing seminaries; the growth of this organization as a now highly visible and respected ecumenical forum for serious discussion of all aspects of our field; and most important, the building of personal friendships and

This address was prepared, in keeping with the South African theme, for presentation by retiring AETE President Richard S. Armstrong at the closing session of the annual meeting in Fresno, CA, in October, 1991. Because of a last-minute change of format, however, the address was not delivered. Dr. Armstrong is the Ashenfelter Professor Emeritus of Ministry and Evangelism at Princeton Theological Seminary.

relationships that transcend the usual denominational and theological barriers, are reasons why all of us can be proud to be part of this Academy. I want you to know that I regard my relationship with the AETE as my most satisfying and enjoyable professional association.

## I. CONVICTIONS

My predecessors in this office have not established any consistent pattern in their farewell addresses. Some have reminisced, some have spoken out of their own areas of research or special interest, some have addressed a topic pertinent to our field of common interest. I decided to relate my remarks to the primary theme of this year's meeting, because of my own passionate interest in the South African situation. In so doing I shall draw upon the report which I prepared for the Institute for Research Development of the South African Human Sciences Research Council, which sponsored my visit to that country in the summer of 1990.

There is no way to condense into a 45-minute address all of the thoughts, feelings and emotions evoked by my incredibly intensive visit to that beleaguered republic, which for me is a microcosm of the entire world, with all its possibilities and problems, accomplishments and contradictions, diversities and disparities. In this beautiful land, so rich in natural resources, the world-wide gulf between the affluent first-world minority and the deprived and oppressed two-thirds world is dramatically focused. I returned to America with an overpowering conviction that if South Africa can indeed build a new society, with fairness and justice for all, then there is hope for the rest of the world as well.

A corollary of that conviction is the equally strong belief that the churches have a crucial role to play in the shaping of a new South Africa. Both of these convictions grew out of hours and hours of conversations with hundreds of students, professors, church leaders, pastors and lay people of various racial, cultural, linguistic, educational, economic, and social backgrounds, and widely divergent political and theological points of view.

Based on this broad exposure to all kinds of people, on eleven different university campuses and in several different black and so-called coloured townships, in homes, offices and churches, is a powerful awareness that the churches must assume a proactive role of leadership in bringing about dramatic but peaceful change in that country, a role which raises issues of crucial importance to the ministry of evangelism.

Let me take this opportunity to express in this context my deep appreciation to Professor Malan Nel, who arranged and coordinated my itinerary, and who served as the official host throughout my visit. He was a most helpful and efficient guide and a most gracious representative of Vista University and of South Africa.

## II. IMPRESSIONS

I wish there were time to report thoroughly on what many of our South African colleagues on various theological faculties are doing to meet the

challenges of their changing society. Vista University, for example, is finding creative and imaginative ways to meet the educational needs of its students, especially urban blacks. Their program, like that of the University of South Africa, is making advanced education available to thousands of persons who could not otherwise receive it. UNISA's non-resident program enables students from far and near to obtain degrees by correspondence under the supervision of a large faculty of able, dedicated scholars. Vista University offers both a resident experience on its several campuses and a correspondence curriculum taught by its Pretoria faculty, for which graduates may receive a certificate or diploma.

Members of the theological faculty at Stellenbosch University are deeply involved in research to develop a theology for the changing times, one that is both ecumenically sensitive and politically and socially relevant. So, too, theologians at the University of the Orange Free State are discussing the need to broaden their educational program to meet the needs of the independent churches, whose members may not have the prerequisites demanded of degree candidates in the *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk*.

Seminary students, professors and pastors who attended my lectures at the University of Pochefstroom were keenly interested in hearing about how to equip the church for mission and evangelism in the contemporary world. They responded enthusiastically to a style of evangelism that takes seriously the needs of the people and the environment in which most of them live. Those who attended my open lecture at the Rand Afrikaans University in Johannesburg were equally excited to hear about the service-oriented evangelistic outreach of an American congregation which successfully met the challenge of a racially changing urban community.

Professors at the University of the Western Cape and the University of the North explained how they cope with the disruptions caused by unpredictable boycotts and the threat of violence to those who dare oppose the masses. I experienced such a boycott at the latter university, where no students showed up for classes the day I was there. The time was well spent, however, in a most productive dialogue with the faculty members. I should mention, at the same time, that eighteen black students from the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa's seminary in Qwa Qwa drove with their professor from Witsieshoek to Bloemfontein to attend two of my lectures. Their interest and enthusiasm were contagious.

One of the most stimulating exchanges for me occurred on my visit to the University of the Western Cape, where the openness and honesty of the students in sharing their political views in the context of their faith commitment was a confirmation of my own conviction that such dialogue between the races was an indispensable requisite for rebuilding the trust dissipated by political, social and ecclesiastical *apartheid*.

I must quickly add that all of my contacts with groups of students were positive, productive and exciting. There were varieties of opinion represented in every class, and it would be very difficult to generalize about a "student point of view," at least within a particular racial group. There were, of course, marked differences between the concerns and attitudes of the black and coloured students from those expressed by white students.

In speaking with faculty and administrative representatives on the

Soweto campus of Vista University I was impressed by their strong commitment to providing a quality university education in that sprawling township for students who are highly motivated, despite the extremely difficult circumstances they must often overcome to be there.

These are the kinds of concerns expressed by professors, students and administrators on the various campuses I visited. Many other pertinent subjects were covered in the hours and hours of conversation that took place during my month-long stay in South Africa. We grappled with the deepest theological, political and social issues. One of my indelible impressions from those discussions was of the immense amount of good will I found wherever I went, coupled with a widespread and sincere commitment to the shaping of a new South Africa. Over and over again I found myself wishing that the things that were being said to me by persons of various races and tribes, persons with widely differing political and theological viewpoints, could be said to and heard by each other.

### III. QUESTIONS

Because of the close relationship of the Dutch Reformed Church to the political power structures of South Africa, it has a tremendous opportunity to play a key role in the building of a more just, fair, and democratic society in South Africa. For that reason the DRC could become a model for any church facing the challenge of change, and the implications of that role for the ministry of evangelism. The situation in South Africa is so volatile and things are happening so rapidly that one feels the need to check the very latest news before offering any suggestions or making any predictions. Nevertheless, after reflecting on all that I heard and saw during my visit to that country, I framed some questions which in my opinion need to be addressed by the leaders and members of the Dutch Reformed Church, as they think about their proactive role in helping to bring about forceful, positive, peaceful, and immediate change in South Africa. I see these questions as adaptable to and relevant for any church in any society.

1. Can there be any real change of heart and mind without genuine dialogue at the grass roots level between racial groups?

Repeal of the last vestiges of *apartheid*, including the Group Areas Act, was a necessary step but no guarantee of changed attitudes. Only when blacks and coloureds feel that they have really been listened to, instead of talked to, and when their hurts are heard and their needs addressed, will their trust in the Dutch Reformed Church be restored. After talking with scores of black and coloured pastors and lay people, I am convinced that what is needed is a faith-sharing approach through which people of good will can learn that the ties that bind them are stronger than those which society has imposed to divide them. The many one-to-one conversations that must take place among ordinary people will have a much more lasting impact than the

lofty pronouncements of those in high places, whose words now have a hollow ring in the ears of the oppressed.

2. What role can a linguistically, socially, and racially homogeneous church play in solving the black-on-black violence which is now plaguing South Africa?

As the black-on-black violence continues between the ANC and the supporters of Chief Buthelezi's Inkatha, what can the Dutch Reformed Church do to ease tensions between the rival black factions? As the *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk* (NGK) remains an all-white island in the Dutch Reformed family of churches, its very language is a barrier to many blacks, who still smart from the forced use of Afrikaans, which was one of the major factors leading to the Soweto riots of 1976. Can such a church play a mediating role in the conflict, or does its very nature preclude that possibility?

To be sure, there are many people of good will who are ready to accept whatever change is necessary to bring about peace at any and all levels of their society. Before they can do so, however, they have a perception problem to overcome in the minds of many blacks. It is not what the NGK thinks it is; it's what the blacks perceive it to be.

It is easy to transpose this question to the situation in many American cities, where disenfranchised, urban blacks need to be heard by those whom they view as their oppressors. As one who has served in urban parishes, I have long tried to motivate and equip congregations for the kind of one-to-one dialogue that is absolutely essential, if there is to be a trust relationship between angry blacks and affluent, indifferent whites.

3. Is the DRC's traditional "shepherd-flock" image of pastoral leadership not counter-productive to the lay involvement and leadership needed if the church is going to be a force for positive change in South Africa?

The DRC is not the only church which operates from the shepherd-flock image! Many American Protestant churches do the same. Church members must be disabused of the notion that the pastor has to do everything in the church, and they have fulfilled all righteousness if they show up for worship on Sunday morning. They must understand and accept their role as Christ's ambassadors and witnesses in the world. Training programs will be needed to teach church members how to listen and, having earned the right to be heard, how to share their faith in a winsome way.

4. Can a doctrinally oriented, catechism-bound church learn to listen?

The catechetical method of instruction hardly lends itself to a faith-sharing approach. When Christianity is defined in terms of right thinking and rigid adherence to the prescripts of the church, proclamation becomes the paramount task of evangelism, almost always at the expense of listening, and dialogue gives way to one-way conversation. Faith sharing becomes faith telling, and listening is displaced by lecturing.

One thing was quite obvious to me, as a result of my conversations with younger black and coloured clergy and lay people: They don't want to be talked to any more. They want to be heard. Whether or not the leaders of the *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk* think they are wrong is unimportant. What matters is that their perceptions be heard and understood. "Are the leaders of the NGK aware of the depth of distrust and bitterness among so many of the blacks and coloureds?" I asked one professor at the University of the Western Cape. His blunt reply was, "No!" To be sure, there are more moderate voices among the coloureds and blacks, especially among members of the older generation, who may be less aggressive and militant in their opposition to a divided church, for example. But do they represent the wave of the future? Listening must be an inclusive process. That is, it must not be limited to those who agree with the NGK.

Conversations with a number of Indian Christians disclosed a great fear in their community that they and other Asian peoples will be caught in the middle between the whites and the blacks. They do not feel either side has their interests at heart, and they feel "squeezed out," as one person put it. What is their role in the shaping of a new society, and will their voice be heard and their fears addressed?

So again I ask, Can the Dutch Reformed Church learn to listen—really listen?

5. Can a racially divided church contribute to the building of a new society?

The *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk* to this point has been opposed to any kind of structural unity in the Dutch Reformed family. The Dutch Reformed Mission Church and the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa see the NGK's opposition as a rationale for the status quo. Actions taken by the General Synod in 1990 to remove all hindrances to open membership within the Dutch Reformed Church family and to allow ministers to be called to and from any church are important steps in the right direction, as were the confessional statements made by various participants in the interdenominational church meeting held at Rustenburg. Having heard the frustration and suspicion of many blacks and coloureds, I was disappointed but not surprised that the Dutch Reformed Mission Church and the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa did not accept the

confession. They want action not words. They will believe the confession when there is no ecclesiastical apartheid.

6. Does an encapsulated, isolated denomination bear witness to the Christian unity that is the main hope for peaceful change in South Africa?

In addition to the unity within the Dutch Reformed Church family there is a need for closer relationships with other church groups, including the South African Council of Churches and the independent churches. What kind of ecumenical theology can be developed to meet this need? It is a challenging question, but one that is being creatively and courageously addressed by members of the University of Stellenbosch theological faculty and others. Actions of the 1990 Synod and the Rustenburg Conference reflect the new commitment of the DRC to ecumenical cooperation, but there are reactionary elements within the churches who still need to be persuaded.

The research done by the Stellenbosch group who participated in the massive study of human relationships in South Africa indicated that 70-75% of the people surveyed belonged to some church. Religion was found to be the most common thread running throughout the population, yet the churches were divided. What could be the main unifying factor was in actuality the least influential! The Stellenbosch researchers are seeking a democratic solution to the problem, based on Christian principles and closer ecumenical relationships. They are asking how the *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk* can become involved in the building of genuine ecumenical relationships among the various Christian churches in South Africa.

Without a spirit of ecumenism among the denominations the effectiveness of their churches as instruments of reconciliation in any racially torn society will be severely limited if not eliminated entirely. Let us hope that the experience of the DRC in the days to come will serve as a role model for change in churches around the world.

7. Are pastors dealing realistically and forthrightly enough with these needs in their preaching and teaching ministries?

The aforementioned survey indicated that they are not. One group of researchers, chaired by a member of the Stellenbosch faculty, discovered that ministers' sermons, for the most part, have not dealt with individual and group relationships. Instead they focus almost exclusively on the perpendicular relationship between the individual and God. Their findings confirm my own observations based on conversations with pastors in the evangelism seminars and workshops I conducted. There has been very little outreach to the surrounding communities, and no encouragement from the pulpit to do so. There are, of course,

notable exceptions to this lack of an inclusive outreach. Some pastors are taking courageous stands in this regard and giving prophetic leadership to their people. And some are paying a painful price for it.

8. Are seminary students being adequately prepared for ministry in the changing world they are called to serve?

Many DRC seminary students and faculty members think not. One Stellenbosch professor described the situation this way: "The direction of our faculty is determined by the theological direction of the Dutch Reformed Church, whose ministers we are training. 99% of our students go into white, middle to upper class, Afrikaans-speaking, DRC congregations. The political, social, and economic changes that are taking place will have a drastic impact on our society. If we don't adjust our curriculum to prepare our students for the new society, we will be training them for a situation that no longer exists. Our training program is outdated, and the church at large doesn't realize it!"

"We need to have a more ecumenical view," said a professor at the University of the Orange Free State. "The whole political situation is changing. Our theological training will have to reflect a more open society, including a sensitivity to the needs of the independent churches. How can we help them? We need to be prepared and moving ahead, instead of waiting until these changes are forced upon us. Our problem is a shortage of money and teachers, and that limits our research capabilities."

Despite the pressing demand for more relevant and ecumenical seminary training, some voices within the *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk* are questioning whether there is a need for three NGK seminaries. The strategic locations of each institution, however, and the potential contribution each can make in training ministers for leadership in the new South Africa, would seem to call for expansion rather than for retrenchment. If the NGK is willing to broaden its mission and ministry to include the training of ministers for other denominations and for the independent churches, then its seminary faculties must become more ecumenical.

One of the reasons why pastors are not providing the kind of leadership needed to meet the challenges of a changing society is that they have been trained under the present system. An exciting vision for rectifying this situation is that of Professor Nel for establishing a university-based, inter-racial institute for furthering the theological education of pastors already serving churches. Dr. Nel's dream can become a reality as soon as funding is available.

9. Are there aspects of NGK polity that hamper the mission and ministry of the local church?

In addition to updating the theology of the church, the polity should also be studied to see what changes are needed to enable the NGK to function more faithfully and efficiently in a changing society. Three examples come to mind: first, the parish concept which prevents outreach across rigidly defined parish boundaries; second, the absence of a head of staff in multiple staff churches; third, the resistance to the ordination of women to the ministry of the Word and sacraments.

The first principle prevents church members from seeking a new church home when they move away from their home parish. It also prevents churches from evangelizing inactive members of other churches. Church members who move away should be encouraged to transfer their membership to a church in their new community and removed from their home church roll if they don't do that within a certain length of time. The current polity is not conducive to the equipping of churches and parishioners for mission and evangelism. The local congregation needs to view their parish as a mission field. It is encouraging to note that Prof. Johan Heyns addressed this need in an article in the South African weekly, *Die Kerkbode* (August, 1991).

The second polity principle is a barrier to church administration. Under ideal conditions a collegial style of leadership may work, but conditions are seldom ideal, and the lack of clear lines of authority makes for inefficient management. Poor communication, inadequate accountability, and confused decision-making are almost inevitable when no one is in charge, and power struggles occur among equals who are vying for congregational support. If the church is to be a positive force in the shaping of a new South African society, what is called for is strong pastoral leadership.

The third polity question concerns the ordination of women. Are the churches ready for this eventuality? The question is more than purely hypothetical. In 1990 a woman was ordained for the first time in the DRC. There were a few women among the students in some of the classes I taught. Will the churches be ready and willing to receive them when they graduate? What polity changes are needed to prepare the way? What help is being provided for the women who will be the pioneers in the radical departure from tradition which their ordination signifies? Researchers may want to draw upon our American experience in meeting this need, and in dealing with the implications of feminist theology in general.

### III. CONCLUSIONS

Although I have never spent a busier month, as my speaking itinerary would attest, I can also truthfully say that my visit to South Africa was

for me and my wife probably the most meaningful and memorable experience of our lives. What a privilege it was to be welcomed into the hearts and homes of so many beautiful representatives of every racial group. The cordiality of the people we met and the hospitality extended to us wherever we went could not have been more genuine and generous. The willingness of people to share their hopes and fears, their anger and frustration, their convictions and faith, so openly and honestly was as inspiring as it was enlightening.

The professional contacts were stimulating and productive. I was enormously impressed by the competence and commitment of my South African colleagues in the field of practical theology, and by the aptitude and receptivity of their students. It was heartwarming to discover that the theological and methodological principles I have been advocating in North America are just as relevant and applicable to black, brown and white churches in South Africa. I was also interested but not surprised to confirm my belief that pastors and lay people have the same questions and concerns about the mission and ministry of the church and about faith sharing and evangelism that the people in our country have.

I am most grateful that, although the focus of my visit was practical theology and evangelism, the continuing conversation was not limited to esoteric theological issues. On the contrary, I was thoroughly exposed to the political and social realities, and I was excited to see how relevant the theological issues are to those realities. Indeed, most of the problems which plague humankind are fundamentally theological in nature. Even so, I came away with a new awareness of the complexities of the problems that beset the nation and a much greater appreciation of all that is being done on so many different levels to solve them. I am encouraged by the good will I encountered in unexpected places, and by the countless Christian people who are committed to peaceful change. My heart goes out also to those who have declared their readiness to accept whatever sacrifices are necessary to bring about a fair and just society for all.

As I stated earlier, South Africa is a microcosm of the entire world. For churches and individual Christians it is also a laboratory wherein their responses to political and social stimuli can be tested. That is why I view the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa as a weather vane for churches here in America, where many of the same conditions and problems have yet to be addressed, let alone solved.

May God inspire and equip us to communicate in word and deed, with faithfulness and power, the good news of the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ to the changing world in which we live.

# Imperatives of the Gospel in a World of Change: A Missiologist's Reflections

Hans Kasdorf

## INTRODUCTION

Standing with others in a long theological tradition that has consistently held a high view of the Judeo-Christian scripture, in general, and the gospel of Jesus and the kingdom of God, in particular, I have chosen to address this gathering on a topic commensurate with that tradition.

But there is also a more objective reason for that choice, namely this: You and I stand vocationally in a sibling relationship. Your discipline is *Evangelistik*, mine is missiology. You train servant leaders in the ministry of evangelism, I in mission. While *Evangelistik* and Missiology are two different disciplines, and while evangelism and mission are two different ministries, they share one common denominator: The gospel of Jesus Christ and his kingdom. This, I submit, is the reason for the existence of both. Take the gospel out of mission and evangelism, and all we have left are two empty shells without life.

With those brief remarks on our common task, I now invite you to reflect with me on a few selected imperatives of the gospel in the context of a changing world.

## IMPERATIVE NO. 1: DISCERNING THE TIMES IN THE LIGHT OF THE GOSPEL

The old adage that "nothing is as constant as change" has stood the test of time. The world in which the Church has lived and served with the gospel for 2000 years is an ever-changing world. The historical movements we observe are constantly in flux, leaving one eon behind and ushering

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in another. This is certainly true of mission history since the second World War.

When we look at this period in its broadest perimeters possible, we can discern at least three main epochs, allowing, of course, space for overlap, transition, and intermediary movements within each era.

### A. The Twenty-Five Unbelievable Years 1945-1969

The Vasco da Gama era began in 1497 when the Portuguese sailor da Gama introduced European rule on Asian soil. This was the cornerstone on which Western Colonization rested for 450 years. Without closing our mind to the many devastating ramifications of this era, we must remind ourselves that one of the most phenomenal outcomes on the side of the gospel is the establishment of the Church of Jesus Christ within the cultural soil of nearly every people and tribe and tongue on this globe. But the Vasco da Gama era of Western advance and domination came theoretically to an abrupt end soon after World War II, making way for the gospel to enter another era in mission and evangelistic history.

This era of transition was ushered in "with the hideous mushroom cloud above Hiroshima on August 6, 1945," and ended 25 years later when American astronaut for the first time put down his foot on the surface of the moon.<sup>1</sup> Ralph Winter has described this epoch in a title of one of his earlier books as *The 25 Unbelievable Years*. European missiologists like Stephen Neill and Bengt Sundkler prefer to set the beginning date two years later, pointing out the significance of this era in terms of geopolitical as well as missional East-West relations. Sundkler writes:

An Indian—evidently with a sense of history—was standing on the quay at Bombay on August 15, 1947. It was the greatest day in the modern history of India: India's independence day. He saw a British ship leaving harbour, on her way to the West. Thoughtfully he said, "Well, Vasco da Gama has gone home now." In those few words he summed up the feelings of Asia about modern history; and at the same time revealed something of the new era in East-West relations.<sup>2</sup>

The ensuing political events shaped the worldwide mission of the Church as much, if not more, as the inherent changes within the missions themselves. What the Western nations had built up during 450 years of Colonialism was reversed within 25 years of retreat and devolution. These were the turbulent years of the Western World, including the 1960s, when indeed, "the world had been turned upside down," as Charles Van Engen puts it.<sup>3</sup>

Prior to 1945, according to Winter, 99.5% of the non-Western peoples were still under Western domination. But 99.5% of them had already gained their independence by the end of 1969.<sup>4</sup> As the peoples became independent nations, the churches among them became indigenous communities with their own missionary vision. Perhaps it is noteworthy that

this new vision has been keenly stimulated by the rise of the charismatic spirit in the early 1960s.

### B. Global Evangelical Mission, Consolidation 1974-1989

The rise of the Younger Churches to the position of a missionary force on a global scale is a relatively new phenomenon. That is not to say, however, that the churches which resulted from Western missionizing efforts, manifested their missionary concern only during the 1960s and 1970s. Such claim would be historically false. We know, for example, that "The National Missionary Society of India" was already founded in 1905. The churches of Samoa, West Pakistan (now Pakistan), Burma, Korea, the Philippines, Japan, and Indonesia as well as churches in numerous African countries have for many years missionized their own peoples, sent missionaries to different parts of their own lands, and even to other countries.<sup>5</sup> Yet the most notable years for the formation and consolidation of the new missionary force on a global scale are those 15 years between the two International Congresses on World Evangelization, conveniently referred to as Lausanne 1974 and Lausanne II, 1989.

At Lausanne 1974, Stephen J. Akangbe presented a brief report on "Third World Missions."<sup>6</sup> What seems evident in this report is the struggle for identity of these missions. The report presented 15 years later at Lausanne II is quite different in tone.<sup>7</sup> There is a sense of identity, vigor, and purpose pulsating with a saving gospel to be given to the world.

What Latin American mission leaders expressed two years prior to Lausanne II, serves as a summary for all Two-Thirds-World missions: "The small beginning becomes an explosion in missionary movement with the gathering of thousands of mission leaders during the COMIBAM Congress held in Brazil in 1987."<sup>8</sup> That is why Larry Pates speaks with a measure of confidence about "the changing balance in global mission" which he sees as mission "from every people"<sup>9</sup> and moving to every people.

The Ecumenical Commission on World Mission and Evangelism expressed at its 1963 Conference in Mexico City the intriguing idea about "Witness on Six Continents." The notion of a one-way street, namely the mission of the Church from the industrialized First World to the peoples of the developing Third World was seriously challenged. Some 25 years later the Evangelicals were even more emphatic. In their Manila Manifesto they called on "the whole church to take the whole gospel to the whole world." The focus here is as much on the missional task of the worldwide church as it is on the holistic nature of the gospel message. The Church of the Two-Thirds World has come of age, and its missionary force will numerically surpass that of the First World by the year 2000.<sup>10</sup>

In view of these changes it must be remembered that the peoples who once were a mission field have given birth to a growing mission force and the churches that once were mere mission churches have become missionizing churches, taking the saving gospel by every people to every people.

### C. Amazing Changes Since Glasnost 1985-Present

I venture to point out a third era of changes impacting the gospel in a yet undefinable and unpredictable manner. Perhaps we could call it—at least tentatively—the era of *glasnost* and *perestroika*. These two concepts have literally invaded the international vocabulary almost overnight since coming onto the popular scene in 1985.

Surely, no one can yet delineate the outer limits of this era. Yet everyone agrees that the geopolitical, ideological, and ecclesiastical changes in Eastern European countries and in the Soviet Union itself are nothing short of miraculous and cataclysmic. All we can do is exclaim: Amazing! Astounding! Incredible! The God of history and redemption is at work. And, just as he said to the prophet Habakkuk 2500 years ago, he calls to us, saying: "Look at the nations and watch—and be utterly amazed. For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told" (Hab. 2:5 NIV). Speaking of these momentous changes, Time magazine offered an interesting summary of events: The revolution in Poland took 10 years; that in Hungary 10 months; in Czechoslovakia the revolution was over in 10 weeks; and in East Germany the walls had crumbled in 10 days; in Rumania it all happened in 10 hours.<sup>11</sup>

In the face of these and many other revolutionary changes throughout modern history and across the globe, the gospel confronts us with imperatives which can assist us to be more effective teachers of evangelists and missionaries in the academic classroom, and to be ourselves more fruitful field workers and researchers, evangelizers and missionizers in the worldly workroom.

## IMPERATIVE NO. 2

### CLARIFYING THE NATURE OF THE GOSPEL

Two of the most frequently misunderstood concepts in missiological literature today are evangelism and mission, the very framework of the gospel. Many people use them as synonyms. When they say mission, they may mean evangelism and when they say evangelism, they may mean mission. That confuses the issue even more. The two terms cannot be equated, either linguistically or theologically. For mission is much broader than evangelism—yet evangelism is one inescapable dimension of mission, namely, the verbal dimension. And the gospel, the *evangel*, belongs to both, evangelism and mission. If we take the *evangel* out of evangelism, then all we have left is a mere ism. But what is this *evangel*?

#### A. A Journey Through Journals

In my personal quest to understand the nature of the gospel, I decided to survey 17 well-known missiological, theological, and evangelistic periodicals, generally somewhat academic in content.<sup>12</sup> These are published

on five continents and designed for international, transcultural, and ecumenical readers. I picked 10 (in one case, only five) issues from each set, dated between 1981 and 1991. This gave me a total sampling of 165 single copies to work with. A careful reading of the title of each feature article plus the titles of hundreds of shorter contributions resulted in both surprises and disappointments.

For one thing, it became apparent that contemporary missiologists and theologians of evangelism and mission are much more preoccupied with issues, strategies, and methodologies related to their respective disciplines and the dissemination of the gospel than they are with the essence of the gospel itself. There is a veritable plethora of topics, ranging all the way from the Church's ecological responsibility as an integral part of its mission in the world<sup>13</sup> to a trinitarian theology as the biblical foundation for its mission to the world.<sup>14</sup> Major concerns between these two poles revolve more around the *where*, the *how* and the *what for* of a mission than they do around the *whence*, the *why*, and the *what* of the gospel. This places the pragmatic above the reflective dimension, relegating hardly more than marginality to such foundational questions as origin, motive, and essence of the gospel.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the writers do pay attention to semantics, but the meaning of the gospel in its absolute terms seems to escape serious attention. In the 165 periodicals surveyed, there is only one article entitled "The Gospel." This deals exclusively with the nature of the good news.<sup>15</sup> There are, however, numerous other articles and contributions in which the authors eloquently treat the missionary and evangelistic tasks by defining such related concepts as mission, evangelism, evangelizing, evangelization, and evangelist.<sup>16</sup>

In seeking to clarify evangelism, David Watson points out that the evangelistic task assumes the Church's faithfulness to the *evangel* not only in verbal proclamation, but also in its entire life and work.<sup>17</sup> While he is certainly right in his claim to the holistic nature of the evangelistic task, he does fall short of explaining the *evangel* itself.

Moreover, these articles—not unlike books dealing with missiological issues—frequently address the much debated theological question of the relationship between the *kerygma* and *diakonia*, or between gospel proclamation and social action.<sup>18</sup> While the major battlefield at this juncture is fought between ecumenical theology of mission of the conciliar movement and evangelical theology of mission of the nonconciliar movement, the one common fundamental issue is one of interpreting the gospel.

David Bosch reminds us that, from an ecumenical perspective, the gospel is not intended for the human soul only, but for the whole person; it is not meant to be for the individual only, but for the whole of society;<sup>19</sup> it does not address personal sin only, but also the evil structures. The evangelicals have a somewhat different perception. They understand the gospel first and foremost as a message of forgiveness of personal sin equated with salvation and eternal life. Thus on the one hand, we have the evangelicals charging the "ecumenicals" for preaching "a diluted gospel";<sup>20</sup> that often leaves the sin and the soul untouched. On the other hand, we have the ecumenicals faulting the evangelicals for proclaiming "an emaciated

gospel."<sup>21</sup> That may leave the body in misery and death.

Refreshing, however, are several articles which address this delicate question in a more conciliatory tone than the one found in *The Battle for World Evangelism*.<sup>22</sup> Fully cognizant of the danger of a one-sided interpretation of the gospel, a more balanced approach is becoming evident with increasing frequency. Both sides realize that they have not yet arrived, and that neither one can claim exclusive monopoly on either doing justice and thereby giving witness to the gospel or on proclaiming the gospel and thereby seeking to do justice. In a "Letter from those with Evangelical Concerns at San Antonio to the Lausanne II Conference," the drafters state:

Evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty, as the Lausanne Covenant of 1974 reaffirmed. Many thousands of evangelicals have found innovative ways to issue the invitation to follow Jesus Christ in the context of engaging in social action. Encouraged by what we have seen God do through these, we give thanks to God and urge you to pursue a stronger relationship between proclaiming and demonstrating the good news in relation to the social and political dimensions of life.<sup>23</sup>

Summarizing the Lausanne Movement's position from its beginning to the present, Robert Coote seems to reinforce the above statement by calling for "holistic evangelism," "integral evangelism," and "integrity of mission,"<sup>24</sup> which must always have the gospel in the center of service.

Finally, it is also noteworthy that one of the most frequently raised issues is that of the gospel in relation to other faiths, particularly to Islam. This question has been around for many decades. It has occupied center stage in ecumenical discussions since the Jerusalem Conference in 1928. Yet only in quite recent times has it also received serious attention in the theological and missiological teachings and writings by men and women of evangelical persuasion. Such articles as "Rediscovering the Doctrine of Lostness" by the Sri Lankan Ajith Fernando; "The Challenge of Other Religions," by Collin Chapman of England; "The Christian Gospel and World Religions," by the American Ralph Covell, and "Christian Communication and Religious Pluralism: Capitalizing on Differences," by David Hesselgrave, also American, are but few examples.<sup>25</sup>

The relationship of the salvific claim of the Christian *evangel* to the soteriological claims in other religions constitutes, in my judgment, a most compelling and urgent imperative to clarify the nature of the gospel to our generation and the generation that will follow us. That may mean that professors of evangelism and missiology will have to engage in serious biblical scholarship as well as in the theology of religions. They will have to submit articles to our religious periodicals on the nature and essence of the gospel of God and his Christ. For it is the gospel that claims exclusive salvation in Jesus.

## B. Human Language and Biblical Theology

It is interesting that our English word "gospel" has linguistically no resemblance to the Greek *euangelion* or the Latin *euangelium*, or to any of the Romance and Germanic designations of the term. Yet semantically it does. If we strip the prefix (*eu*) and the suffix (*ion*) from the noun *euangelion*, we have a brand new word, namely *angel*; an English word at that. An angel is generally defined as a messenger or one who brings a good, or joyous, or glad report. An angel is an announcer of good news. That is also the meaning of our English word *gospel*.

But there is a slight difference in the origin of the good news as *euangelion* and as *gospel*. At least so the Anglo-Saxons seem to have thought. For them, *gospel* was the *god-spell* or simply the *God-story* itself. But the Germans and the French and the Portuguese had only an *angel-story*. Happily, however, in the course of time that *euangelion* or *angel-story* became considered to be as good as the *god-spell* or the *God-story*. According to William Tyndale, the great reformer and Bible translator before the Protestant Reformation, the word "gospel" signified "good, mery, glad and ioyfull tydinge, that maketh hym synge, daunce, and leepe for ioye."<sup>26</sup>

The New Testament scholar, R. H. Mounce, traces the word *gospel* to its historical roots. He points out that while *euangelion* was used occasionally in pre-Christian and outside of early Christian literature, it is today "quite distinctively a NT word." Its writers use it more than 75 times "with the specific connotation of good news."<sup>27</sup> Jesus himself used the term *euangelion* as a broad description of his message. What was predicted about the Messiah in the Old Testament, Jesus declared as fulfilled by him in the New Testament. He saw his message of the coming kingdom of God (Mk. 1:14) already present in his word and deed as the *evangel*, the good news. "Blessed are your eyes, because they see, and your ears, because they hear," he said to his disciples (Mt. 13:16). "This message of joy," observes U. Becker, "is no longer to be separated from the messenger who brings it, and this messenger is Jesus himself."<sup>28</sup> The writers of the four Gospels retell this God-story as they have heard, seen, and experienced it.

In Paul's mind, there was no doubt that the word *euangelion* makes the message and the messenger inseparable. He uses the term at least 60 times throughout his epistles, except in Titus. He has used the word *gospel* 23 times in absolute terms without further qualification to describe the content of the message. For Paul, then, the "*euangelion* has become a central concept of his theology." It is for him the embodied God-story, the familiar good news "that God has acted for the salvation of the world in the incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus."<sup>29</sup>

Hugh Wetmore of South Africa suggests that "there are six texts of Scripture in which the Holy Spirit specifically reveals the content of the gospel message." They are Rom. 1:1-17; 2:16; I Cor. 15:1-4; Col. 1:21-23; II Tim. 1:8-11; and II Tim. 2:8. A careful reading of these passages results in a list of at least nine fundamental gospel themes: (1) Jesus is the Christ (8x); (2) Jesus is descended from David (2x); (3) Jesus died on the cross (5x); (4) Jesus rose from the dead (3x); (5) human beings are sinners (2x); (6) sinners can and must believe the gospel (4x); (7) faith results in salvation, justification,

reconciliation, and eternal life (9x collectively); (8) the gospel is given in the Scriptures (3x); and (9) human beings must continually be reminded of the gospel (2x). This gospel is qualitatively described as the "gospel of Jesus/Christ" (14x) and the "gospel of the kingdom" (9x).<sup>30</sup>

## C. From the Technical to the Practical

All this is highly significant on two counts, as Wetmore points out. For one thing, "the gospel belongs to Jesus Christ. It has its source in him. It is all about him—who he is, and what he has done in grace." The gospel is not a theoretical proposition, but a person: Jesus Christ. Every reference to the gospel in that brief analysis of passages just made is also a reference to Jesus Christ, the God-Man who died, who rose, who lives, who saves. Thus it is the person of Jesus Christ, the God-Man, who fills the God-story. Here, then, lies the answer to the question of the *whence*, the *what*, and the *why* of the gospel.

The second point is that the gospel is the gospel of the kingdom of God. Paul writes to the Ephesians (1:19-21) that God exerted incomparably great power when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realm far above all rule and authority, power and dominion. All things and all principalities are subject to him. He is King. He is Lord. He rules. Thus, "the gospel of the kingdom emphasizes that in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, God has demonstrated his conquest of all evil, and his kingly rule over all creation."<sup>31</sup> This is the position from which Jesus utters his so-called Great Commission.

When we look at the nature of the gospel in this way, then we begin to appreciate the passion with which Paul and Peter preached. A few selected mission sermons recorded by Luke in the Book of Acts (2:14-40; 10:27-44; 13:16-48; 17:16-31) yield similar results about the nature of the gospel as we have gleaned from Paul's Epistles. F. F. Bruce summarizes the major elements of the gospel contained in these sermons:

1. The prophecies have been fulfilled and the new age inaugurated by the coming of Christ; 2. he was born into the family of David; 3. he died according to the Scriptures, to deliver his people from this evil age; 4. he was buried, and raised again the third day, according to the Scriptures; 5. he is exalted at God's right hand as Son of God, Lord of living and dead; 6. he will come again to judge the world and consummate his saving work.<sup>32</sup>

Paul and Peter were convinced of the truth of the gospel. It is the truth that sets men and women free. They believed it. They proclaimed it. They practiced it. What Mounce says so eloquently about Paul could also be said of Peter:

Paul's ministry was distinctively that of the propagation of the gospel. Unto this gospel he was set apart (Rom. 1:1) and made

a minister according to the grace of God (Eph. 3:7). His special sphere of action was the Gentile world (Rom. 16:16; Gal. 2:7), it was necessary that in the discharge of this obligation he speak so as to please God rather than man (I Tim. 2:4). The divine commission had created a sense of urgency that made him cry out, "Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel" (I Cor. 9:16). For the sake of the gospel Paul was willing to become all things to all men (I Cor. 9:22-23). No sacrifice was too great. Eternal issues were at stake. Those whose minds were blinded and did not obey the gospel were perishing and would ultimately reap the vengeance of divine wrath (II Cor. 4:3; II Thess. 2:9). On the other hand, to those who believed, the gospel had effectively become the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16).<sup>33</sup>

Such, then, is the nature of the gospel. And we are its communicators both in an academic setting and in the practical laboratory of the world.

### IMPERATIVE NO. 3: CONSIDERING THE CENTRALITY OF THE GOSPEL

As pointed out earlier, both conciliars and non-conciliars within the Protestant tradition of Western Christianity have expended much energy and time, written many books and articles, held many conferences and congresses, delivered many addresses and lectures, and drafted many declarations and affirmations over the issue of evangelism and social concern in mission.

While all this may have been done with the best of intentions and the purest of motives, and while much has been accomplished in terms of moving forward with an evangelistic passion to fulfill the so-called "Great Commission," and while the chasm between the evangelical and the ecumenical segments of Protestantism is gradually narrowing, the "battle for evangelism" or the battle for social action has been very costly to both sides: It has also been detrimental to the gospel, barring it from central place in the total mission of the global Church.

#### A. Unfortunate Division

Current missiological literature covers an enormously broad range of interesting topics. But among them are also subjects that sadden both soul and mind. The debate about priority of the *kerygma* over the *diakonia* or verticalism vs. horizontalism belongs to this disturbing category. This is not to suggest that the debate has created the division; rather the reverse seems to be true. The sad part is the reality of it, causing serious tensions which are more destructive than creative.

As a case in point, I call attention to two major world missionary conferences: The Commission for World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches convened in Melbourne, Australia, in May 1980; the Consultation on World Evangelization of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization met in Pattaya, Thailand, in June of the same year.

The theme at Melbourne was a prayer: "Your Kingdom Come"; the theme at Pattaya was a question: "How Shall They Hear?" The difference between vision, mood, philosophy, theology, and approach has been analyzed by David Bosch, who was present at both meetings. His perceptive observations can help us understand more appropriately the hiatus between the two groups:

MELBOURNE	PATTAYA
Shows a preference for the "Jesus language" of the Gospels.	Shows a preference for the language of Paul's epistles.
Emphasises the present.	Emphasises the past and the future.
Begins with "man's disorder".	Begins with "God's design".
Stresses unity (at the expense of truth?).	Stresses truth (at the expense of unity?).
Believes that God also reveals himself through contemporary experience.	Believes that God reveals himself only through Jesus Christ (and in Scripture/the Church).
Emphasises the deed (orthopraxis).	Emphasises the word (orthodoxy).
Social involvement is part and parcel (or all?) of the Christian mission.	Social involvement is separate from mission, or a result of conversion.
Societal ethics of prime importance.	Personal ethics of prime importance.
Sin is also corporate.	Sin is exclusively individual.
Mission=humanisation=social change.	Mission=a call to repentance=a gathering into congregations.
The kerygma renders support to the koinonia and the diakonia.	The kerygma is primary; it gives birth to the koinonia and the diakonia.
Emphasises liberation.	Emphasises justification and redemption.
Hears the cry of the poor and the oppressed.	Hears the cry of the lost.
Considers man from the perspective of creation.	Considers man from the perspective of the Fall.
Judges the world positively.	Judges the world negatively.
There are no clear boundaries between the Church and the world.	The boundaries between the Church and the world are clearly defined.
Regards the world as the main arena of God's activity.	Regards the Church as the main arena of God's activity.

Underscores the Church's credibility.  
Is concerned about witnessing where the Church is.  
Divides the world into rich and poor, oppressor and oppressed.  
Reveals a proclivity towards socialism.  
Highlights Jesus' human nature.  
Focusses attention on the universality of Christ.

Underscores the Church's opportunities.  
Is concerned about witnessing where the Church is not.  
Divides the world into "people groups".  
Reveals a proclivity towards capitalism.  
Highlights Jesus' divine nature.  
Focusses attention on the uniqueness of Christ.

This juxtaposition of two approaches may, on the one hand, be an oversimplification of the theological underpinnings in the debate. On the other hand, however, it does present a helpful schema to compel both conciliars and non-conciliars to look at the nature of the gospel as being central to evangelism and mission with all social concerns.

At the 1968 Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Uppsala, the ecumenicals were so profoundly preoccupied with social action to change the world structures that there was little or no room for evangelistic concern. This compelled John R. Stott to reflect on the Great Commandment and the Great Commission, trying to bridge one obvious gap. "Our neighbor," says Stott, "is neither a bodyless soul that we should love on his [her] soul, nor is he [she] a soulless body that we should care for its welfare above."<sup>35</sup> Yet the division continues, and the centrality of the gospel suffers.

## B. Vignettes From a Denomination's Files

To sharpen the imperative of the centrality of the gospel in both mission and evangelism, I here offer a brief reflection on an earlier study based on the mission records of my own denomination.<sup>36</sup>

1. Preliminary comments. The development of the Mennonite Brethren theology of mission has gone through at least four clearly discernible periods. First, we have the period of an implicit theology (1885-1936). Very little was explicitly written or spoken about it. Things happened spontaneously, but they were carried out with great compassion in a holistic manner. Then came the second period which can be identified as a salvationist theology of mission. It lasted for about 20 years. In 1957 a third emphasis emerged with a focus on the kingdom of God, but without a rejection of the salvationist emphasis. With the decade of the 1980s began a fourth emphasis, namely, a focus on a trinitarian theology. But there was no negation of any of the earlier emphases. Thus the older the denomination becomes, the more layers it adds to its theology of mission.<sup>37</sup> That is not bad, as long as the gospel is not covered up in the process.

2. Priorities affirmed. It is striking how often the Mennonite Brethren have felt the need to reaffirm the priority of evangelism in mission and how the priority language is sharply highlighted.

a. At the 1960 Centennial Convention in Reedley the Conference adopted as part of a longer resolution that "in consideration of the great spiritual urgency of our day to complete the assignment of Christ to 'preach the gospel to every creature' the Mennonite Brethren Church should renew its dedication to the sacred assignment of the world evangelization committed to the Church by our risen and ascending Lord who calls us 'to finish His work' " (GCY, 1960:97).

b. In view of the postwar tendency of institutionalization of foreign mission, the Board of Missions expressed concern at the 1963 Convention in Winnipeg "that the primacy of direct evangelism be not overshadowed by institutionalism or social and cultural concerns in our brotherhood and mission enterprise, important and attractive as they may be" (GCY, 1963:60).

c. When the Board of General Welfare and Public Relations merged with the Board of Missions to form the Board of Missions and Services in Corn, Oklahoma in 1966, the Conference issued a special "Statement of Principles," and affirmed its belief "that the proclamation of the gospel is the primary task of the church."

d. In 1969 the language was even made stronger. A statement of Conference priorities said: "In all we do, we will be clear in our top priority: winning people for Christ and the establishment of His church. All other ministries are important, but subordinate to this" (GCY, 1969:50).

e. At the Conference in Reedley in 1972, Church Growth language is added to priority language, the General Secretary stated that the Mennonite Brethren were free to reaffirm their priorities. He then added:

We will affirm our priority of church planting evangelism. In this hour of mission opportunity we will stick close to the Word that teaches that all men are lost and that there is no other name in heaven or earth than Jesus whereby men may be saved. (GCY, 1972:27)

f. In 1975 the Board of Missions/Services asked the Conference to endorse as mission priority "to evangelize and plant churches" (GCY, 1975:108). In 1978 the Chairman of the Board reiterated the "highest priority of evangelism, church planting, and indigenization of national churches" (GCY, 1978:67). Three years later he focused on "telling the good news" and on being agents of reconciliation (GCY, 1981:97).<sup>38</sup>

3. Polarizing language. The language of prioritization in holistic mission is actually the language of polarization. A promotional pamphlet entitled, "Telling the Good News," states that "Mennonite Brethren Missions/Services stresses evangelism as its first priority." Such language is confusing. When we keep the gospel central in mission and evangelism there is neither a need to prioritize the proclamation of the gospel nor a need to defend ministries of a social dimension. The kerygma of God's Word for souls and the diakonia of good works as service to the body are integral components of holistic mission to people in a broken world. Where, on the one hand, there is only kerygma when people suffer from desperate physical hardships or political oppression the missionary message without a diaconal component is exposed to emaciation and thereby placed

in jeopardy of losing its credibility. But the reverse is also true: Where, on the other hand, the missionary message is reduced to mere *diakonia* of horizontal concerns without confronting men and women with the claims of Christ for the salvation of their sinful being it is no more than a diluted gospel without the power to save the soul.<sup>39</sup> As soon as one is neglected at the expense of the other, there is no longer holistic mission.

In all mission reports and resolutions adopted by the Conference between 1954 and 1984 the focus is on establishing the priority of proclamation over social concern. But why, we must ask, did the Mennonite Brethren feel the need for repeated defense of prioritization? Were they afraid of losing credibility in the supporting constituency? Or was there an inherent fear that the redemptive message so central in salvationist theology would erode and become diluted by the added emphasis of social ministries? Whatever the reasons may be, the tension between evangelism and social concern is obvious, a tension which the Mennonite Brethren have never been able to resolve.

### C. An Attempted Solution

Very much like other denominations, the Mennonite Brethren equate evangelism with mission and mission with evangelism. As stated earlier, the two concepts have much in common, but they are not synonymous. Mission is much more comprehensive and inclusive than evangelism in its approach to the multidimensional needs of humankind.

Mission is the Church sent by God to cross frontiers towards the world in order to witness in the power of the Spirit on the other side of those frontiers. The content of that witness is the gospel of Jesus and his kingdom. That gospel means "to love, to serve, to preach, to teach, to heal," and to help.<sup>40</sup> The gospel, then, is the very center of every aspect of mission, touching the spiritual as well as the material, the eternal as well as the temporal dimensions of humankind's need. That is also how the 1982 Grand Rapids Report understands mission.

Evangelism is an indispensable ingredient of mission. It means to tell the God-story; it means to tell the good news about Jesus. As Bosch puts it:

Evangelism is the core, heart or center of mission; it consists in the proclamation of salvation in Christ to non-believers, in announcing forgiveness of sin, in calling people to repentance and faith in Christ, in inviting them to become living members in Christ's earthly community, and to begin a life in the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>41</sup>...If you cut the heart out of a body, that body becomes a corpse. With [the gospel and] evangelism cut out, mission dies; it ceases to be mission.<sup>42</sup>

There is, then, no mission without evangelism, for evangelism is the heart of mission, but it is not the priority of mission. As soon as we prioritize, we also dichotomize; we are left with the impression that we have a choice to make; we can do one and leave the other undone. But when we uphold

evangelism as central to mission and the gospel as central to both, then we have no choice but to evangelize as we missionize<sup>43</sup> and to render service as we present the gospel.

## IMPERATIVE NO. 4:

### REDEFINING THE OBJECT OF THE GOSPEL

God himself, in his Trinitarian grace, greatness, and glory, is the ultimate subject of mission. The world, in its fallen alienation, brokenness, and sinfulness, is the real object of mission. But the image of this object has greatly changed over the last 50 years or so. And the change is continuing.

During the entire Vasco da Gama era, for example, only the so-called "pagan world" was perceived to be the object of mission. Only the not-yet-Christians had to be evangelized, missionized, and Christianized. But such view of the object of mission does no longer hold, and the real mission object merits redefinition.

#### A. An Indefensible Position

The Dutch missiologist Johannes Verkyl makes an interesting point about evangelism and mission. He believes that the communication of one's Christian faith in Western society that is nominally churchled should be seen as the task of evangelism, while missiology should center on communicating that same faith in "regions of Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean."<sup>44</sup> The argument is, on the one hand, that evangelism is for those who are either no longer Christians or only nominally so. "It refers to the calling back to Christ...those who have become estranged from the church. Mission, on the other hand, means calling to faith those who have always been strangers to the gospel. It refers to those who are not yet Christians."<sup>45</sup>

While this is still a commonly held view in continental Europe, and while it may be appealing because of its clear-cut definitions, it is missiologically difficult to defend. For one thing, to say that the peoples of the first world are Christian is as untenable as it is to say that the peoples of the Two-Thirds World are all pagan. Furthermore, this view also assumes that those who are no longer Christian will respond to the evangelistic message and those who are not yet Christian will not respond to evangelism and, therefore, the broader meaning of mission must be used.

#### B. From Western Mission To World Mission

The era of evangelical mission consolidation on a global scale mentioned earlier was also an era when mission leaders and critics faulted traditional mission agencies with prolonging Western paternalism in non-Western

lands. These discussions gave rise to the Moratorium debate that came to a head at the 1975 Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Nairobi.

The call was for the Western missionary to go home and to put a hold on Western missions. But that in no way meant the end of mission; it meant the end only of Western mission; it meant the end of mission as a one-way street—from the Western World to the rest of the world. This is in some circles still the prevailing understanding of mission.

For many people mission has to be far away to be authentic. There is what I call a lingering geography syndrome that is perpetuated by promoting foreign mission instead of world mission.

There is, of course, a compelling call to engage in cross-cultural mission. Such a call we can only endorse. To some, this may mean foreign mission if it requires a move to a foreign country. To others, it may mean home mission if it requires merely a trip from Fresno to Los Angeles within the United States or a trip from Curitiba to São Paulo within the boundaries of Brazil. Yet in each case it may mean cross-cultural mission, depending on the continental situation. But in each case it does mean world mission. Even such terms as home mission and foreign mission are of little value to define our mission object in a pluralistic world.

### C. A Gospel Object With Many Faces

Ever since the early 1980s mission leaders and evangelists the world over have become deeply concerned with the rapid de-Christianization process of the First World, touching particularly the countries where Protestantism has had deep historical roots. Some even speak of a repaganization process and its resulting neopaganism. Thus the myth of a "Christian America" or a "Christian Europe" has been demythologized. It just does not exist.

The Mennonite missiologist Roelf Kuitse has shown that the crisis of Western culture is most often described by the terms *secularization* and *neopaganism*. "The view behind the first word is that modern life has become desacralized. The other word, neopaganism, points to the phenomenon of resacralization." Operating on the assumption that desacralization results in secularization and eventually produces a religionless society, Kuitse maintains that neopaganism is the ultimate product of resacralization. This is the society that has made secularism to be its new religion. In its craving for religionlessness, it has produced a new religiousness, dominated by *New Demons*, as Jaques Ellul has put it.<sup>46</sup>

All this points to the widely-held belief by sociologists and students of religion that a society cannot exist without some form of the sacred. Even when the gods become fragmented, there are still the habits of the human heart that cannot be without the religious. In his recent book *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, Bishop Lesslie Newbigin makes a very pertinent observation on this point, saying:

In the face of the statistical evidence of the survival and vigor of religion in the most highly secularized societies, sociologists no longer accept the theory which has had so much currency since the time of Weber's writing. Sociologists have accumulated a great mass of statistical material which demonstrates the continuing and often greatly increased vigor of religious belief in that society which has proceeded farthest along the road of rationalization, industrialization, and urbanization—namely the United States.<sup>47</sup>

It is this new state of a non-Christian religious reality in the context of a traditional Christendom that compelled Alfred Krass to write his book on *Evangelizing Neopagan North America*.<sup>48</sup> Since then, many other world Christian leaders have written about "Re-Evangelizing the First World" and "The Re-Evangelization of a Continent."<sup>49</sup>

This is only one face of the gospel object in our day. It is not an attractive face nor is it easily attracted to the gospel. I tell my students that it is easier to talk with a pre-Christian genuine pagan about the gospel of Jesus Christ than it is to discuss the claims of the gospel with a post-Christian neopagan. Yet this is one of the challenging objects of the gospel of salvation in Jesus.

But a redefinition of the object of the gospel has many other faces. There are the megacities with their millions in the slums and their millions in the skyscrapers and other millions in modest dwellings and the thousands in rich houses. There are the oppressed and the oppressors; there are the sinning and the sinned against. Then there are the unreached peoples—not only millions, but billions of them. Some are far away. Others live nearby. All of these—and many more—constitute the multifaceted object of the gospel. The gospel calls for a redefinition of the missional boundaries in order to prevent stockpiling in one place and deprivation in another.

## CONCLUSION

I have tried to reflect on four imperatives of the gospel in a world of change: The gospel demands (1) that we discern the times and eras and what they mean for our missional task; (2) that we understand the very essence of the gospel in terms of its whence and what and why; (3) that we give full centrality of the gospel to our missional and evangelistic work; and (4) that we redefine the multifaceted object of the gospel in a fallen world.

And with a note from the drafters of the Grand Rapids Report I conclude with a prayer, namely that the imperatives of the gospel of Jesus Christ in a world of change can inspire us to bring this very gospel to the lost and the needy and the oppressed for the greater glory of God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Ralph D. Winter, *The 25 Unbelievable Years 1945-1969* (Pasadena: Carey, 1970).
- <sup>2</sup> Bengt Sundkler, *The World of Mission* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), p. 94.
- <sup>3</sup> Joel A. Carpenter and Wilbert R. Shenk, eds., *Earthen Vessels: American Evangelicals and Foreign Missions, 1880-1980* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), p. 217.
- <sup>4</sup> Winter, *The 25*, p. 12.
- <sup>5</sup> Sundkler, *The World*, pp. 64-66.
- <sup>6</sup> J. D. Douglas, ed., *Let the Earth Hear His Voice* (Minneapolis: World Wide, 1975), pp. 1302-1303.
- <sup>7</sup> J. D. Douglas, ed., *Proclaim Christ Until He Comes* (Minneapolis: World Wide, 1990), pp. 390-392.
- <sup>8</sup> Douglas, *Proclaim*, p. 391.
- <sup>9</sup> Larry Pates, "The Changing Balance in Global Mission," *IBMR* 15, No. 2 (April 1991), 56-61. See also his book, *From Every People: A Handbook of Two-Thirds World Missions* (Monrovia: MARC, 1989).
- <sup>10</sup> Pates, "The Changing Balance," p. 60.
- <sup>11</sup> *Time*, January 1, 1990.
- <sup>12</sup> An alphabetical listing of the journals and magazines surveyed with the country of publication in parentheses after each title follows: (1) *Asia Missions Advance* (India); (2) *Bibliotheca Sacra* (U.S.A.); (3) *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* (U.S.A.); (4) *Evangelical Review of Theology* (U.K.); (5) *Evangelikale Missiologie* (Germany); (6) *Global Church Growth* (U.S.A.); (7) *Idea Spektrum* (Germany); (8) *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* (U.S.A.); (9) *International Review of Mission* (Switzerland); (10) *Journal of the Academy for Evangelism in Theological Education* (only 5 issues published to date) (U.S.A.); (11) *Missiology: An International Review* (U.S.A.); (12) *Missionalia* (Republic of South Africa); (13) *Mission Focus* (U.S.A.); (14) *Mission Studies* (U.K.); (15) *Occasional Papers* (Costa Rica); (16) *World Evangelization* ([discontinued] Singapore); (17) *Zeitschrift für Mission* (Germany).
- <sup>13</sup> The entire issue of *IRM* (No. 314, April 1990) is devoted to the theme: "Spirit and Mission: Renewing the Earth." The Southern African journal *Missionalia* 19, No. 1 (April 1991) also carries several articles on the ecological question and mission.
- <sup>14</sup> Robert S. Anderson, "Mission...In the Way of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit," *IRM* No. 309 (October 1988), 487-490; A. H. Mathias Zahniser, "The Trinity: Paradigm for Mission," *Missiology* 17, No. 1 (January 1989), 69-84; Harold Hong Shik Shin, "The Mission of God," *Asian Missions Advance* 23 (November 1981), 3-12.
- <sup>15</sup> Hugh Wetmore, "The Gospel," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 14, No. 3 (July 1990), 225-235.
- <sup>16</sup> David Lowes Watson, "Evangelism: A Disciplinary Approach," *IBMR* 7, No. 1 (January 1983), 6-9; World Council of Churches, "Mission and Evangelism—An Ecumenical Affirmation," *IBMR* 7, No. 2 (April 1983), 65-71. Lesslie Newbigin, "Crosscurrents in Ecumenical and Evangelical Understandings of Mission," *IBMR* 6, No. 4 (October 1982), 146-151; cf. 146-155.
- <sup>17</sup> Watson, "Evangelism," p. 6.
- <sup>18</sup> Cf. "Mission and Evangelism—An Ecumenical Affirmation," *IBMR* 7, No. 2 (April 1983), 65-71; Valdir R. Steuernagel, "Social Concern and Evangelization: The Journey of the Lausanne Movement," *IBMR* 15, No. 2 (April 1991), 53-56.
- <sup>19</sup> David Bosch, *Witness to the World: The Christian Mission in Theological Perspective* (Atlanta: Knox, 1980), p. 212.
- <sup>20</sup> Bosch, *Witness*, pp. 212-220.
- <sup>21</sup> Bosch, *Witness*, pp. 202-211.
- <sup>22</sup> Arthur Johnston, *The Battle for World Evangelism* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1978).
- <sup>23</sup> The letter is found in *IRM* No. 31/32 (July-October 1989), 431-435. See p. 433.
- <sup>24</sup> Robert T. Coote, "Lausanne II and World Evangelization," *IBMR* 14, No. 1 (January 1990), 10-17.
- <sup>25</sup> See *World Evangelization*, No. 49 (November-December 1987), 18-19-21; No. 50 (January-February 1988), 14; No. 62 (November-December 1989-January 1990), 16-18; *IBMR* 15, No. 1 (January 1991), 12-17; *Missiology* 18, No. 2 (April 1990), 131-138.
- <sup>26</sup> Quoted by R. H. Mounce, "Gospel," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), p. 472.
- <sup>27</sup> Mounce, "Gospel," pp. 472-473.

- <sup>28</sup> U. Becker, "Gospel," in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977), Vol. 2, p. 110. (Hereafter NIDNT).
- <sup>29</sup> Becker, NIDNT, Vol. 2, pp. 110-111.
- <sup>30</sup> Wetmore, "The Gospel," pp. 226-227.
- <sup>31</sup> Wetmore, "The Gospel," pp. 227-228.
- <sup>32</sup> F. F. Bruce, "Gospel," in *New Dictionary of Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1988).
- <sup>33</sup> Mounce, "Gospel," p. 473.
- <sup>34</sup> David J. Bosch, "In Search of Mission: Reflections on 'Melbourne' and 'Pattaya,'" *Missionalia* 9, No. 1 (April 1981), 5-6.
- <sup>35</sup> John R. W. Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1975), p. 29.
- <sup>36</sup> See Hans Kasdorf, "Centrality Instead of Priority: An Emerging Philosophy of Mennonite Brethren Missions," *Direction* 16, No. 1 (Spring 1987), 27-36. The observations in this section are from this article given with only minor changes.
- <sup>37</sup> Cf. Hans Kasdorf, "Toward a Mennonite Brethren Theology of Mission," *Mission Focus* 16 (March 1988), 1-6.
- <sup>38</sup> Kasdorf, "Centrality," pp. 32-33.
- <sup>39</sup> Cf. Bosch, *Witness*, pp. 203-270.
- <sup>40</sup> David J. Bosch, "Mission and Evangelism: Clarifying the Concepts," *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft* 68 (July 1984), 169.
- <sup>41</sup> Bosch, "Mission," p. 170.
- <sup>42</sup> Bosch, "Evangelism," p. 100.
- <sup>43</sup> Kasdorf, "Centrality," p. 36.
- <sup>44</sup> *Contemporary Missiology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1878), p. 9.
- <sup>45</sup> Bosch, "Evangelism," pp. 98-99.
- <sup>46</sup> Roelf Kuitse, "Neo-Paganism," *Mission Focus* 16, No. 3 (September 1988), 41.
- <sup>47</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), p. 212.
- <sup>48</sup> (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1982).
- <sup>49</sup> See the entire issue of *World Evangelization* 16, No. 60 (July-August 1989); also 15, No. 55 (November-December 1988), 30-31.

## CRITICAL GOSPEL ISSUES CONFRONTING US

Milton L. Rudnick

### INTRODUCTION

Those of you who understand humour and who use it effectively are well aware of the importance of the punchline. A good punchline well-delivered makes the joke and evokes a delightful explosion of laughter. A forgotten or bungled punchline evokes only yawns and groans. The punchline is more than important. It is everything. Whatever else goes with it is preparation for the punchline or reaction to it.

My topic, "Critical Gospel Issues Confronting Us," focuses in on the punchline of the Christian message. The gospel is that punchline. If it is delivered properly, it evokes beautiful responses of faith and obedience. If it is bungled or forgotten, the responses are feeble or inappropriate. In the Christian message, the gospel punchline is not only important. It is everything. Whatever else goes with it is either preparation for or reaction to that gospel.

I do not pretend to bring any special expertise or unique experience to this assignment. But I am deeply committed to the gospel, as you are, and I have some serious concerns about what is happening to the gospel. This commitment and these concerns are what I will set before you, for your reflection and, of course, discussion.

There is a lot of irony in my use of the punchline metaphor. You see, no one has more trouble remembering punchlines than I do. That helps to explain why I rarely tell jokes. There is bad news in this, of course. It means that I rarely have the pleasure of telling a good joke. But there is also good news for me in this quirk. It means that I can enjoy the same joke over and over again when others tell it. No matter how often I heard it before. The punchline is always a new experience for me.

Which leads me to one last introductory comment. In the Christian message, the punchline is always good news. And in this respect it is very

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This paper was presented at the eighteenth annual meeting of The Academy for Evangelism in Theological Education at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, New Orleans, LA, in October, 1990. Dr. Rudnick is President of Concordia Lutheran Seminary in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, and a long-time member of the AETE.

different from nearly all of the good news/bad news jokes that we hear. Because with them the punchline is almost always bad news. The good news comes first and serves to set someone up for the let-down of the bad news.

The Christian gospel is no joke. It refers to problems of great seriousness and to solutions of vital importance to every human being. The gospel is crucial communication from the God of the Universe. It is the only hope for a fallen humanity.

"Critical Gospel Issues Confronting Us," is my topic. The gospel issues that I have selected for consideration are certainly not the only ones of their kind. Some critical gospel issues have been addressed extensively by others and I will not go over this ground again. I refer to issues such as pluralism, universalism, and the New Age Movement. The issues that I shall discuss are equally critical, but have not been so widely discussed.

The first issue is that of *definition*. What, after all, is the gospel? What is the content of our exhilarating punchline?

The second issue is that of *centrality and pervasiveness*. Is the gospel to be the central and integrating theme of our witness, preaching, and theology? Or is it to be one of several important emphases?

The third issue is that of *commitment*. Are we to insist on or at least strive for total and unwavering loyalty to him who is the gospel? Or may we settle for a partial and limited response?

The fourth and last issue which I will discuss is that of *moral transformation*. Is the good news of Christ only that your sins are forgiven? Or is it also that because you are forgiven you can become a new and better person? Do we present the gospel as that which changes attitudes and behaviours or only as that which effects a saving relationship with God?

### ISSUE #1: DEFINITION

This obviously is the most basic issue. To communicate the gospel faithfully and effectively, we must know what it is. For the gospel to have maximum impact on the people of the world, it would be helpful if Christians of the various churches understood and articulated the gospel in substantially the same way. At the very least, it would be desirable for Christian witnesses from different churches not to contradict but rather to complement each other. What, after all, is the gospel which we are to share? Can its content be defined in a way that is generally acceptable? Are current expressions of this gospel consistent with the New Testament witness? How is the gospel being defined in the churches today? Are there errors or distortions which need to be addressed?

What is the gospel? Some would say that the gospel is any good news for a bad situation. Others claim that the gospel is the good news that God is at work in this world rescuing people from poverty and oppression. Still others insist that the gospel is the good news that, in the name of Jesus, by the power of the Holy Spirit, God will perform signs and wonders in

your life today just as God did for people in biblical times. Then, too, there are those who say that the good news is that God wants to make you rich, powerful, and successful. And there are many other definitions of the gospel offered by various contemporary Christian spokespersons. Most of these "gospels" are or can be combined with a more traditional understanding of the gospel. But I believe it's fair to say that typically they overshadow or even displace the traditional gospel.

For purposes of comparison, permit me to try to summarize very briefly the content of the gospel as the New Testament defines it. Of course, many who disagree with me also contend that their definition is the New Testament version of the gospel. And in this short presentation I cannot begin to respond directly to those claims. My intention here is to set forth in a simple and positive way what I understand the New Testament to be defining as the gospel.

In a word, what New Testament believers regarded as the best news of all times and what they shared so enthusiastically was *Jesus*. Not merely a set of doctrines or a moral code, (although these, too, were essential elements) but a historic person was the focus of their evangelistic remarks. Furthermore, this person was not just someone who had once lived and done some remarkable things, but one who still lived and who was available, even eager to relate personally to all who would have him. What Jesus did and endured as well as what he said was the heart of their message. Its relevance to the hearers was that the meaning and benefits of Jesus' work were the solution to their worst problems and the key to a grand new life for them now and hereafter. In short, New Testament witnesses and evangelists were not speaking in abstractions, but introducing people to a person, a unique and helping person, one who could make all the difference in the world to them.

That Jesus himself is the central theme and substance of the New Testament gospel is supported abundantly by virtually all the documents. In Acts, not only the evangelistic preaching of the apostles, but also the witness of ordinary believers was the presentation of Jesus. To Cornelius, Peter preached "the good news of peace by Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all" (10:36). To the Samaritans, ordinary believers from Jerusalem scattered by persecution proclaimed Christ (8:5). Paul characterizes his preaching as preoccupation with Jesus Christ and him crucified (1 Cor. 2:2), which of course, also included the offer of divine pardon through his death, as well as victory through his resurrection (1 Cor. 15:3-4). Peter summarizes the Christian good news as deliverance from sin for glory through the suffering and rising of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1). The author of the epistle to the Hebrews introduces Jesus to his readers as the divine Son of God through whom God delivers his ultimate communication and through whose incarnation and sacrifice he provides purification from sin and empathy and support in temptation (Hebrews 1 and 2). The four Gospels are nothing more or less than the portrayal of and testimony to Jesus, with heavy emphasis on his suffering, death, and resurrection as atonement for human sin, the dynamic of the Christian life, and the basis of Christian hope.

With rich variety, the Gospels describe Jesus. He is the divine King who came into the world on a mission of rescue in fulfillment of God's Old

Testament promises (Matthew). He is the one by whose mighty deeds the dark powers are routed and God's kingdom is established (Mark). He is the divine-human Saviour who reached out with compassion and gentleness to all who were in need (Luke). He is the Word of God who is God, the source of divine life and light; the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world; the Son of God; the Son of man; the King of Israel; the bread of life; the good shepherd; the way, the truth, and the life; the source of the spirit, the true vine (John).

The specific form of the gospel was determined by the background and situation of the hearers. To Jews, for example, Jesus was introduced as the Messiah promised to their fathers (Acts 13:16-41) and the heavenly high priest foreshadowed in the Old Testament history and cultus (Heb. 7-10). To Gentiles he was presented as Lord of all (Acts 10:36), the unknown God, creator and judge, whom they worshipped without realizing who he was (Acts 17:22-31), the image of the invisible God, who by his blood reconciled all things to God, whether on earth or in heaven (Col. 1:15-23), the King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:16). This is good news! The best ever! Too good to keep to ourselves. It is good news that everyone needs to hear.

To appreciate the good news of Jesus for what it really is, we must hear the bad news that goes with it. There is plenty of bad news around us. It comes at us from every side. The environment is in trouble. The economy is bad. Our society is full of injustice and corruption of every kind. We have great difficulty getting along with one another and with ourselves. Families are falling apart. We are being engulfed by the drug traffic and AIDS is epidemic. In rare moments of honesty, we may recognize that our relationship with God is not what it ought to be. To say the least, we probably have not taken God as seriously as we should.

All this is true, but it is only the tip of the iceberg. To those who look to Scripture for answers, the full truth about our situation is far worse than we ever could imagine on our own. Here we learn that our fundamental problem and that of all people is a broken relationship with God. And it is this problem above all that the gospel addresses. Because of circumstances beyond our control, we are alienated from and in rebellion against God. As a consequence, we are under his wrath and judgment.

That is the most terrifying aspect of our sinful condition in a fallen world. Not only the hostility of dark powers, the cruelty of other human beings, disappointment with self, or threats to health and happiness from a hostile environment, but the anger of an offended God is the sinner's most alarming problem. The bad news in no way obscures or compromises the good news. In fact, it enhances the impact. The devastating diagnosis of human sinfulness and its consequences immeasurably magnifies the value of the gospel cure.

Imagine a visit to your physician in which you sought help for persistent loss of vitality and a fever that would not go away. After receiving the results of tests he says, "It's good that we caught this. It's a pervasive infection—very dangerous, actually. But, not to worry. There is this new medication and it will take care of it." Well, you would be relieved and grateful of course.

But let's change the scenario. After studying the test results, the doctor shakes his head. "I hate to have to tell you this, but the news is as bad as it can get. You have AIDS. You may have contracted it through a contaminated blood transfusion when you were injured in that auto accident two years ago. We can try to slow up the progress of the disease, but, as you know, there is no cure." For six months, you live with that death sentence, as the debilitating disease runs its course. Then quite unexpectedly one day, you receive a phone call from your doctor. "Come in right away. A cure has been found." Imagine the relief, the exhilaration, the thanksgiving that would emerge from that rescue. The intensity of the good news would be in direct proportion to the seriousness of the bad news.

The scriptural gospel is the good news of a rescue from the ultimate danger: the wrath of God for human sin. Anything that minimizes that danger or soft pedals it, diminishes the wonder and the beauty and the power of the gospel. God loves you more than you can ever imagine. God wants to help you and be close to you. God wants to make right everything in and around you forever. *But it's not easy—even for God*, who is outraged by what you and I are and do. God would have every reason to spurn us for ever and to punish us without mercy. But, in God's great love for us, God in Jesus Christ offers us complete and unconditional pardon.

I don't need to convince you that the bad news of God's wrath is being ignored or at least down-played in much contemporary witness, preaching, and writing. This is discussed in a recent article in *Christianity Today* (February 19, 1990) by Robert Brow, entitled "Evangelical Megashift: What You May Not Have Heard About Wrath, Sin, and Hell Recently." In Brow's article, and in five responses by other authors, it is evident that there is a large and growing reticence to present the bad news of God's wrath. We deplore "fire and brimstone" evangelists who distort the message with an overemphasis on the bad news. However, we do no service to the gospel, if at the other end of the spectrum, we down-play the seriousness of the sinner's problem. The content of the gospel is changed, the definition is revised, to the extent that we diminish or eliminate the bad news of God's wrath and judgment for all who sin.

There are many who disagree with what I have been saying, and who feel that this change is a big improvement. This deemphasizing of the wrath of God bothers me. What bothers me even more is that I myself and others who agree with me in theory are also soft-pedaling the wrath of God. My point is simply that this basic gospel issue needs to be addressed seriously. The very definition of the gospel is at stake.

## ISSUE #2: THE CENTRALITY AND Pervasiveness OF THE GOSPEL

Is the gospel of Jesus Christ as our rescue from God's wrath for perfect and eternal fellowship with God and one another, is this gospel to be the central and integrating theme of our message? Or is it to be one of several

important emphases? To state it in a different way: What is the relation of the gospel to the total Christian message?

For many the gospel appears to be primarily the entry, an essential but initial element, by which a person is brought into a saving relationship with God. Once that is taken care of we go into other things such as instruction in Christian obedience and preparation for service. There is a passage in Hebrews 6 which may seem to support this view. Although an examination of the entire letter leaves quite a different impression.

A different model is that the gospel is basically eternal fire insurance. It is something absolutely essential to have and to hold at the point of death or at the final judgment in order to avoid hell. However, once in place for that purpose, it can be filed away and one's attention can be devoted to other things.

Those who operate with either of these views might, at least in theory, contend that the gospel ought to be part of every sermon; for example, in case there are unbelievers present. It certainly will not hurt the believers to hear it, but strictly speaking they don't need it, because they already know and believe it.

Still another approach, for which I have already argued briefly, is that the gospel is the punchline of our message. Everything else in the message is leading up to or away from that punchline. Without a punchline, you have no joke. Without the gospel, you have no Christian witness, no Christian sermon, no Christian teaching or writing of any kind. The gospel is the heart of the matter, the living, throbbing, heart of the matter.

This is not to say that most or even a large part of every Christian witness, sermon or book, must linger endlessly at Calvary and the empty tomb. Quantity is not the issue. Centrality is. It is not the amount of time or the number of words devoted to the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus for our sins and for our salvation, but rather the importance and the impact of those words and images in their context. A presentation of the gospel may be very brief, but because the hearer was well prepared for it, that brief gospel statement may virtually explode into the hearer's consciousness and life.

I am certainly not arguing for a ten second-gospel element in a thirty-minute sermon. The gospel is to be central to and pervasive of the Christian message. Rather I am saying that structurally, psychologically, and emotionally, Jesus Christ and him crucified should be the climax of our witness, our preaching, our writing.

Again, many disagree with me, and this, too, bothers me. And again, what bothers me even more is the fact that I, and others who in theory agree with me, also often marginalize or even eliminate explicit and climactic gospel material from our witness, preaching, and writing. We assume that hearers are already aware of the gospel or focused on it. Or we express the gospel in clichés or resort to gospel tokenism. That is, we make some brief, stereotypical gospel reference to save our consciences, but devote our real energy and creativity to highlighting and expounding other themes.

This, then, is the issue: Is the gospel to be the central and integrating theme of Christian communication? Or is it to be just one important theme

among several? The gospel, in my opinion, is being marginalized in much Christian communication. Even evangelistic communication to unbelievers, even evangelistic communication by people like me, often fails to make the gospel as explicit and climactic as it deserves to be.

### ISSUE #3: COMMITMENT

Are we to insist on or at least strive for total and unwavering loyalty to him who is the gospel? Or, may we settle for a partial and limited response?

In Canada, ever since Reginald Bibby wrote his provocative work entitled, *Fragmented Gods: The Poverty and Potential of Religion in Canada*, we have been very conscious of the drastic limitations which most Canadians have imposed on their religious commitment and participation. According to Bibby, the highest priorities of Canadians are time and money. Since the churches want both, Canadians tend to keep their distance. They are not angry with the churches or with God. For the most part their feelings are quite positive. In fact, he discovered that inactive Anglicans feel even more positively about their church than the active ones do. For rites of passage and in times of crises Canadians of various denominations turn to their churches. But they are careful not to get too involved. He calls this "religion à la carte." People pick and choose from the churches' menus what they want and feel they need, but are very reluctant to attend regularly, to accept responsibility, or even to join officially. I suspect that the attitude of many people in the U.S.A. to their churches is not too different.

Long before Bibby ever published his research, many of us experienced what he is describing. In most Canadian congregations a large portion (one third or more) of the members are inactive. Another third or so are somewhat active, and another third are very or rather active. The very active may be as few as 5% or 10% of many congregations.

The issue here is not organizational strength or success, although these, too, are important. Rather it is the issue of response to the gospel, to Jesus Christ who is the gospel. What kind of response to Jesus Christ do we strive for, accept, or expect when we share him with others? Jesus talks about a total commitment of self and possessions. He challenges prospective followers to pick up their crosses (Matt. 16:24) and to stand firm even before death-dealing enemies (Matt. 10:17-28). He warns people to count the cost of being his disciples (Luke 14:25-29). He never said it would be easy, and when someone hesitated to respond immediately or completely he was very impatient. "Let the dead bury their own dead" (Matt. 8:22), was his startling reply to one such.

Are we distorting the gospel or watering it down if we present it as anything less than that which deserves and requires total commitment? The message we often communicate, whether we mean to or not, goes something like this: "Jesus Christ is everything. He gave everything for you. He did everything necessary for your salvation. He wants to be everything

to you. He wants everything from you—your highest loyalty, your complete devotion. Now, of course, this is all very idealistic. As far as we're concerned, we will be satisfied with a few hours of your time and a few dollars of your money, and a few minor adjustments in your life style." Our approach is so often coloured by a marketing mind-set, we are so interested in appealing to felt interests and needs and so reluctant to scare anyone off, that we trivialize Christian commitment. We are very nervous about asking too much from those who are considering, or who have already accepted, Jesus Christ. The real problem, I suspect, is that we ask far too little. How can people take seriously the incredibly wonderful news of God's saving and transforming love in Christ, if we obviously expect it to mean so little to them?

I am not advocating a legalistic or perfectionistic approach to Christian commitment. My conviction is that Christian faith and commitment are gifts and works of God, as the Holy Spirit reaches out to people through the gospel. What I am saying is that the gospel which we present is very capable of evoking tremendous commitment. And I believe that people who hear the gospel expect, initially, to respond with such commitment. However, in subtle and not so subtle ways, by what we say and by our own feeble commitment, we signal to them that it is not really necessary to do anything as drastic as that.

Let me restate this issue once again as I see it: Are we to insist on or at least strive for total and unwavering loyalty to him who is the gospel? Or, may we settle for a partial and limited response?

### ISSUE #4: MORAL TRANSFORMATION

Is the good news of Christ only that your sins are forgiven? Or is it also that because you are forgiven you can become a new and better person? Do we present the gospel as that which changes attitudes and behaviours, or only as that which effects a saving relationship with God?

Often the matter of Christian transformation is presented as bad news. Says the witness or evangelist to the prospective Christian: "Do I have good news for you! Out of love for you, God's Son suffered in your place. That means that you're not in trouble with God any more and can get to glory. That's the good news. Now for the bad news. You're going to have to make a lot of changes. You're going to have to give up a lot of things that you like to do. And you're going to have to do a lot of things that aren't much fun. Sorry, but that's the way it is. You've got to take the bad with the good." I exaggerate, of course, but I suggest that there is more than a kernel of truth in my caricature. The new life of Christian obedience is regarded as an unfortunate obligation that goes with the privilege of salvation.

Spiritual and moral improvements should be presented as a marvelous blessing that the Saviour presents to everyone whom he forgives. In his love, he not only removes the guilt that condemns us but he also rehabilitates us. Through his Spirit, he becomes a powerful and transforming

influence in our heart and life. He enables us to change into the kind of people that God had in mind when God created us, and the kind of people that, down deep, we ourselves would like to be. That is to say, he helps us to become like himself. The good news of new personhood is a testimony to the fullness of God's grace in Christ and a powerful statement of the Christian potential.

This is good news that many people long to hear. How frantically many work at self-improvement of every kind, because the need is so painfully evident. The body needs to be shaped up and the mind and memory sharpened. Self-esteem needs to be built up and confidence strengthened. Social and relational skills need enhancing, and creativity needs stimulating. All of these needs and others like them point to a basic and rather general need to change. There is a widespread realization that we are not the people we could or should be.

The changes that God wants to make and offers to make through the gospel, however, are deeper and more radical than any forgiven sinner either expects or wants. God wants to instill brand new attitudes—new attitudes toward God and toward others, new attitudes toward one's own self and toward the environment. And God wants to evoke new behaviours that conform to these attitudes. The transformation, the radical improvement, of the Christian is not a self-help project. Rather, it is the gift and work of God through the gospel, which is the inseparable companion to the gifts of pardon and eternal life.

Everyone who accepts God's gift of salvation, also receives the gift of transformation. That is to say, he or she receives the renewing presence and power of the Holy Spirit, who is able and eager to make these changes. Many of us think and talk a lot about justification by faith, as well we should. The correlative of this is sanctification by faith. To claim God's gift of sanctification means to trust the promise of transformation which goes with his promise of forgiveness. It means to believe that God has given me a new heart and that through the Spirit, I have the power to live a new life and then act accordingly. This requires faith, because I may not feel this powerful, transforming influence. Furthermore, it requires faith because so much in my heart and life seems to obscure or deny it. And yet, since God promises this gift of newness, I can count on it and put it to work in my life. The transformation that God offers and implements is not perfection, not in this life, but it is significant improvement.

George Gallop's recent study reveals that the moral behaviour of church people is not much different from that of the unchurched. Why is that so? Have they not heard the gospel of Christian newness? Do they not accept it by faith? Christian obedience is being taught very aggressively by some. However, it is most often presented only as obligation, and sometimes even as meritorious.

The issue, once again, is this: Is the good news of Jesus Christ only that your sins are forgiven? Or, is it also that because you are forgiven, you can become a new and better person? Do we present the gospel as that which changes attitudes and behaviours, or only as that which effects a saving relationship with God?

## CONCLUSION

The gospel issues which we have been considering are as challenging as they are important. Two of these issues, definition and centrality, focus on the very content of the good news. They challenge us to rethink and evaluate the way in which we are dealing with the heart of our evangelistic message. The other two issues, commitment and moral transformation, focus primarily on the response of people to the good news. The challenge here is to present the gospel in all its boldness and radicality. Neither challenge is new. Christians have been struggling with them since the beginning. Neither challenge is easy to meet. However, we who know and trust in Jesus Christ, we who have personally experienced his pardon and his power, we whose hearts have been won by his suffering and triumphant love, have every reason to approach them with confidence.

"Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever. Amen" (Eph. 3:20-21).

## TOWARD A POSTLIBERAL APOLOGETICS

Meredith B. Handspicker

Commending the gospel to others is the heart of evangelism. Apologetics is one form of evangelism, and is designed to deal specifically with intellectual objections to the gospel as well as commending its intellectual strengths. It has been defined as dealing with the "defense and proofs" of Christianity.

In this essay we shall deal with what shape apologetics might take today. Liberal apologetics, as embodied in the work of someone like Paul Tillich, may have had its successes, but it seems to give over too much to the culture which it addresses. Yet we are Enlightenment people; we cannot and should not go back to some "preliberal orthodox." We need what George Lindbeck calls a "postliberal" approach to apologetics. I shall try to outline the shape of such an apologetics in this essay. But let us first get a fuller understanding of the nature of apologetics.

### *Apologetics*

One way of defining apologetics is in terms of its audience. In my own teaching I have defined apologetics as "evangelizing the intelligentsia." The "intelligentsia" are the intellectually acute, if not elite, of a given age or society. They are likely to be the society's culture-bearers. If "culture" is "the sum total of ways of living developed by a group of human beings and handed on from generation to generation,"<sup>1</sup> then the "intelligentsia" are those who have particular responsibility for handing it on. They are likely therefore to be conscious of this task and aware of critical aspects or elements of the culture for which they are responsible. Not the least important of these elements of culture are the criteria by which the culture judges value and truth. In one way or another it is to these criteria we must speak when we "evangelize the intelligentsia" or engage in apologetics.

Apologetic theology is "answering theology." In some way or other it "answers the questions implied in" the culture with the power of the gospel.<sup>2</sup> Yet this means that in seeking to "answer," to "be relevant," apologetics may lose its character as Christian theology. As Paul Tillich put it,

M. B. "Jerry" Handspicker is Professor of Pastoral Theology and Evangelism at Andover Newton Theological School, Newton Center, Massachusetts.

"The perennial question has been: Can the Christian message be adapted to the modern mind without losing its essential and unique character?"<sup>3</sup> With his "method of correlation" Tillich sought to relate "questions" raised by the culture to "answers" provided by the gospel. Yet his critics have maintained, with some justification, that in the end he fell prey to the danger he himself foresaw: the gospel seemed to lose its essential character.

Yet we cannot be smug about this. As Tillich notes, we all have to face the problem of communication. "Even kerygmatic theology must use the conceptual tools of its period. It cannot simply repeat biblical passages."<sup>4</sup> Certainly unless we limit ourselves to shouting proof texts into the air we must take this stricture seriously. My own sense, however, is that part of Tillich's problem was that he was not sufficiently dialectical about the relationship between message and culture. Let's see what this means.

Our message is always enculturated. It has to be encoded in the language and thought forms available in a given time and place. Yet it can never fully be captured in those thought forms and that language. They need to be broken open to new meanings if they are to convey the gospel and not domesticate it. Thus the New Testament writers used the linguistic and conceptual coinage of their day (they had no "divine" language to speak). But its common meanings were overcome and given new meaning by their reference to Jesus Christ. As my New Testament mentor, Paul Schubert, used to put it: "Jesus Christ is the demythologizing of the New Testament." Do you want to know what *Logos* means? The writer of the Gospel of John says, "The *Logos* became flesh and dwelt among us in this Jesus of whom we speak." Do you want to know what Lordship is? Then read the story of Jesus washing the disciples feet, or sing the hymn of the self-emptying Lord of Philippians 2.

The New Testament message was in the language and thought forms of "the receptor culture," but it called "radically into question the way of understanding embodied in the language it uses."<sup>5</sup> In Schubert's apt metaphor, Jesus Christ "demythologized" the language which was used to describe him. So apologetics is not merely a correlation of question and answer, it also involves questioning the questions.

Lesslie Newbigin illustrates poignantly the dilemma of the communicator of the gospel. He gives the example of a missionary taking the gospel to a new culture. She must first of all struggle to master the language. This ultimately involves coming to know the everyday talk, the songs and folks tales, the literature of the people. At this stage the missionary knows that there are no exact linguistic equivalents for the gospel message, but she begins to translate anyway. And she faces two dangers: she may just fail to communicate; she has not mastered the language and sounds like a foreigner. Or she may "so far succeed in talking the language" that she is accepted as a familiar character, like others in the culture. Her "message is simply absorbed into the existing world-view."<sup>6</sup> To succeed properly she must both communicate and at the same time remain "strange" (a stumbling block and foolishness) to the culture. For the gospel is "a call to conversion" of both the individual and his or her culture. Apologetics is merely a *preparaetio evangelica*; "this radical conversion can never be

the achievement of any human persuasion, however eloquent. It can only be the work of God."<sup>7</sup>

### Western Culture as Missionary Territory

Lesslie Newbigin gives us a unique angle of vision on what a "postliberal apologetics" might involve. He came back to the West after a lifetime of missionary service in India (with time out to serve the World Council of Churches in Geneva in the '60s). The beauty of his situation was that he could look at his return as recrossing a cultural barrier. How, now, to proclaim to the gospel to this strange new culture?

He sought first to understand the culture. Then, rather than seeking to accommodate the message to the culture (the liberal strategy) Newbigin chose to confront the culture with the gospel's claims. Then he challenged what Peter Berger has called the "plausibility structures" of the Enlightenment "scientism" which characterizes the culture and shapes the minds of its "intelligentsia."

But how does one address the intelligentsia in such a situation? George Lindbeck has a proposal which is designed to maintain the integrity of the gospel and introduce people into it as a way of life.

The postliberal way of dealing with this problem is bound to be unpopular among those chiefly concerned to maintain or increase the membership and influence of the church. This method resembles ancient catechesis more than modern translation. Instead of redescribing the faith in new concepts, it seeks to teach the language and practice of the religion to potential adherents. This has been the primary way of transmitting the faith and winning adherents for most religions down through the centuries.<sup>8</sup>

Religious knowledge cannot be achieved through the "publically verifiable" manner acceptable to the regnant culture. It is not "objective" in that sense. Rather one needs "to interiorize a set of skills by practice and training"—thus the comparison to ancient catechesis.<sup>9</sup> One then learns how to "feel, act and think in conformity with a religious tradition that is, in its inner structure, far richer and more subtle than can be expressly articulated."<sup>10</sup>

For the postliberal world Lindbeck proposes this "linguistic-cultural" model of religion. Epistemologically it is a "critical realism". It stresses "the degree to which human experience is shaped, molded and in a sense constituted by cultural and linguistic forms." (So it is "critical" in a post-Kantian sense.) But without this "shaped and molded experience" there are "numberless thoughts we cannot think, sentiments we cannot have, and realities we cannot perceive."<sup>11</sup> (This is the "realism.")

What Lindbeck seems to be saying here is that religion deals with a dimension of reality which can only be known religiously. What this denies is that there is a general epistemic framework or conceptual scheme to

which all knowing is to be adapted. This is not to deny that there are "norms of reasonableness," but as Thomas S. Kuhn has argued in reference to science and Wittgenstein in philosophy, "the norms of reasonableness are too rich and subtle to be adequately specified in any general theory of reason or knowledge."<sup>12</sup>

Here we have two points to address to the intelligentsia. First, the current plausibility structure of the culture is inadequate. It does not allow for the possibility of a particular way of knowing, namely religiously, and thereby forecloses arbitrarily on the possibility of gaining contact with an important dimension of reality. Second, even respected representatives of the culture (e. g. Kuhn and Wittgenstein) argue that there needs to be multiple "norms of reasonableness" rather than a general theory of reason or knowledge.

### Criteria for a New Strategy for Apologetics

We have developed, at least implicitly, a number of criteria for a "postliberal" apologetics. First, it needs to be dialectical and not simply correlative (in a Tillichian, or even Tracyian, sense). Apologetics is to seek to transform culture and not merely accommodate to it.

Second, apologetics arises out of the specificity of the religious way of knowing. It does not use a general conceptual scheme, but provides a conceptual scheme developed in a manner appropriate to its area of inquiry.

Third, a point which we have not developed yet but have assumed, apologetics will deal with the connections of Christian faith to other cultural issues. It will do so in a way which is reasonable, but transformative rather than accommodative.

In the final sections of this essay we shall discuss resources which we can use to develop a "postliberal" apologetics which can effectively address the culture in which we live.

### A Transitional Resource

One book which has been extremely useful in teaching a postliberal approach to apologetics has been John Whittaker's *Matters of Faith, Matters of Principle*.<sup>13</sup> This book deals with the bases of knowledge, whether in theology or in science. It demonstrates how the foundational principles whereby we know cannot be proven within the systems for which they are foundational.<sup>14</sup> For Whittaker matters of faith function within theology much the way matters of principle function within scientific discourse:

...the truth conditions of a principle cannot be corroborated without the prior assumption of the principle's truth, and they cannot be contradicted without the prior assumption of its falsity.<sup>15</sup>

Whittaker's approach leads to a number of results. First, it has the virtue of putting theology and science on a level playing field. Both depend upon fundamental principles which are not themselves provable but which must be assumed if the enterprise is to proceed.<sup>16</sup> Second, it implicitly allows for a variety of rational methods, each appropriate to a field of inquiry and each with its own assumptions. Each method would be judged in terms of its obedience to the area or dimension of reality which is being investigated and the fruitfulness of its results. There is no privileged or general theory of knowing to which every field of investigation is to be subject. But there is clearly a similar rational structure to each: it proceeds on the basis of fundamental assumptions; it demands internal coherence; in some way it is to be judged on its capacity to help us understand and deal with one dimension or another of reality.

This approach has some salutary results. First, it means that one does not have to accept a kind of reductionist scientific approach by default by entering the skeptic's world on the skeptic's terms. (Yet one does not need to violate the skeptic's integrity either.) Second, as a corollary of the first, one can have a standpoint and discipline of one's own on the basis of which one speaks. Third, the gospel can therefore be presented in its integrity (however enculturated!) for it does not have to be articulated within the limitations imposed by the skeptic.

To use a sports analogy, Whittaker enables us to play on a level playing field with our dialogue partners. His approach provides a kind of formal argument which establishes the *structure* in which apologetics can take place. But what is the *substance* of a postliberal apologetics? Lindbeck describes postliberal apologists as engaging in "the ancient practice of absorbing the universe into the biblical world."<sup>17</sup> How is this to be done? Do we have any examples?

### Material Resources for Apologetics

It is my conviction that we already have a very able "postliberal apologist," and that by attending to his work we can obtain the resources for engaging in such a task. The person of whom I speak is Thomas Forsyth Torrance. He speaks of what Lindbeck calls the "liberal foundational" approach in his book *The Ground and Grammar of Theology*.<sup>18</sup>

Instead of trying to change the paradigms of society and culture, whole generations of preachers, scholars and theologians have been asking how they can communicate the Gospel and make it understandable and relevant to the modern world, and in answer they have been trying to fit the Christian message to the paradigms of the community—otherwise, they argue, people today would not understand what Christianity is about.

Torrance contrasts this with the approach of the theologians of the early church who strove mightily to *change* the paradigm of the dominant culture. Only with a radical reconstruction of ancient philosophy, science and

culture could the "Christian Gospel take root in the civilized world and transform its society until it was brought within the Kingdom of Christ."<sup>19</sup>

This is the kind of approach both Newbigin and Lindbeck have been advocating. It is a transformative rather than an accommodative apologetics. The Church Fathers sought to develop a world view in which the gospel could be understood rather than accommodate the gospel to the already-present world view. Torrance's work seeks to continue such a program today.

In our context this involves a true dialectical relationship with culture, particularly the culture of science. First, it challenges it by appealing to its own foundations. Second, it makes use of some of its latest developments to overcome inappropriate limits it places on knowledge. Let us see how Torrance does this by arranging his work under the three criteria we have developed above.

The first section will deal with his challenge to culture, his attempt to be transformative of it. The second will deal with the question of methodology (the study of method); how and why do we have multiple "norms of reasonableness" today, and what does this say about the relation between religion and culture? Finally, how does apologetics deal with the positive connections of Christian faith to cultural issues, particularly those of natural science?

### Foundations

If one examines some popular treatments of science and religion today, one would think that the empirical science of today had either come into being full blown during the Enlightenment or that it had developed out of Greek philosophy and science. Even when some attention is given to its antecedents it is basically treated as a fairly monolithic world view which stands on its own.

In fact it does not stand on its own; it has fairly clear historical foundations. And these foundations are to be found in part in Greek philosophy and science. But mostly they are to be found in Christian theology.

The Church Fathers sought to develop a world view in which the gospel could be understood rather than accommodating the gospel to the already-present world view. In the course of their work these early Christian theologians developed three "masterful ideas" which would have a profound influence on the world view which made possible the development of empirical science: 1) the rational unity of the universe; 2) the idea of the contingent rationality or intelligibility of the universe; and 3) the freedom of the universe.<sup>20</sup> The first challenge to the autonomous world-view of today is to face it with these foundations.

The "uniformity of nature" is one of those "matters of principle" upon which contemporary science is founded. This principle is itself founded on the rational unity of the universe, which is rooted in the Jewish and Christian idea of the one Creator of all things. The idea of one Creator involved the rejection of all "polytheism, dualism, pluralism and polymorphism" of the ancient cultures. And the one Creator created through the

one Word of God so that "wherever you go in the universe it is accessible to rational inquiry."<sup>21</sup> This is certainly not the only possible view of the universe, and the ancient Greeks had another one. But it is the view necessary for the nurture of science.

Another underpinning of *empirical* science is the idea of the "contingent rationality" of the universe. This was foreign to all the ancients. "Contingency," the idea that something could be other than it was, was a defect in being as far as the ancients were concerned. True being was "necessary being"; and only necessary being was rational (e. g. the Platonic ideas). As a result science was deductive, arguing from necessary first principles. With such a world-view there was no motivation to examine the world as it actually is, for whatever element of contingency it might have merely vitiated real knowledge rather than contributing to it.

But the Christian view was not only that the universe was a rational unity, it might have been a rational unity of another sort. One had to look to discover what kind of world we have.

If you are to understand any natural process in the universe, you cannot do so by any *a priori* thought, or by any kind of theological reasoning from what we know of God, but only by going to the natural process itself and probing into its natural or intrinsic order.<sup>22</sup>

This belief in the contingency of the universe led Francis Bacon to the first aphorism of his "New Organon":

Man, being the servant and interpreter of Nature, can do and understand so much and so much only as he has observed in fact or in thought of the course of nature. Beyond this he neither knows anything nor can do anything.<sup>23</sup>

That Christian faith is the source of the "matters of principle" upon which empirical science is based are important for apologetics. It is not that this fact provides an argument for the existence of God; but it demonstrates that science is not "self-grounded."<sup>24</sup> As Torrance puts it, when scientists find themselves "close to those zero points where their science no longer proves adequate but where they must continue to ask rational question," they have to be open to the transcendent ground and sufficient reason for the "coherent singularity of the universe."<sup>25</sup>

This approach does not accommodate to the prevailing world view. It demonstrates its limits. But even more it points to the "ontological and semantic reference of the universe beyond itself," to its creative ground.<sup>26</sup> In short, I would add, it indicates that if the question raised by the limits of the universe is to be "answered," the answer must come from beyond the limits. It must be revealed since it cannot be inferred or sought out.

## Method

Second, we indicated that apologetics needs to address the specificity of ways of knowing. This is a methodological question and one which we indicated already has intimations of an answer in the work of Kuhn and Wittgenstein.

This methodological specificity is a key to Torrance's work. As he indicates it has arisen in a shift from an abstractive conception of science to one in which science is regarded as an extension of our natural ways of knowing. At various points in his work he noted that in recent years Albert Einstein was a major advocate of this approach, and that it lay at the root of his success in developing his theories of relativity.

Thus there developed a form of scientific inquiry which is more rigorous in that it is governed throughout by the demands of its object and yet for that reason more flexible in that it is equally applicable in every field of human experience.<sup>27</sup>

This means that there cannot be an ideological imposition on one field of experience of "forms and connections of thought" derived from another. It is what I would term an "epistemology of obedience," since method in each field is to be developed under the constraint of the reality (or dimension of reality) under investigation.

While this methodological principle applies in the realm of the empirical sciences (e.g., the methods of physics are not to be imposed upon the realm of biological investigation), it applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to theological science as well. Therefore our second criterion for apologetics, that it develop a conceptual scheme "appropriate to its area of inquiry," is met.<sup>28</sup> It remains, then, to discuss the connections between the Christian faith and natural science.

## Connections

What Torrance's apologetic clearly establishes is that science rests upon foundational ideas that science did not and could not have produced on its own, "ideas that derive from a Christian understanding of the relation of God to the universe."<sup>29</sup> But developments in contemporary science have also become helpful to theology. The methodological specificity we dealt with above, for instance, can help theology be truer to its own foundations. It encourages theology to develop its own appropriate method rather than accommodating to the established criteria of the current "plausibility structure" of the culture.

How there are connections between theology and natural science should now be clear. Both are dealing with the same universe. Both assume its rational unity: knowledge of God and knowledge of the world share the same ultimate foundations "in the *Logos* or Rationality, of God the Creator."<sup>30</sup>

Let us here merely note some of the connections between these two, which deal with different dimensions of the same reality. First, theology

indicates the relative autonomy of creation because God has given it real being beside his own. Thus nature is set free from "divinization" and science is free to pursue its investigations in methodological independence from theology. Second, theology is set free to elaborate its own epistemological method, "under the compulsion of the nature of the object as it becomes disclosed in the course of inquiry."<sup>31</sup>

The connection between science and theology then comes from a natural theology. But not from one developed independently and inferentially from the side of nature, nor from a science developed independently and deductively from the side of theology. Rather "a proper natural theology should be natural both to theological science and to natural science."<sup>32</sup> The connection between theology and natural science will be a natural theology which has its place in the dialogue between the two

...within their common sharing of the rational structures of space and time conferred on the universe by God in his creating of it, and within their common sharing in the basic conceptions of the unitary rationality of the universe, its contingent intelligibility and contingent freedom—which derive, as we have seen, from a Christian understanding of the relation of God to the universe.<sup>33</sup>

## Conclusion

We need a "postliberal" apologetics. The liberal or accommodationist approach has not worked; it has tended to give over too much to the current plausibility structure of Western culture. Yet we are post-Enlightenment people; there is no returning to a "first naiveté" (an egregious mistake made, for instance, by so-called "creation science").

We have discussed a number of elements which can contribute to such an apologetics. The "cultural-linguistic" approach of Lindbeck begins to provide an independent and non-accommodationist approach to religion and doctrine. The careful methodological analysis of Whittaker enables us to develop a level playing field upon which to engage with intelligentia representing contemporary culture. But, most important, the apologetic approach developed in Torrance's works enables us really to be and feel like players on the field. He faces the reality of contemporary culture and its strengths. But without capitulating to culture he presents the gospel in such a way that it can be transformative of our culture. Most important, from my own experience and that of my students, Torrance helps us understand the gospel and science with sufficient clarity that we ourselves become convinced and thereby are more successful in convincing others that

The God whom we have actually come to know through Jesus Christ really is Father, Son and Holy Spirit in his own eternal and undivided being

and that this Triune One is, in fact, the source of all that is, our Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986. p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology, Volume I*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951. p. 6.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Newbigin, *op. cit.*, p. 5f.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>8</sup> George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1984. p. 132.

<sup>9</sup> For a contemporary description of what evangelism of this kind might be like see Robert E. Webber, *Celebrating Our Faith: Evangelism Through Worship*. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc., 1986.

<sup>10</sup> Lindbeck, *op. cit.*, p. 35. Note the similarity here to Michael Polanyi's oft-quoted dictum, "We know more than we can tell" ("far richer than can be explicitly articulated").

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130. We shall come back to this more specific notion of "reasonableness" later.

<sup>13</sup> John Whittaker, *Matters of Faith, Matters of Principle*. San Antonio, Texas: Trinity University Press, 1981.

<sup>14</sup> A point many already know if they have a mathematical background and are acquainted with Goedel's theorem.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>16</sup> This would tend to put science also into the realm of a cultural/linguistic enterprise. "There are numberless thoughts we cannot think...and realities we cannot perceive unless we learn to use the appropriate symbol systems" and, we would here add, experimental procedures.

<sup>17</sup> Lindbeck, *op. cit.*, p. 135. His final sentence concerns such apologists, "May their tribe increase!"

<sup>18</sup> Thomas F. Torrance, *The Ground and Grammar of Theology*. Charlottesville, Virginia: University Press of Virginia, 1980. p. 48.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 52-58.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 52f.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>23</sup> Francis Bacon, *The New Organon and Related Writings*. Edited, with an introduction, by Fulton H. Anderson. New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1960. p. 39.

<sup>24</sup> For an indication of how this can be used in apologetics see my article "Intimations of Transcendence: Some Developments in the Relationships between Science and Religion," in *Prism*, Volume 6, Number 2, Fall 1991.

<sup>25</sup> Torrance, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107.

<sup>27</sup> Thomas F. Torrance, *The Christian Frame of Mind: Reason, Order and Openness in Theology and Natural Science*. Colorado Springs: Helmers and Howard, 1989. p. 71.

<sup>28</sup> The actual development of this method can be found in many of Torrance's works. Perhaps it is most developed in *The Grammar and Ground of Theology and Reality and Scientific Theology*. Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1985. The most compact presentation is to be found in *The Christian Frame of Mind*.

<sup>29</sup> Torrance, *The Ground and Grammar of Theology*. p. 73.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

## RICHARD BAXTER AND PURITAN EVANGELISM<sup>1</sup>

Timothy K. Beougher

Richard Baxter argued that evangelism<sup>2</sup> must be the first and greatest priority of the minister, claiming, "the work of conversion is the great thing we must first drive at, and labour with all our might to effect."<sup>3</sup> The saving of souls must be the main end of the minister's study and preaching.<sup>4</sup> Baxter confessed he often was forced to neglect the work of building up the Christians in his congregation because of the "lamentable necessity" of the unconverted.<sup>5</sup> He exhorted his fellow ministers to engage themselves in the great work of converting souls regardless of what else they had to leave undone.<sup>6</sup>

Baxter decried what he termed "false apprehensions" of the doctrine of election which left people saying, "if God hath chosen us, we shall be saved, and if he hath not, we shall not, whatsoever we do."<sup>7</sup> He argued that God elects no person to the end without means, but to the ends and means together.<sup>8</sup> He emphasized the means of hearing the Word of God preached,<sup>9</sup> reading the Word, and reading books written to help one apply scriptural teaching.<sup>10</sup> Baxter also taught that another means which God has appointed for obtaining his grace is to inquire seriously of those who are able to give guidance for salvation, both ministers and private Christians. He said a great deal about the responsibility of these two groups in evangelism. Before examining his teaching on the practice of evangelism, it will serve us well to focus on the responsibility Baxter maintained all Christians, especially Christian ministers, had—to share the gospel with the lost.

Baxter never tired of reminding his fellow ministers of their obligation to fulfill their calling to evangelize. He continually referred to Christ's commission to preach the gospel to every person, without exception or restriction.<sup>11</sup> He spoke of his own proclamation as "obey[ing] the voice of God,"<sup>12</sup> and reminded pastors that God had appointed their voices to be the means of arousing and reclaiming the lost.<sup>13</sup>

He reminded them they would be judged for how well they fulfilled this task.<sup>14</sup> He challenged them to, "Let not the blood of souls...be required at thy hands."<sup>15</sup> He compelled ministers to examine their own lives by focusing

on the judgment they would incur if they neglected their responsibility: "I am afraid, nay, I am past doubt, that the day is near when unfaithful ministers will wish that they had never known that charge; but that they had rather been colliers, or tinkers, or sweepers of channels, than pastors of Christ's flock! when, besides all the rest of their sins, they shall have the blood of so many souls to answer for."<sup>16</sup>

But this was not all ministers needed to remember. In addition to not neglecting their responsibility to proclaim the gospel, they must not forget God's role in the process. They were to plant; only God could bring the fruit. Ministers were to cast the seed at God's command, but only God could bring the increase.<sup>17</sup> This reminder that it was the power of the Holy Spirit working through the Word of God that brought conversion was to help ministers keep their role in proper perspective.<sup>18</sup>

Baxter also taught that each "individual Christian" had the responsibility to witness.<sup>19</sup> The profession of true religion is such a great duty that only foolish persons would try to conceal their faith or keep it to themselves.<sup>20</sup> Baxter stands amazed that anyone could be genuinely converted and not be telling others about salvation through Jesus Christ:

Shall the Holy Ghost make such a change on the heart of a sinner, and shall not the tongue partake of it, or express it? Can Christ and his Spirit dwell in the heart, and the tongue conceal so blessed an inhabitant? Can a man have a taste of heaven upon his heart, and the kingdom of God begun within him, and yet not express his life or joy?...What! have the love of God shed abroad in their hearts, and say nothing of it? have the pardon of sin in the blood of Christ, and say nothing of it? What! see many hundred souls in danger of damnation, and say nothing, but let them perish?<sup>21</sup>

Obviously the answer to these questions is "no." A person who has experienced new life in Christ cannot but speak of what he or she has seen and heard.

Baxter emphasized the responsibility to witness to one's family and servants. He encouraged fathers to help children and servants learn "they have a higher Father and Master that must be first served."<sup>22</sup> He challenged parents to avoid making family duties into meaningless routines, but to use them as opportunities to speak about God, heaven, hell, and holiness.<sup>23</sup> One of the great hindrances to conversion is parental neglect in raising their children in the things of God.<sup>24</sup> The habit patterns developed in youth are hard to break when one becomes an adult. If parents would only look around they clearly would see "most of the world are such as they were taught in their childhood to be."<sup>25</sup>

Christians must also recognize their responsibility to their neighbors. Believers should speak to their neighbors about Christ, and not stop, "till death hath stopt your mouths, or stopt their ears."<sup>26</sup> Christians need to go to their neighbors' houses to converse with them concerning spiritual things. "Take all opportunities that possibly you can," Baxter exhorted, "to confer with them privately about their states, and to instruct and help

Timothy K. Beougher is Assistant Professor of Evangelism at the Wheaton Graduate School and Associate Director of the Institute of Evangelism at the Billy Graham Center. This article is adapted from part of his Ph.D. dissertation, "Conversion: The Teaching and Practice of the Puritan Pastor Richard Baxter With Regard to Becoming a 'True Christian.'"

them to the attaining of salvation."<sup>27</sup> Baxter mentions in his *Call to the Unconverted* that he hopes Christians will give that book or a similar one to their neighbors, in hopes of winning their souls.<sup>28</sup>

Baxter had special words of exhortation for teachers. He reminded them of their tremendous responsibility to influence their students for Christ. "Let some piercing words fall frequently from your mouths," he said, "of God, and the state of their souls, and the life to come."<sup>29</sup> If they would prove to be the means of students' conversion, many souls would bless them, and they could do no greater good for the church.<sup>30</sup>

Baxter tirelessly reminded Christians that the reason for their conversion was to enter into service for God.<sup>31</sup> He listed the desire to see others converted as one of the marks of genuine conversion. A converted person eagerly shows others the way. A genuine believer "prayeth heartily for the conversion of other men: he pleadeth with them, and persuadeth them; and fain he would have their eyes to be opened, and their hearts to be softened and turned to God."<sup>32</sup> Christians should not focus solely on the benefits of conversion which they receive, but should recognize that a major benefit of conversion is that it will make them useful to others.

Having looked at Baxter's teaching on the responsibility of all Christians to share the gospel, we now turn to the question, "How then should evangelism be practiced by ministers and by 'private' Christians?" Before looking at how each of these groups should practice evangelism, Baxter would first have us examine the characteristics of a good witness. Baxter continually emphasized that *being* comes before *doing*. In *The Reformed Pastor*, he first challenges ministers to "take heed to themselves," to make sure they themselves are practicing what they are preaching to others. While Baxter did not ever list the qualities of a good witness in the form we are presenting them here, such a list would be fully consistent with his emphasis on being before doing.<sup>33</sup>

Baxter would first call the evangelizer<sup>34</sup> to be certain of his or her own conversion experience. "See that the work of saving grace be thoroughly wrought in your own souls," he exhorted. "Take heed to yourselves, lest you should be void of that saving grace of God which you offer to others..."<sup>35</sup> A cold and careless heart has little chance of warming the heart of another, even if the inclination were there to do so.<sup>36</sup>

Baxter would challenge the evangelizer to live a godly life. "Did professed Christians more exactly conform their hearts and lives to their profession and holy rule," Baxter claimed, "their lives would...do more to convince the unbelieving world of the truth and dignity of the Christian faith, than all the words of the most subtle disputants."<sup>37</sup> There is a profession by actions as well as a profession by words.<sup>38</sup> The blameless, humble, loving lifestyle of Christians is a powerful means of winning souls. Every Christian should "preach" through this kind of example.<sup>39</sup>

Baxter challenged preachers especially at this point, warning them not to allow their lives to ruin what they say with their lips. Good doctrine is often refuted by bad practice.<sup>40</sup> Preachers who did not live godly lives before their people were the greatest hindrance to the success of their ministry.<sup>41</sup> He exhorted, "We must study as hard how to live well, as how to preach well."<sup>42</sup>

A lifestyle of godliness has many ramifications. Christians must use their time wisely and live in a state of readiness to share the gospel. Believers should be ashamed to fill up their time with "trifles" that keep them from their business of winning souls for Christ.<sup>43</sup> Baxter challenged Christians not to let souls perish while they minded their worldly business and worldly pleasure.<sup>44</sup> Implicit in this is a willingness to sacrifice. He chastises ministers who would rather see souls eternally perish than have their families live in "a low and poor condition." He asks, "Nay, should you not rather beg your bread, than put such a thing as men's salvation upon a hazard or disadvantage? yea, or hazard the damnation of but one soul?"<sup>45</sup>

Evangelizers should be willing to bear rejection. Baxter knew that the only way to avoid offending the "guilty and impenitent" was by silence. But "silent we cannot be," because God has commanded us to speak.<sup>46</sup> He encouraged Christians to bear up under rejection by reminding them "it is for men's salvation."<sup>47</sup>

Christians ought to always keep before them the lostness of people. Every time they see the faces of sinners, they must remember that "they must be converted or condemned..."<sup>48</sup> Baxter challenged Christians to look upon an unconverted person and contemplate that in a few days his or her soul might be in hell.<sup>49</sup> He believed that keeping the lostness of people in perspective will help the Christian maintain a heart of compassion and urgency. If a Christian had only a "spark" of compassion, it should cause him or her to labor diligently to save souls from perishing. Recognizing that a lack of compassion hampered evangelistic motivation, Baxter prayed that the Lord would give all Christians "more compassion to these miserable souls."<sup>50</sup> Closely related to compassion was the attitude of love. Baxter told pastors that the whole course of their ministry must be carried on in a tender love to their people.<sup>51</sup>

Another interesting characteristic Baxter brings out is the expectation of success. He says: if you would prosper in your work, be sure to keep up earnest desires and expectations of success. If your hearts be not set on the end of your labours, and you long not to see the conversion and edification of your hearers, and do not study and preach in hope, you are not likely to see much fruit of it... I have observed that God seldom blesseth any man's work so much as his whose heart is set upon the success [of it].<sup>52</sup>

Remember that God is at work in the hearts and lives of people. You can plant and water with confidence because it is God who has promised to give the growth.

In addition to living a godly life, Baxter believed a good witness would possess certain characteristics in his or her presentation of the gospel. Whether it involved a preacher exhorting from the pulpit, or a "private" Christian talking with a neighbor, Baxter taught that several qualities were inherent in a good presentation. He believed mere words without the proper manner to back them up would yield little fruit.

First, and seemingly always foremost in Baxter's mind, was an attitude of seriousness. He besought, "Oh speak not one cold or careless word about so great a business as heaven or hell!"<sup>53</sup> Baxter maintained that few ministers preached with all their might, or spoke about eternal things with

the spirit of "earnest utterance."<sup>54</sup> He pleads:

O sirs! how plain, how close, and earnestly should we deliver a message of such a nature as ours is, when the everlasting life or death of men is concerned in it!...Can we believe that our people must be converted or condemned, and yet speak in a drowsy tone? In the name of God, brethren, labour to awaken your hearts, before you come, and when you are in the work, that you may be fit to awaken the hearts of sinners.<sup>55</sup>

Lethargic preaching from a sleepy minister stands little chance of awakening slumbering sinners.

Related to this attitude of seriousness was an attitude of reverence.<sup>56</sup> Baxter believed the work of God should be carried out with reverence and in the fear of the Lord, not in a careless frame of mind like everyday affairs often were. He said, "It beseemeth a believer to have more of the fear of God upon his heart, in his ordinary converse in the world, than hypocrites and formalists have in their most solemn prayers."<sup>57</sup>

Another important consideration in witnessing was that it be carried out in the wisest possible manner.<sup>58</sup> The work of God should be performed "understandingly." God was not pleased in the blind devotion of people who did not know what they were doing. Thus his constant emphasis that pastors "study" to be more effective. All discussion of spiritual things should be kept as plain and simple as possible. He said, "Truth loves the light, and is most beautiful when most naked."<sup>59</sup> Baxter admitted he had found that it was impossible to speak "too plainly" to most people.<sup>60</sup>

Good witnesses will strive to bring their exhortation to an issue. If they are drawing a sinner to Christ, they must not leave the person until he or she has confessed that his or her present state is "miserable" and "not to be rested in."<sup>61</sup> They must lead the unconverted to subscribe to the necessity of Christ and conversion. They must secure a promise that the sinner will "fall close to the use of means."<sup>62</sup>

Another key ingredient in being a good evangelizer was persistence in sharing the gospel. It is not once or twice that will usually prevail with the unconverted. Frequent exhortation is necessary. "Weary out sinners with your loving and earnest entreaties," he said. "Follow them, and give them no rest in their sin."<sup>63</sup> Baxter encouraged ministers not to give up on an individual after one try, but to continue trying to reach the person: "A soul is so precious, that we should not lose one for want of labour; but follow them while there is any hope, and not give them up as desperate, till there be no remedy.... Charity beareth and waiteth long."<sup>64</sup>

Lastly, Baxter would challenge witnesses to remember that it is not their own gifts and abilities on which they are to depend, but upon God.<sup>65</sup> It is God and God alone who can bring fruit from their labors. Prayer is therefore as vital a part of the minister's work as is preaching.<sup>66</sup>

Even though all Christians have an obligation to do all they can for the salvation of others, a minister has a double obligation, because "he is separated to the gospel of Christ, and is to give up himself wholly to that work."<sup>67</sup> Baxter argued there were four main ways for ministers to increase their

abilities: "Study<sup>68</sup> and pray,<sup>69</sup> and confer, and practise..."<sup>70</sup>

Baxter emphasized the need for reasoned arguments in preaching. People are rational creatures, so sermons must reach the will through the mind.<sup>71</sup> Emotion is also necessary at the proper time: "Every reasonable soul hath both judgment and affection; and every rational, spiritual sermon must have both. A discourse that hath judgment without affection is dead, and uneffectual; and that which hath affection without judgment is mad and transporting."<sup>72</sup> People must be made to feel what they know before they will act on it. Many ministers study only to compose their sermons. According to Baxter, that is not enough. He says:

in the study of our sermons we are too negligent, gathering only a few naked heads, and not considering of [sic] the most forcible expressions by which we should set them home to men's hearts. We must study how to convince and get within men, and how to bring each truth to the quick, and not leave all this to our extemporary promptitude, unless it be in cases of necessity.<sup>73</sup>

Application must come through clearly in each sermon.

Ministers should preach with gravity, with plainness, with convincing evidence, with powerful winning motives, and with fervency.<sup>74</sup> It requires a loud call to waken a deadhearted sinner.<sup>75</sup> Ministers must beat down people's objections so as to leave them nothing on which to stand:

We must...find out their common objections, and give them a full and satisfactory answer. We have reasonable creatures to deal with; and as they abuse their reason against truth, so they will accept better reason for it before they will obey. We must therefore see that our sermons be all convincing, and that we make the light of Scripture and reason shine so bright in the faces of the ungodly, that it may even force them to see, unless they wilfully shut their eyes.<sup>76</sup>

Ministers should present their stores of evidence to the unconverted "as with a torrent upon their understandings," until they are forced to yield to the power of truth.<sup>77</sup>

Baxter believed the public ministry of preaching the gospel from the pulpit was primary, but he also recognized the tremendous benefits of "private work," i.e. visiting parishioners in their homes<sup>78</sup> to converse with them about spiritual matters. He says, "I know that preaching of the gospel publicly is the most excellent means, because we speak to many at once; but otherwise, it is usually far more effectual to preach it privately to a particular sinner...I conclude, therefore, that public preaching will not be sufficient...Long may you study and preach to little purpose, if you neglect this duty [private work]."<sup>79</sup> The goal of such personal instruction was nothing less than the salvation of all the people in his parish.<sup>80</sup>

Baxter not only asserted that evangelism was the primary task of all ministers, he likewise maintained it should be the focal point of all personal

work. He encouraged fellow ministers to speak pointedly to each particular sinner's situation to try and bring home the truth of the gospel, beginning by trying to prepare the person for receiving what they had to say.<sup>81</sup> If the entire family were present, Baxter instructed the minister to take the family members aside one by one and deal with them privately. People respond better to "close dealing about their sin" when they are alone with you.<sup>82</sup> Once in private, the minister should begin questioning the individual about the catechism,<sup>83</sup> and if the minister suspects the person is unconverted, question the individual about his or her hope for salvation.<sup>84</sup> The minister should close the time by exhorting the sinner concerning the duty to believe in Christ and on his or her responsibility to use the external means of grace.<sup>85</sup>

Baxter lamented the lack of skill among ministers for personal work. He comments, "Alas, how few know how to deal with an ignorant, worldly man for his salvation!"<sup>86</sup> In response to the objection that it would take too much time to learn how to do personal work and would cause the neglect of a minister's studies, Baxter replied: "I highly value common knowledge, and would not encourage any to set light by it; but I value the saving of souls before it. That work which is the next end must be done, whatever be undone."<sup>87</sup> Baxter further maintained that if ministers would not waste time in "vain recreations and employments" or in "needless sleep," that they would have plenty of time for both study and personal ministry.

Baxter stressed the effectiveness of personal ministry would be greatly heightened if ministers knew their people well:

We must labour to be acquainted with the state of all our people as fully as we can; both to know the persons, and their inclinations and conversation; to know what are the sins that they are most in danger of, and what duties they neglect for the matter or manner, and what temptations they are most liable to. For if we know not the temperament or disease, we are like to prove but unsuccessful physicians.<sup>88</sup>

In line with this, Baxter emphasized ministry to families. He told ministers, "You are like to see no general reformation till you procure family reformation."<sup>89</sup>

Another important part of a minister's evangelism was being ready to give advice to inquirers who came for counsel. Ministers must not only be willing to perform this vital ministry, but must instruct their people about the opportunities it provided. Pastors should exhort people publicly to come to them for advice in matters related to their souls. "We must not only be willing of the trouble," Baxter claimed, "but draw it upon ourselves by inviting them hereto."<sup>90</sup>

Baxter also gives "private" Christians practical advice about sharing Christ with others. He encourages them to "pray heartily" for the conversion of others, to "plead with them," and to "persuade them" to open their eyes and turn to God.<sup>91</sup> One of the fruits of conversion was an eagerness to prepare oneself to be more effective in evangelism: "If they [the

unconverted] want instruction, you will be more able to instruct them: if they are ignorant or careless, you will have some words to say to them for the awakening of their souls."<sup>92</sup> He gave a special instruction to private Christians concerning sharing evangelistic literature with others. In his *Call to the Unconverted*, he requests: "That you will seriously read over this small treatise (and if you have such that need it in your families, that you read it over and over to them: and if those that fear God, would go now and then to their ignorant neighbours, and read this or some other book to them of this subject, they might be a means of winning souls)."<sup>93</sup>

Having examined Baxter's teaching on characteristics of a good witness and evangelism by ministers and private Christians, we finally turn to his use of appeals to the unconverted.<sup>94</sup> To what did Baxter appeal in challenging sinners to be converted?<sup>95</sup> What reasons for turning did he give? He begins by focusing on the nature of God. He challenges sinners to think about the God with whom they will "have to do."<sup>96</sup> He asks them to think about those in hell and remember that once death comes, there are no second chances:

Thousands are under burning and despair, and past all remedy, while patience is waiting yet upon you. Can you forget that others are in hell at this very hour, for as small sins as those that you are yet entangled and linger in? Good Lord, what a thing is a senseless heart! That at the same time when millions are in misery for delaying or refusing to be converted, their successors should fiercely venture in their steps.<sup>97</sup>

He admits, "it is unpleasant doctrine, but it is necessary, and it is most true! God never yet did prove a liar; if he were not true, he were not God."<sup>98</sup>

But Baxter's gospel is not only one of judgment and pardon. He knows that Christ came to bring abundant as well as eternal life. He therefore reminds the unconverted person of all the blessings he or she is missing out on in this life as well. He openly challenges sinners, saying, "If you could show us any probability of a more pleasant and joyful life on earth, than that which serious holiness doth afford, I should be glad with all my heart to heart to hearken to you."<sup>99</sup> What Christ offers is far better: "This is the religion, the labour that we invite you to: it is not to despair, nor to...miserable melancholy...it is to the foretastes of everlasting joys, and to the beginnings of eternal life."<sup>100</sup>

Baxter then proceeds to list some of the benefits enjoyed by the converted in this life:

If you would be rich, I have showed you the only riches; if you would be honourable, it is only conversion that can make you so; if you would have pleasure, I have showed you the way to pleasure, and how you may be possessed even of your Master's joy. If in a word, if you would be happy, I have showed you the only way to happiness; a life of peace and safety hath been offered you; a life of honour and pleasure hath been offered you.<sup>101</sup>

He also counts it as a special part of the benefits of the converted to live among God's people, in their special love, and to "have a special communion with them, and interest in their prayers, and may possess among them the privileges of the saints and the ordinances of God."<sup>102</sup> He appeals to the sense of stewardship of the unconverted, assuring them that when they are converted, they will regret deeply, "and a hundred times repent it," that they delayed so long before they yielded.<sup>103</sup>

Baxter brings in an element of urgency by his assertion that the longer the person remains unconverted, the harder it will be to come to Christ later in life. He claims: "If you stick at conversion as a difficult matter today, it will be more difficult to-morrow, or the next month, and the next year, than it is now."<sup>104</sup> He challenges them that there is no better time than now.<sup>105</sup> If you cannot turn now with all these helps and means, what hope have you if the means be taken from you? "If you cannot row with the stream," he asks, "how will you row against it?"<sup>106</sup>

Was Baxter's approach effective? He certainly saw great fruit in his personal ministry, as the following citation from his *Autobiography* attests:

The congregation was usually full, so that we were fain to build five galleries after my coming thither...Our private meetings also were full. On the Lord's Days there was no disorder to be seen in the streets, but you might hear an hundred families singing Psalms and repeating sermons as you passed through the streets. In a word, when I came thither first, there was about one family in a street that worshipped God and called on his name, and when I came away there were some streets where there was not passed one family in the side of a street that did not so; and that did not by professing serious godliness, give us hopes of their sincerity...<sup>107</sup>

As Wilkinson says, "He had behind him the unquestionable authority that belongs to a successful ministry."<sup>108</sup> His ministry not only bore fruit, it was fruit that remained.

Three hundred years have brought significant changes in our world, but Jesus Christ and the gospel remain the same "yesterday, today and forever." Some of Baxter's methodology may need updating, but the passion for evangelism he modelled is still desperately needed in our day. The harvest remains plentiful; the laborers continue to be few.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> An examination of the life and ministry of Richard Baxter (1615-1691), arguably Puritanism's greatest pastor, provides insight into the practice of evangelism among the English Puritans. He not only wrote numerous books on conversion (including *Call to the Unconverted*, a "best seller" in the 1650s), he also put this theology into practice in a world renowned parish ministry at Kidderminster. His "success" in evangelism makes his ministry a worthy object of study.

The starting point for any consideration of Baxter's life must be his own autobiography

*Reliquiae Baxterianae* (1696), published by his friend and colleague Matthew Sylvester. This was issued in abridged form in 1925 by J. M. Lloyd Thomas, and reissued in 1974 by N. H. Keeble under the title *The Autobiography of Richard Baxter* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons).

The best biography is Geoffrey Nuttall's *Richard Baxter* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1965), surpassing F. J. Powicke's two works, *A Life of the Reverend Richard Baxter, 1615-1691* (London: Jonathan Cape, Ltd, 1924), and *The Reverend Richard Baxter Under the Cross, 1662-1691* (London: Jonathan Cape, Ltd, 1927). Nuttall has filled in numerous gaps in our knowledge of Baxter's life by utilizing historical references scattered through Baxter's other published works and especially in his manuscript correspondence, which Nuttall was the first to calendar and read in chronological order.

See also my articles: "The Puritan View of Marriage," *Trinity Journal* n.s. 10 (Fall 1989): 131-160; and "Go Fetch Baxter," (co-authored with J. I. Packer) *Christianity Today* (December 16, 1991): 26-28. The majority of citations are from *The Practical Works of Richard Baxter*, 4 vols. (London: George Virtue, 1838). This set was reprinted in 1990 by Soli Deo Gloria Publications. The following abbreviations will be utilized for citations from *The Practical Works*:

CD—A Christian Directory

CD:CEcc—Part III. Christian Ecclesiastics

CF—The Catechising of Families

CU—A Call to the Unconverted

DP—Directions and Persuasions to a Sound Conversion

NN—Now or Never

PAA—Baxter's Preface to Mr. Alleine's *Alarm to the Unconverted*

RP—The Reformed Pastor

SER—The Saints' Everlasting Rest

TCon—Treatise of Conversion

<sup>2</sup> To my knowledge, the term "evangelism" was not used by the Puritans. Their favorite expression seems to have been "preaching the gospel." I substitute the term evangelism to protect two truths: laypersons as well as clergy were involved in this activity; and the pastor's ministry of persuasion took place not only in the context of the sermon during worship services, but also outside of the church building. These truths are not readily apparent in the phrase "preaching the gospel."

<sup>3</sup> IV:381, RP (1656). He constantly sought ways to be more effective in reaching people for Christ: "Oh that any one of you could tell me what I should say more, or what I should do now to save the souls of ignorant, fleshly, worldly sinners from damnation! and to convert the unconverted, and turn the hearts of men to God! Oh that you could but tell me how I might accomplish it!" II:500, TCon (1657).

<sup>4</sup> III:230, SER (1650). Baxter would argue, "He is no true Minister of Christ whose heart is not set on the winning, and sanctifying, and saving of Souls." See *Compassionate Counsel to all Young-men* (1681), 48.

<sup>5</sup> IV:381, RP (1656).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> II:496, TCon (1657).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 476.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 478.

<sup>11</sup> II:618, 621, DP (1658).

<sup>12</sup> II:502, CU (1657).

<sup>13</sup> IV:444, RP (1656).

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> II:555, NN (1663), citing from Ezekiel 3:18-20.

<sup>16</sup> IV:444, RP (1656).

<sup>17</sup> II:539, CU (1657).

<sup>18</sup> II:571, NN (1663).

<sup>19</sup> Brauer overstates the situation when he places Puritan conversion under the "control of a religious elite, the clergy." See Jerald C. Brauer, "Conversion: From Puritanism to Revivalism," *Journal of Religion* 58 (1978): 239. Cohen recognizes what Baxter emphasizes here: "Ministers had no monopoly on instructing and counselling; family, friends, and acquaintances of prospective Saints also performed these tasks." Charles C. Cohen, *God's Caress*:

*The Psychology of Puritan Religious Experience*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 173. Ralph Barton Perry also recognized this truth in his *Puritanism and Democracy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1944), 321.

Baxter makes clear he is not suggesting that the distinction between minister and parishioner be blurred. While every Christian should share the Gospel with others, public preaching can only be undertaken by the minister. See III:213, SER (1659).

<sup>20</sup> I:562, CD:CEcl (1673). He says that the person who does not profess God with his/her tongue is a "practical atheist."

<sup>21</sup> II:431-32, TCon (1657).

<sup>22</sup> II:552, NN (1663).

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> II:490, TCon (1657).

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> II:553, NN (1663).

<sup>27</sup> III:214, SER (1650).

<sup>28</sup> II:507, CU (1657).

<sup>29</sup> IV:425, RP (1656).

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> See, for example, II:565, NN (1663): "Why standest thou idle...when thou art redeemed for work? for evangelical work?"

<sup>32</sup> II:433, TCon (1657).

<sup>33</sup> This list does not claim to be exhaustive, nor is it presented in any particular order of priority.

<sup>34</sup> I have chosen the term "evangelizer" because it avoids the professional connotations of "evangelist." To my knowledge Baxter himself did not use this term.

<sup>35</sup> IV:369, RP (1656).

<sup>36</sup> IV:1033, PAA (1656). Baxter says, "I will make my free confession to you to my shame, That I never grew cold, and dull, and pitiless to the souls of others, till I first grew too cold and careless of my own (unless when weakness or speculative studies cool me, which I must confess they often do.)"

<sup>37</sup> II:560, NN (1663).

<sup>38</sup> I:563, CD:CEcl (1673).

<sup>39</sup> I:813, CD:CP (1673).

<sup>40</sup> III:233, SER (1650).

<sup>41</sup> IV:371, RP (1656). Baxter chided ministers who would study to preach exactly, and study little or not at all to live exactly.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 372.

<sup>43</sup> II:559, NN (1663). Baxter laments his own failings at this point: "For my own part, though I have long lived in a sense of the preciousness of time, and have not been wholly idle in the world; yet when I have the deepest thoughts of the great, everlasting consequents of my work, and of the uncertainty and shortness of my time, I am even amazed to think that my heart can be so slow and senseless, as to do no more in such a case. The Lord knows, and my accusing, wounded conscience knows, that my slothfulness is so much my shame and admiration, that I am astonished to think that my resolutions are no stronger, my affections no livelier, and my labour and diligence no greater, when God is the commander, and his love the encourager, and his wrath the spur, and heaven or hell must be the issue." See II:565, NN (1663).

<sup>44</sup> IV:355, RP (1656).

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 380.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 355.

<sup>47</sup> II:553, NN (1663).

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 555.

<sup>49</sup> IV:385, RP (1656).

<sup>50</sup> II:502, CU (1657).

<sup>51</sup> IV:394, RP (1656).

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 426.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 412. He says, "we speak so drowsily or gently, that sleepy sinners cannot hear; the blow falls so light, that hard-hearted sinners cannot feel it."

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. Baxter himself exemplified this attitude, as his oft-quoted statement expresses: "I preached, as never sure to preach again, And as a dying Man to dying Men." Richard Baxter, "Love Breathing Thanks and Praise," *Poetical Fragments*, 1681.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 394: "I know not what it doth by others, but the most reverend preacher, that speaks as if he saw the face of God, doth more affect my heart, though with common words, than an unreverend man with the most exquisite preparations."

<sup>57</sup> II:573, NN (1663).

<sup>58</sup> III:217, SER (1650).

<sup>59</sup> IV:393, RP (1656).

<sup>60</sup> II:399, TCon (1657).

<sup>61</sup> III:218, SER (1650).

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> IV:456, RP (1656).

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 393.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 442.

<sup>68</sup> Baxter told ministers they should study how to do personal work just as seriously as they studied for their sermons. Ibid., 360.

<sup>69</sup> He claimed, "Prayer must carry on our work as well as preaching: he preacheth not heartily to his people, that will not pray for them." Ibid., 393.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 371. Baxter helps his readers in terms of practice by giving specific directions for "the right managing of this work." See Ibid., 454-63.

<sup>71</sup> IV:1034, PAA (1672). Baxter says, "Poor sinners! I know that I am speaking all this to those that are dead in sin; but it is a death consisting with a natural life, which hath a capacity of spiritual life; or else I would no more speak to you than to a stone. And I know that you are blind in sin; but it is a blindness consisting with a reasonable faculty, which is capable of spiritual illumination; or else I would no more persuade you than I do a beast."

<sup>72</sup> III:232, SER (1650).

<sup>73</sup> IV:412, RP (1656) [emphasis added]. Packer asserts, "The Puritans did not regard evangelistic sermons as a special class of sermons, having their own peculiar style and conventions; the Puritan position was, rather, that, since all Scripture bears witness to Christ, and all sermons should aim to expound and apply what is in the Bible, all proper sermons would of necessity declare Christ and so be to some extent evangelistic.... The only difference was that some sermons aimed more narrowly and exclusively at converting sinners than did others." Packer, "The Puritan View of Preaching the Gospel," (Puritan and Reformed Studies Conference Papers, 1959), 13.

<sup>74</sup> IV:151, CF (1682). "When a dull hearer and a dull speaker meet together, a dead heart and a dead exhortation, it is far unlike to have a lively effect." III:217, SER (1650).

<sup>75</sup> III:216, SER (1650). Baxter's teaching here mirrors the findings of Erroll Hulse in his article, "The Puritan Approach to Persuading Souls," (Puritan and Reformed Studies Conference Papers, 1973), 7-19. Hulse says concerning the Puritans, (p. 18), "The whole of their preaching was one protracted and powerful appeal to the whole man, that the sinner being born again might be persuaded once and for all to turn and close with Christ." Unfortunately the only reference Hulse makes to Baxter in the article is to point out that his Amyraldianism was a minority viewpoint among the Puritans.

<sup>76</sup> IV:426, RP (1656).

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> This was the method Baxter encouraged others to use; due to his continual poor health, he had his parishioners come and visit him in his home.

<sup>79</sup> IV:443, RP (1656). Baxter says: "I have found by experience, that an ignorant sot that hath been an unprofitable hearer so long, hath got more knowledge and remorse of conscience in half an hour's close discourse, than they did from ten years' public preaching." The point comes home even more when we remember that Baxter was perhaps the greatest preacher of his day!

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 439.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 457. Baxter writes out for his fellow ministers the essence of what he says at this point. Much of it involves telling his parishioners it is his solemn duty under God to instruct them about spiritual matters.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 457-58. Baxter lists the questions that he proposes to the one who appears to yet be unconverted.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 461. It is noteworthy that it appears Baxter made no effort to press for an immediate "decision." While stressing the urgent necessity of turning to Christ, the immediate commitment he pressed for was not to turn to Christ, but to involve oneself in the means of grace.

This rings true to the findings from Packer's study of evangelism among the Puritans. He says, "The immediate duty of the unprepared sinner is not to try and believe on Christ, which he is not able to do, but to read, enquire, pray, use the means of grace and learn what he needs to be saved from." Packer, "Puritan Evangelism," *The Banner of Truth* IV (1957): 11.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 442.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 449. Baxter makes it clear where his priority lies: "I would throw by all the libraries in the world, rather than be guilty of the perdition of one soul." Ibid., 215.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 384.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 385.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 384. Baxter argued that since people had "grown unacquainted with the office of the ministry," that the minister should invite the people to knock frequently at his door.

<sup>91</sup> II:431, TCon (1657).

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 468.

<sup>93</sup> II:507, CU (1657).

<sup>94</sup> A related aspect is how Baxter dealt with objections raised by the unconverted. He treats them at length in his *Treatise on Conversion*, specifically in "The Hinderances of Conversion, With Directions Contrary to Them." II:476-500, TCon (1657).

<sup>95</sup> Consistent with his view of humankind, Baxter largely made his appeals on the basis of reason. For example, he says: "I beseech thee, read over and over again the reasons that I have here offered thee, and judge whether a reasonable man should resist them, and delay an hour to come in to God." See II:660-1, DP (1658).

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 589.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 664. Baxter says: "If it had been in my power to have showed you heaven and hell itself, that you might better have known the matters that we speak of, I think I should have done it. But God will not have men live by sense in this life, but by faith." Ibid., 660.

<sup>98</sup> II:446, TCon (1657).

<sup>99</sup> II:575, NN (1663).

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> II:469, TCon (1657).

<sup>102</sup> II:591, DP (1658).

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 643.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 582.

<sup>105</sup> This is the key theme throughout Baxter's treatise, "Now or Never." II:545-79, NN (1663).

<sup>106</sup> II:583, DP (1658).

<sup>107</sup> *Reliquiae Baxterianae* (1696), I, 84-85. Perhaps even more telling for the quality of his ministry is the following statement, written after his Ejection: "though I have been now absent from them about six years, and they have been assaulted with pulpit calumnies, and slanders, with threatenings and imprisonments, with enticing words, and seducing reasonings, they yet stand fast and keep their integrity...not one, that I hear of, that are fallen off, or forsake their uprightness." Ibid., 86.

<sup>108</sup> John T. Wilkinson, "Richard Baxter's Reformed Pastor," *Expository Times* 69 (1957): 16.

## BOOK REVIEWS

### Telling the Story: Evangelism in Black Churches

By James O. Stallings. Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1988. Pp. 128. \$9.95.

"Telling the Story," a phrase that is characteristic of much of black preaching and personal testimony, is the subject and content of this book. The Story is the story of how God was infleshed in the liberation of a humanity. But ultimately for Christians The Story is about a God who was infleshed in a Person; his name is Jesus. James O. Stallings has written an important work that should be of interest to all Christians, but in particular to those of us who minister in African American settings.

One could say that the book is divided into two parts: the first relating to the historical story of African American Christians, the second relating to the evangelistic challenges that face African American Churches and how this history can assist in evangelism.

In a cogent style, Stallings tells the story of Africans who became Americans, who then took the religion of their slavemasters and found in it a power for survival and progress. The emergence of the invisible church, as it has been coined, was then followed by the institutional church, and was proof positive that through the ingenuity of those who were brought in shackles, God was dealing with a people. The significance of the Spirituals, the unique biblical and theological perspective of an enslaved people, is brought out as The Rev. Stallings considers how churches were built up in the faith. The personages of George Liele, Andrew Bryan and other early black missionaries/evangelists are explored as those who were grasped by the gospel and whom God called to preach.

Of particular interest is the story of the rationale for the creation of separate black churches during a period in this country when Africans and whites worshipped together. With so-called white Christians considering the presence of black persons in worship a nuisance, these churches were formed to nurture those who needed to be affirmed as people of God. The missionary stories of George Allen and Absalom Jones are told as these two began what became known as the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

Stories that are told often have debate within them. The stories of African American Christians contain controversy over whether black Christians should undertake involvement in overseas missions. This story is told in an honest and forthright manner, showing the result that African

American Christians evangelized in places such as Sierra Leone, Liberia, and the Caribbean, yet with a concentration on the lot of Africans in America. The missionary societies that were a part of the times were also begun in black circles. The story about the "Woman's Home and Foreign Missionary Society" and its support for work in Liberia is an important story to hear.

After spending this time in the story of the past, the writer turns to its significance for the future. The significance of orality among African American people is explored as a lifestyle. From the "griots" of the African society, to those who survived the middle passage, to those who became the slave preachers, the importance of oral tradition is emphasized by Stallings. The importance of this orality in the gathering of the community is told as the reader considers testimonies, preaching, public worship, prayer meetings, experience meetings, Sunday worship and conversion stories as means of communicating the gospel.

The challenge for those churches ministering in African American settings is a real one. For that reason The Rev. Stallings considers the story of a church he calls "Missionary Union Church (Baptist)" to consider what the historical foundations can mean. In the telling of this story the author lists and elucidates the following: pastoral leadership, planning, spontaneity, cultivating lay leadership, and empowering members to tell their stories. These he considers important issues for a congregation to address in its evangelization.

Bringing it down to a more personal dimension, the last two pages of the manuscript help the reader grasp her/his story both experientially and theologically. A guide is given to help the reader reflect on her/his faith story. The reader is then given some suggestions on some ways to keep what I would consider an evangelistic spirit.

I believe what The Rev. Stallings has done is to bring to us under one cover a consideration of the historic black church under the umbrella of evangelism. I believe that the information covered in this book will be new to most. The focus on evangelism is timely and useful for the black church of today. He has helped us to see that the black church was not simply a church born out of protest; it was and became an evangelistic church. I think also that the book might spark interest and conversations about contemporary continent mission as historic and other black churches consider their place as "missionary" churches on the world scene. Black churches may be led to rediscover their responsibility in being a "sending" church. Finally I believe that The Rev. Stallings has helped to delve into orality as a means of doing evangelism in communities, helping membership to "tell their stories" of what God has been doing and is doing in their lives. Read the book.

James M. Capers

James M. Capers is Director for Evangelism Training and Motivation in the Division for Congregational Ministries of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Chicago, Illinois.

## Speaking of God: Evangelism As Initial Spiritual Guidance

By Ben Campbell Johnson. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991. Pp. 188. \$12.99.

For a dozen years Ben Campbell Johnson has been teaching evangelism at Columbia Theological Seminary. Early in his tenure he became convinced that the issue was not just how to do evangelism or how to organize congregations for evangelism, but especially the spiritual life of ministers. Johnson sees this as a crisis. As a result most of his recently authored books reflect this concern with spirituality. Some examples are *Concerning God's Will, To Will God's Will: Beginning the Journey*, *Pastoral Spirituality: A Focus for Ministry*. This volume, *Speaking of God*—a matter about which many mainline pastors are reluctant—is written to help ministers find courage, conviction and a course of action that will enable them to speak directly to persons about God and to encourage lay men and women to do the same.

Recognizing that stereotypical notions of evangelistic salesmen and evangelistic preachers often block serious consideration of evangelism, Johnson introduces the image of spiritual guide. A spiritual guide is a spiritual friend and suggests two persons on a journey with one helping the other see sights and make discoveries that might otherwise go unnoticed. A guide is a companion and encourager. By *initial spiritual guidance* Johnson is delimiting and clarifying the task of evangelism. Evangelism is helping persons begin the journey with Christ. Chapters in the book focus on "The Spiritual Guide Through the Ages," "The Theological Structure of Spiritual Guidance," "The Style of the Spiritual Guide," etc. Theologically the book provides appropriate balance between the work of God and the work of the human agent in evangelism. Numerous verbatims, cases and practical hints illumine the author's understanding of just how one can give an initial spiritual guidance.

This is not a cool, calm and collected academic tome, though it is thoughtfully composed and soundly argued. It is a tract through which the author's passion can be felt. "Like many pastors I dream of my denomination becoming vital and alive through the Spirit, being truly open to all, inclusive of theological, economic, and social diversity, and giving as much attention to conversion and commitment as it does to compassion and justice."

John R. 'Pete' Hendrick

John R. 'Pete' Hendrick is Professor of Mission and Evangelism at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Austin, Texas.

## The Gospel and Contemporary Culture

Edited by Hugh Montefiore. London: Mowbray, 1992. Pp. viii+182. £10.00.

During the 1980s a new missiological movement was shaped in England under the influence of the retired and well-known missionary Lesslie Newbigin. It was a movement which sought to address the missiological implications of trying to reach modern Western culture with the gospel. The perspective used was that the countries of the West have become mission fields as much as any other geography in the world. The concept used was formulated under the title of "The Gospel and Our Culture" and was set in motion as a program following the seminal work laid down by Bishop Newbigin in his books *The Other Side of 1984* (1983) and *Foolishness to the Greeks* (1986).

This new "movement" gained more attention through a regular newsletter along with various scheduled events. It is ecumenical in constituency and missiological in intent. The latest conference sponsored by this movement, a National Consultation at Swanwick in July 1992, is the occasion for this book. This work is a series of eight essays which critique the perspectives of various academic disciplines of modern Western culture from the perspective of a gospel and culture missiological paradigm. The unifying theme of these essays is to offer an alternative Christian viewpoint to that presented in the assumptions, values, and institutions which shape modernity and modern Western culture.

Montefiore establishes this thesis clearly in his introductory chapter, where he calls on Christians to rethink the root paradigms which shape modern culture and to critique them from the perspective of the gospel. The intent is that the church should have a mission to culture, a mission that will seek to influence the intellectual and academic forces which shape the paradigms of how people see their context and understand their culture. The goal is to develop a more "gospel-friendly" culture through such mission activity. The eight essays each take their turn in providing such a mission perspective. These areas include: history, science, arts, epistemology, economics, education, medicine, and mass media.

The essays are somewhat uneven in their quality, although all of them are faithful in addressing their stated goal. While their specific contents exceed the space of this review, there are a number of themes which seem to run through most, if not all, of these essays. First, there is a strong emphasis on the shaping influence of the Enlightenment and the need to rethink its basic assumptions, especially those introduced through Kant. This book is part of a growing body of missiological literature calling for a rethinking of classical Enlightenment assumptions. The arbitrary separation of facts and values, in particular, is called into question. Second, there is a strong emphasis on demonstrating the consequences of modernity as the assumptions of the Enlightenment, given form through modern institutions, have now created modern, Western, secular culture. The limits of modernity or its adverse consequences are noted by most of the authors. And third, there is a strong assertion that the biblical paradigm

offers a viable alternative for understanding life and reshaping modern Western culture. The authors follow Montefiore's intent of offering a missiological approach by providing a biblical alternative to the forces of modernity.

While the book is a helpful introduction to the areas addressed, as both a critique of the present systems within modernity and in offering some missiological perspectives, there are a number of weaknesses in the approach taken. First, the approach assumes that the primary contribution to cultural change will be made by trying to make the dominant culture more gospel-friendly. This approach may be just one more version of the ideal of modernity to control and manage life in a rational way. With the increased reality of a postmodern, pluralistic society, we may be past the point of trying to redeem modern Western culture. Second, the approach assumes that fundamental change can be made through a trickle down approach which uses intellectuals and academics as the entree point into reshaping the dominant culture. While there are examples of this historically, this assumption may be both a little naive in design and limited in scope.

Overall, this is a useful book in the growing field of missiological literature related to the gospel and culture theme in the West. Persons from Europe and North America will find this volume helpful, although some of the material is context specific to England. It will provide helpful supplemental reading in both college and seminary classrooms for courses which address missiological issues.

Craig Van Gelder

Craig Van Gelder is Associate Professor of Domestic Missiology at Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

## Church Growth Principles: Separating Fact from Fiction

By C. Kirk Hadaway. Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1991. Pp. 203. \$11.95.

"Southern Baptists talk more about evangelism than they do evangelism." That statement alone should draw one to read this book by a Southern Baptist who has studied the church growth movement and is now Urban/Church Growth Research Specialist for the Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. He gathered data for this book from a survey of over 500 metropolitan Southern Baptist Churches in 1988. Pointing out that most of what he is doing in the book relates to case studies, he goes on to say that "used alone, case studies can give a distorted view of church growth."

The twelve chapters in the book cover the area of church growth with great precision. The strongest chapters are "The Pastor's Role in Church Growth" and "Setting Goals and Making Plans". Questions such as "what factors are associated with church growth?" and "what factors are associated with decline?" are pursued with great diligence. The 35 graphs scattered throughout the book show differences between growing, plateaued and declining churches.

"The goal of church growth should be to gain members from the ranks of the unchurched, rather than from other congregations" (p.17). This gives an indication of the author's love-affair with evangelism. "Evangelism and outreach characterize growing churches" (p.19). He goes on to point out that, while evangelism is present in Southern Baptist Churches, it is not a major source of growth. (Their growth comes from biological growth, from within).

Techniques of outreach are explored: visitation, revivals and special events, crusades, and life-style evangelism. In churches that are growing the worship is exciting, celebrative and has the spirit of revival. He points out rather forcefully that rapid pastor turnover hurts church growth. Laity are a very important component to good church growth, although laity can be either a thoroughfare or a road block.

In the chapter on long-range planning he makes a very important point that although strategic long-range planning is essential, long preparation for growth may be counter-productive because all of the energy and enthusiasm can be dissipated in the process of planning. So, he concludes that the primary principles for church growth are evangelistic outreach, age structure, and commitment and interest.

The book is well footnoted and is a wealth of information about church growth and its principles. It is a book that anyone interested in church growth should make a point to read.

J. David Hester

J. David Hester is the President of Memphis Theological Seminary of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. He is vice-president of the Academy for Evangelism in Theological Education.

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## The Gospel In A Pluralist Society

By Lesslie Newbigin. *Grand Rapids and Geneva: Wm. B. Eerdmans and World Council of Churches, 1989. Pp. 244. \$14.95.*

This book is a compendium of rare wisdom garnered from four decades of leadership in mission. With the West and its current ideologies as his current focus, Newbigin, the "missionary pastor" diagnoses its pluralist,

relativist, individualist and consumerist premises and sets forth a missiological and apologetic response. *The Gospel In A Pluralist Society* should be required reading for seminary courses in evangelism and for evangelism training programs. Features that pertain to these contexts will be focal to this review.

Newbigin is at his best when dealing with the evangel in evangelism. Drawing on ecumenical lore—some of which he helped to formulate in early assembly statements of the World Council of Churches—and making use of motifs from narrative theology, he calls the church to be faithful to its singular "story" in the face of the isms of the hour. That biblical tale from creation to consummation with its center point in Christ's "incarnation...ministry...suffering and death...resurrection...ascension into heaven, and...session at the right hand of God" (120) not only distinguishes Christian faith from modernity's view of how the world works (a cultural-linguistic argument for Christian identity), but is also universally true. Further, as "public truth," the gospel is set squarely against the regnant cultural orthodoxy which holds that religious claims are private opinion about an inaccessible realm and thus assertable only as "true for me"—"value" but not "fact." Who says so? asks Newbigin. Only the self-appointed priests of the current "plausibility structure" with its Kantian bifurcation. The gospel is an alternative vision of reality with its bold claim of truth for all, not just "for me" or "for us."

Newbigin has recourse to aspects of modern culture itself to refute the proponents of its conventional wisdom—an apologetic strategy that accompanies his central kerygmatic concern. Alasdair MacIntyre, Peter Berger and Thomas Kuhn are called upon to demonstrate the tradition-saturated, theory-laden and culture-relative character of the "reason" modernity trumpets as disembodied rationality necessary to determine "objective" truth. Michael Polanyi's epistemological framework with its honoring of intuition, imagination and tradition in scientific inquiry and its theory of tacit knowledge accessible through "indwelling" investigatory methods that warrant the "universal intent" of scientific assertions also provides Newbigin with an analogy for the gospel's universal truth claims made within its own comparable community in which worship, debate and mission constitute the indwelling and testing of its tradition. Thus by criteria drawn from the sociology of knowledge and the philosophy of science, as well as by the standards of the Story, today's pluralist assumptions (and various accommodationist moves in the church such as the pluralist theologies of Hick, Knitter, Cantwell Smith, Samartha, G. Kaufman, Eck et al.) are exposed as unwarranted value postulates, indeed the creatures of a "supermarket" *Zeitgeist*.

In some significant closing thoughts, Newbigin speaks of his conviction that the local congregation is the chief place for interpreting and communicating the gospel today, with the pastor as nurturer of a committed laity living out their vocation in the midst of the culture's powers and principalities. Considering his long-time role in the supra-parochial regions of the Church, this turn to the local frontier has an important message for advocates of evangelization.

For all the positives in this work, some questions remain. 1) Is there an

inconsistency between Newbigin's espousal of "general revelation" (61-62, 73-75) together with his endorsement of a wider rationality ("There can be no rational human being who does not at some time feel the force of it." 72. Also 43, 50, 55, 56, 70, 77) and his unqualified acceptance of the theory of "the social construction of reality"? Better to pursue the biblical testimony to general revelation (put narratively as the covenant with Noah that assures enough small light to let the story go forward toward God's saving deeds in Israel and Christ) than to let a cultural borrowing from either the sociology of knowledge or the philosophy of science censor these themes. To do so, however, would entail qualification of some aspects of Newbigin's view of "public truth," bringing it closer to, but not the same as, others who use the language of "public" (D. Tracy, M. Stackhouse, W. Pannenberg), and challenging his alternative to Enlightenment control of the civil community (an evangelization of the culture that, while allowing dissent, would work toward grounding the public sector in gospel truth claims). In this country, the free church tradition contributed significantly to the separation doctrine, not on Enlightenment assumptions but because of its belief in both the fall and the Noachic covenant/relic of the *imago*—the former prompting a wariness of the corruptibility of power, ecclesial power included, and the latter a modest confidence that the rainbow after storm left us enough light to arrange the affairs of state.

2) One of the limitations of an earlier ecumenism was its distance from evangelicalism. However, more recently, the evangelical gift to the larger community is being received, specifically, its witness to the personal side of evangelism, including the latter's eschatological dimension. Newbigin's stress on the conversion of culture is a corrective to evangelical privatism. He speaks about the conversion of individuals, as well, but surrounds the subject with so many caveats that the evangelical "passion for souls" and its New Testament warrants are not given their due. An ecumenical evangelism will be inclusive enough to welcome the partnership of personal and public truth and salvation.

Newbigin is a master teacher of how better to tell the story and do so in the critical context of a pluralist society. This book and others of similar perspective (*The Other Side of 1984*, *Foolishness to the Greeks*) have helped to launch significant "Gospel and Our Culture" networks in Great Britain and the United States. Those committed to the call of evangelism will find in both the mentor and the movement welcome allies.

Gabriel Fackre

Gabriel Fackre is the Abbot Professor of Christian Theology at Andover Newton Theological School, Massachusetts.

## The Gospel and the American Dream

By Bruce L. Shelley. Portland: Multnomah Press, 1989, Pp. 192. \$8.95.

This book is a significant addition to the corpus of literature being published lately dealing with the impact of the Christian faith on American culture. Works which focus on the postmodern challenges search for a philosophical platform whence the essence of the gospel can be marshalled as a credible option for present and future generations. Writers describing the American population from the perspective of market research attempt to provide socio-economic analysis that may be superimposed on the gospel with the intention of awakening congregations to be effective in evangelistic outreach.

Shelley pours his evangelical commitment, historical scholarship, and keen analysis into the treatise that, as he calls it, "is something of a social commentary from an evangelical Christian who believes that a great many other Christians and Jews share a concern for America's future." (p. 10).

The book is divided into four parts. Part One, "Land of Dreams," discusses what Shelley calls the four traditions shaping the American dream: biblical, republican, economic, and therapeutic. Those knowledgeable with American history will readily identify the first three. For Shelley, "therapeutic" refers to the reverence in contemporary culture for professional therapists and the widespread use of therapeutic language, especially since the 1960s, to explain the behavior of ordinary people. Terms of the age of therapy are "dysfunctional," "open up," "stressed out," and "up tight."

"Public Dreams" examines three ideals that affect the perceptions and interpretations of many Christians. These are the place of religion in public life, the self-interest that dominates contemporary images of political freedom, and "value free" public education. In Part Three: "Private Dreams" the author considers four ideals embraced by Americans affecting their private lives: success, work, family, and love. The last part, "New Dreams," provides the reader with Shelley's directions for Christian responses to the future. The key element of part four is the attempt to answer the question: "what is distinctive about being Christian in America?"

Shelley presents a credible platform for a biblical transformation of American culture. Key ingredients are the belief in the supernatural, the biblical view of God that confronts rampant secularism, the belief that there is original sin in American culture, the stance on biblical authority as objective standard of truth, and the commitment of Christians to be concerned for their neighbors. For the task of "converting the barbarians," as the final chapter is entitled, the role of churches is crucial. In addition, the testimony of individual Christians in the marketplace, the impact of Christian families, and productive examples of believers in public life are essential for the transformation of culture.

The book provides incisive perspectives that are relevant for the field of evangelism. It is clear from the narrative and analysis that the magnificent truths of the gospel have been watered down by the impact of the

culture on contemporary expressions of Christianity, especially in the last two decades of American history. Shelley presents an informed and concerned evangelical appraisal, arguing that the significant principles of biblical revelation are necessary to keep the best conception of the American dream alive. He does not advocate a gospel interpreted by views of the "religious right." That perspective is compromised by economic and political aberrations. He offers a perspective informed by the Anabaptist and Baptist traditions: a call to transform American culture with the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The book will be useful to pastors, seminary students, and denominational leaders interested in connecting the evangelization task of churches and individuals to the present and future American cultural traditions.

David F. D'Amico

David F. D'Amico is the Billy Graham Professor of Evangelism at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky.

## No Other Gospel!: Christianity among the World's Religions

By Carl E. Braaten. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992. Pp. 134. \$10.95.

Carl Braaten is a profoundly disturbed theologian. He is profoundly disturbed by people like John Hick, Paul Knitter and others who are seriously calling into question the traditional biblical-Christian claim that Jesus Christ is the unique, normative and final self-revelation of God. Braaten believes that the choice is between the gospel offered by God as the true hope for the salvation of the world, and a "different gospel" (Gal. 1:6-9), something which the church must be vigilant always to guard against. At stake are the integrity of the gospel and the survival of the church. Hence Braaten's insistence: *No Other Gospel!*

Professor of Theology at the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago, and an "evangelical catholic," Braaten takes pointed issue with Hick's claim that a "Copernican revolution" is currently taking place in theology. By shifting from an ecclesio-centric and a Christo-centric view of Christianity to a theo-centric view of all the religions, Hick would seek a common ground of affirmation among the many religious faiths, all in the quest of better inter-religious dialogue and cooperation. Especially important to this "revolution" is that Christian exclusivism must descend so that greater tolerance may ascend. What Braaten sees in Hick's reductionism is actually nothing more than an effort to revitalize Ernst Troeltsch's relativistic interpretation of Christianity. The effect is not only to drain Christianity of all vitality, it is tantamount to doing theology as though God does not exist. Pluralistic theology ends up demeaning not only the

gospel and the church; it reduces all the religions to meaninglessness by casting aside their distinctive particularities. The price is too high, insists Braaten. Its result would be the total impoverishment of inter-religious dialogue because nothing of real meaning or value would be at stake.

The whole issue of the church's life, identity, and witness all hinge on Christology, says Braaten. A quick survey of the current Christological landscape, however, reveals much confusion and fragmentation in that arena. It seems that American theologians have been anything but immune to a vast array of cultural pressures, primarily relativism, pluralism and openness. This has resulted in various images of God, "but none is modeled on the God of the gospel according to the Scriptures, the Ecumenical Creeds, or the Reformation confessional writings." In response Braaten lifts up Karl Barth's radical Christocentric Trinitarianism which could, if taken seriously, retain the church's faithfulness as classically understood, while also sustaining a generous posture towards the world's religions. "We find in the religions an echo of God's activity in all expressions of life because God has not left himself without witness among the nations (Acts 14:16-17), which means that the reality of God and his revelation lie behind the religions of humanity..." Moreover, "the presence of [God's] eschatological kingdom in Jesus and in the apostolic mission [of the church] is the anticipation of the future of all religions, as well as the entire religious life of humanity." Such a stance is fully consistent with Scripture and church tradition, declares Braaten, for nowhere in church teaching is the claim made that Christ is the one and only revelation of God in history, but rather he is God's *final* revelation. Christ is therefore to be understood as the eschatological fulfillment of all religious strivings, the one by whom God fulfills the religions.

*No Other Gospel!* is an assertion that what the church really needs is not Troeltsch *redivivus* but rather a biblically rooted "theology of religions," which Braaten develops in chapter 5. Such a theology would invite Christians to interact more effectively as well as more faithfully with people of other religious commitments. This is both possible and necessary, says Braaten, since the absolute gospel is the message of witness for a relative Christianity. Like all the religions, Christianity is incomplete, imperfect, still on the way to God's eschatological kingdom. Its stance must therefore not be one of either intolerance or indifference to other religions, but of engaged interest in how God is preparing the world's religions to encounter the word of salvation, announced by Jesus and embodied sacramentally in the church.

Instrumental to the development of Braaten's theology of religions are the works of Barth, a Protestant, as well as Karl Rahner, a Roman Catholic, (chapter 6). By seeking a trans-confessional unity of the faith founded on the Trinity, these two in particular offer new possibilities for the renewal of the church's faith, one that is vitally important in our increasingly pluralistic setting. The renewal of Trinitarian theology is crucial, says Braaten, not only in the cause of inter-religious dialogue but in the even more important work of sustaining the church's historic faith and mission. The broad ecumenical affirmation of the Trinity is an irreplaceable resource for the faithful performance of the church's mission, he says,

enabling it to discriminate between the gospel and all of its fashionable rivals (e.g., Hick, Knitter, and company). This is essential, for only by remaining true to its historic biblical-Christian affirmations can the church hope to give faithful witness to what God has ultimately in mind for all the religions and for all humanity; indeed, for the whole creation.

While written by a Lutheran primarily for Lutherans, *No Other Gospel!* should prove quite rewarding for others (like myself) who belong to different confessional traditions. Part of what makes the book useful is that it points up how inter-religious dialogue and mission are not weakened but rather served when Christians engage in all such efforts as *Christians*. Important, too, is Braaten's insistence that the only viable avenue to an appropriate ecumenical consensus within the larger church is by the embrace, not of an all-inclusive ideology wherein the faith which we believe is trivialized, but of a broad, trans-confessional affirmation of the Trinity, wherein the church retains both its distinctive identity in the world, as well as its relative status in relation to the other religions. Great is the need to retain this faith, for Braaten is surely right: at stake is the very survival of the church.

George Ervin Crain

George Ervin Crain is the Senior Minister of the University Christian Church of Austin, Texas.

### Profane Evangelism: Taking the Gospel into the "Unholy Places"

By Mark E. Van Houten. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1989. Pp. 143. \$7.95.

The title of this book is an oxymoron. "Profane evangelism" is something like "jumbo shrimp": the contradiction is apparent. The premise of the book, however, is difficult to contradict: we need to demonstrate the gospel beyond the four walls of the church. This is a needed emphasis in our contemporary world.

Mark Van Houten urges Christians to "appear in profane places." He defines "profane" literally as "before (that is outside of) the temple," rather than by the more common definitions of "secular," "irreverent" or even "blasphemous."

The thesis of this small volume, as stated by the author, is that:

Christians are able to evangelize most biblically and effectively as they incarnate Christ and exhibit and exercise the best of the Good News about God; that is, when their presentation of

God is not anchored in the ontological, but in the functional attributes of God (10-11).

Van Houten pleads for a holistic ministry to people. The question, of course, is, "What is holistic ministry?" The author calls for service evangelism. He states "service evangelism is of equal importance with and often more effective than verbal evangelism" (141). While we may celebrate the even-handedness of this statement, the tenor of the book comes perilously close to affirming the old adage, "You cannot give the gospel to a hungry person without feeding him first," which is not true. People have accepted Christ into their lives in the most dire circumstances.

We celebrate the way that God is using Mark Van Houten to change the city. We wish that thousands would follow in his stead. But we must be careful not to denigrate the "verbal evangelists," as Van Houten sometimes does. The awful truth is that those on each side of the presence/proclamation controversy tend to play down the need for the other. This tragedy can only be corrected when there is born a correct conceptualization of what truly holistic ministry really is.

The book is anecdotal in character; it is really a collection of stories. The volume is apparently geared for a popular, rather than an academic audience.

This is a challenging and convicting book. It is a stimulating and sometimes shocking book which should challenge many in the church to hit the streets. It is not, however, a careful delineation of holistic ministry.

Charles R. Gailey

Charles R. Gailey is Professor of Missiology and Director of the School of World Mission and Evangelism at Nazarene Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Missouri.

### Facing the Powers: What Are the Options?

By Thomas H. McAlpine. Monrovia, CA: MARC Publications, 1991. Pp. 103. \$7.95.

Something is wrong in the world. Wars break out even when everyone says they want peace; our planet's ecosystem is being destroyed right before our eyes and we seem powerless to stop it; governments whose purpose it is to promote and protect the lives of their citizens, oppress them instead; the bureaucracy of the church, peopled by well-meaning, spiritually-committed individuals, inhibits the very life of the spirit it seeks to promote.

What is going on? How can all this be explained? Is it simply the mindless manifestation of the Second Law of Thermodynamics or is it the work of hostile powers of some sort? If these are supernatural powers that disrupt

our planet, what is their character? Are these supernatural beings or impersonal forces? What does the gospel say to such powers?

It is questions of this sort that are being asked increasingly. Clearly the Bible talks about such things as principalities and the powers. But are these the spoiling forces we are seeking to understand? Unfortunately, nowhere in Scripture are the "principalities and powers" clearly defined. This being the case, it is necessary to wrestle with the interpretive question. This is what Tom McAlpine does. In this wonderfully insightful, concise but provocative book, Dr. McAlpine (who is director of urban evangelism for the MARC division of World Vision) sketches out for us the four major options when it comes to understanding and dealing with the powers.

The Reformed tradition understands these powers to be the systems and traditions that circumscribe and bind life. What they have in mind are forces such as morality, family, institutions, corporations, the state, and cultural traditions. These powers are part of God's creation but they are in rebellion. As such they are redeemable, so the aim is to tame and transform the powers so that they have greater compatibility with the gospel. Such people as Hendrikus Berkhof and Walter Wink write from this perspective (though in quite different ways).

The second tradition that is considered is that of the Anabaptists. They are not far from the Reformed position except that they understand the powers to be at odds with the gospel so that it is necessary to stand over against them. The Anabaptists emphasize the freedom from the powers that the gospel brings. The gospel is the alternative to the powers. Such people as John Howard Yoder, Gerhard and Norbert Lohfink, and Jacques Ellul write from this tradition.

The third tradition is the newest and most controversial. The so-called "third wave" folk (a term coined by Peter Wagner for a new form of the charismatic movement) understand the powers to be actual demons that inhabit and control geographical areas. They urge spiritual warfare with the aim of miraculous deliverance from these hostile entities. They speak of a kind of territorial exorcism to deal with resistance to the gospel. Wagner would be the chief exponent here, with Frank Peretti's novels as a widespread, popular version of this perspective.

The fourth perspective surveyed by McAlpine comes from the social sciences and draws heavily on the work of Carl Jung and his idea of autonomous complexes and archetypes who influence our world via the unconscious and through the process of synchronicity. This is not so much a coherent tradition as it is the recognition that a group of quite diverse writers (such as Morton Kelsey, Paul Hiebert, and Marguerite Shuster) draw upon the language of the social sciences in addressing this problem.

McAlpine's interest in all this is not theoretical; his concern is with how the powers impact mission. How we view the powers informs how we deal with them in mission situations. If as the Reformed position asserts, the powers are seen where there is injustice in society, then the response would be social action. However, if the Third Wave is right and demons are actively blocking the work of evangelism in certain regions, then spiritual warfare is necessary to break their power so the gospel can prevail.

The great value of this book is its clear and concise description of the

four major positions. While McAlpine proposes no new perspective on these issues, he does define and clarify each position. He also asks penetrating questions of each position. It is at this point that his originality shows itself: by his questions he points the way for the ongoing conversation which must take place around this issue. His ten questions are a powerful lens through which to view each tradition. His questions are the important ones: Are the powers personal spiritual beings? Are the powers integrally connected to cultures, societies, etc.? What is spiritual warfare in this tradition? In what way is the activity of the powers a missiological concern? Etc.

McAlpine's charts, diagrams, models, and summaries enhance the book by visualizing the perspectives and by providing easy access to their central tenants. Also, his bibliography is most helpful in identifying not only the key books on the subject but the important articles.

This is a book that deserves to be widely read. Indeed, it might be argued that the issue of the powers could well become the issue of the 90's. Certainly there is a growing fascination in the church with spiritual warfare. If this is the case, then McAlpine has provided the road map that will guide us through the ensuing conversation.

Richard V. Peace

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Richard Peace is Professor of Evangelism and Ministry and Chairman of the Division of Ministry at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, South Hamilton, Massachusetts. He is a past president of the Academy for Evangelism.

### The Missing Generation: The Church's Ministry with the Baby Boom

By Robert L. Bast. *New York and Monrovia: Reformed Church in America and Church Growth, Inc., 1991. Pp. 187. \$7.95.*

In his book *The Missing Generation* Robert L. Bast has helpfully defined and characterized the so-called baby boom generation. After tracing their development and describing what he perceives to be their common characteristics and felt needs, the author proceeds to outline a strategy for congregations who want to attract their share of the thirty million or so unchurched baby boomers.

Seeing the ministry of evangelization as a corporate enterprise, Bast lists four prerequisites for the task: the church must recognize the need to evangelize, must catch and communicate a vision, must develop a ministry plan, and must make evangelization a priority. He appeals for churches to be inviting, and spells out what that means in relation to the missing generation. To minister effectively to baby boomers a church must work

hard to understand and to communicate with them; to plan a variety of relevant, helpful programs; and to provide ways of enhancing ministry, such as through the use of mentors, small groups, and pastoral care.

The author then devotes a chapter to four fundamental areas of ministry: worship, nurture, fellowship, and mission. Each area is discussed briefly in relation to the needs and interests of baby boomers. He concludes with a chapter entitled "Getting Started," in which he discusses ways of sensitizing a congregation about the need to evangelize baby boomers, and the steps for creating and implementing a plan to do so.

Bast's book is clearly written and contains many ideas which would be useful in reaching any unchurched person, not just baby boomers. He acknowledges that to generalize about 77,000,000 people is risky. What really do they all have uniquely in common other than the period of their birth? Discerning readers will appreciate the fact that the author appropriately qualifies many of his generalizations.

*The Missing Generation* is more practical than theoretical, more descriptive than analytical, more utilitarian than theological. While many will find those emphases appealing, readers will have to look elsewhere for a biblical/theological rationale for evangelism, or a theology of mission, or a doctrine of the church, or an analysis of the meaning and role of faith and of the Holy Spirit in the evangelization process. It is more of a "how to" than a "why to" book and belongs more properly in the category of church growth literature than in the genre of evangelism. That does not detract from its usefulness, however, and pastors and lay leaders have reason to be grateful to Robert Bast for encouraging them to reach out to the missing generation and for providing them with some nuts and bolts for going about the task.

Richard Stoll Armstrong

Richard Stoll Armstrong is Emeritus Professor of Ministry and Evangelism at Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, NJ, and is the Editor of the *Journal of the AETE*.

## How to Reach Secular People

By George G. Hunter, III. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992. Pp. 192. \$9.95.

George Hunter's latest book is a helpful confirmation of but not a corrective to our common understanding of the situation in the so-called Western world today. The case is worth making again, nevertheless, and the author has rendered all of us "reflective practitioners" a valuable service in addressing his own question in an organized and systematic way. Drawing upon a remarkably broad range of sources, he has presented a well documented case for what many thus far have known only intuitively and

experientially to be true. That in itself is a most helpful contribution.

The first sentence of the Preface states the author's focal question: "How do you communicate the Christian faith to the growing numbers of 'secular' people in the Western world?" To substantiate his premise that the West has been secularized, he presents in Chapter 1 a brief summary of the secularization process, identifying and describing the contributing causes and effects, and assessing the secular challenge to the church. In the remaining four chapters the author profiles the secular person of today, outlines strategies for reaching secular people, including a survey of ancient and modern communication principles, and describes the "type of Christians" and the kinds of churches which in his opinion are reaching out to and winning secular people today.

Many scholars, including those cited by Hunter, have addressed the secularization phenomenon. There are also numerous case studies and collections of stories of churches that are creatively and effectively reaching out to unchurched persons. There is an immense amount of literature in the broad field of communication theory and practice, and a wide range of books relating to evangelism methodology, including interpersonal witnessing.

What, then, is the uniqueness of Hunter's book? While it is not a thorough-going theology of evangelism, it proceeds from discernible presuppositions and suggests certain theological emphases for communicating with secular people. While it offers no new, well-defined strategy, it describes some models and spells out many helpful church growth principles from which mission strategies can be developed. While it presents no interpersonal techniques for reaching secular people, it offers a composite profile of some who have been successfully doing so.

Those who are able to summarize, articulate and communicate what others have said and are saying perform a valuable service to anyone interested in that field of scholarship. Organizational skill is itself a form of creativity, especially if it includes the organizer's own evaluative reflections. Hunter's book certainly does. The value of the book is that (a) it clearly identifies, describes and explains a major issue confronting the Christian church, (b) it provides well-documented though largely second-hand information about various aspects of the phenomenon of secularization, and (c) it offers the reader some hope for meeting the challenge.

As one who has enormous respect as well as affection for George Hunter, I should like to raise the following questions for his further reflection and our continued discussion in the Academy for Evangelism:

1. Can a seeker, as Hunter uses the term, properly be called a secular person? Does not a seeker already have faith—i.e., enough faith to seek? The task of evangelizing seekers is quite different from that of evangelizing nonseekers. The real challenge is how to help nonseekers become seekers. Most of the examples in the book involved people whom I would call seekers. They were there. They were asking questions. They were willing to talk. Nonseekers couldn't care less. By what criteria are seekers identified, and by whom?

2. In Chapter 4 Hunter distinguishes four kinds of apostolic ministry: cross-cultural mission, evangelism, church planting and congregational

outreach. The categories are nonparallel and not mutually exclusive, in my view. Is not evangelism part of mission, church planting and outreach? Cannot congregational outreach be cross-cultural?

3. Hunter places the church's ministry of evangelism on the shoulders of the laity, where it rightfully belongs. That does not excuse the pastor, of course, from doing the work of an evangelist. How does Hunter view the pastor as evangelist? I would have appreciated a more thorough and less pejorative discussion of the pastor's role in the evangelistic enterprise than is given in Chapter 4.

4. Is it correct to assume, as the author does in Chapter 5 and elsewhere that "secular" Americans are totally unfamiliar with religious language? The Gallup studies of religion in America contradict that assumption. While the religious surveys point out the widespread ignorance of Christian doctrine and the Bible, the vast majority of respondents do say they believe in God and hence are not uncomfortable with basic God language. That is a huge advantage to a sensitive Christian witness. There are other ways to deal with the religious language barrier than simply by substituting euphemistic expressions which may not communicate as well. Indeed, our substitute jargon may be dangerously misleading.

5. Is the actual focus of the book "how to reach secular people," or is it how to reach unchurched people? Willow Creek Church's "Seven Step Strategy," as described in Chapter 5 leaves many unanswered questions. Step 1 states: "Some believer will have to build a relationship with Unchurched Harry." But who? And how? And where? and Why? Does unchurched mean secular? None of those questions is dealt with. The next six steps simply assume that such a relationship has been established! This is illustrative of the way most of the examples approach the evangelistic task. They really don't talk about how to reach secular, resistant people, the kind who do NOT come to open air meetings, or attend evangelistic crusades, or wander into our churches. In short, what the book seems really to be dealing with is the unchurched American, who may or may not be a truly secular individual.

With these questions in mind, Hunter's book, nevertheless, is, in this reviewer's opinion, highly worthwhile reading for anyone who takes seriously the challenge of evangelizing secular (as Hunter understands the term) people.

Richard Stoll Armstrong

## THE ACADEMY FOR EVANGELISM IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

### Nineteenth Annual Meeting

#### MINUTES

The nineteenth annual meeting of the Academy for Evangelism in Theological Education was held on the campus of the Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary, Fresno, California, October 10-12, 1991. The meeting was opened at 7:30 p.m. by President Dick Armstrong. Dr. Henry Schmidt of the Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary welcomed the Academy to the seminary. Dr. Bob Anderson then lead devotions based on Hebrews 11 and "...those who through faith conquered kingdoms...escaped the edge of the sword...won strength out of weakness...were stoned...killed...well attested by their faith, (but) did not receive what was promised." The devotional ended with a challenge to "...keep our eyes on Jesus who endured...(Heb. 12:1-4)."

Professor Malan Nel of the Department of Biblical Studies at Vista University, Pretoria, South Africa gave the keynote address on "The Task of Evangelism in South Africa Today." He spoke of the church as the agent of evangelism where there is a creative tension between the church seen as a body of believers, the sum total of different denominations, and/or an instrument to reach the world. Evangelism needs both word and deed ministries. He went on to say that 77% of the people in South Africa claim to be Christians and that in the midst of a multitude of separatists only two denominations have more than 10% of the Christians. Commenting on signs of hope for the future he added that last year for the first time 90% of all major denominations met together. In September, 1991, a document was signed to stop violence. This was signed by the government, the ANC and other major political players. Even so, he said, "There are no guarantees in grace." In a discussion of a new praxis Professor Nel noted that "...reconciliation not revolution will produce the only real change which is lasting." In conclusion he summed up his thesis by stating the following: "In order to serve the task of evangelism the churches in our country will have to be: a sign of pro-existence, a symbol of diversity in unity, a Pentecostal laboratory, a temple of dialog, a clinic for public exorcism, a broadcasting station for the voice of the poor and a motel for pilgrims."

On Friday morning at 9:00 a.m. John Nyquist opened with devotions focusing on evangelism from II Cor. 5:11-21 in which he highlighted four motives for doing evangelism: 1) "The fear of the Lord"—vs. 11; 2) the love of Christ—vs. 14-15; 3) an awareness of a reconciliation ministry—vs. 18; and 4) being ambassadors for Christ—vs. 20. John concluded his devotional by reading the doxology found in Hebrews 13:20-21.

From 9:30 to 10:30 we joined the student body in their chapel for an address from Dr. Elijah M. Maswanganyi of Tzaneen, Republic of South Africa. He spoke on the topic "The Church's Role in Helping Shape a New South Africa." Dr. Maswanganyi pointed out nine barriers for both the church and political groups in South Africa. As he did so he affirmed that the problems there are more spiritual than political and that Jesus and the kingdom of God are the answers today. A list of four principles and seven dynamic keys for evangelism and change in the S. African church was followed by the qualifying statement that the bottom line of any solution will be the power of God and a baptism of love throughout the people of God.

After coffee break, Dick Armstrong moderated a panel discussion on evangelism in South Africa. The panelists were professors Nel, Maswanganyi, Dick Peace, and Bob Anderson.

After lunch Dick Peace introduced Prof. Arnold Lovell who presented the first segment of the general theme "Shaping a Basic Course in Evangelism." His sub-theme was "The Place and Importance of Research in the Teaching of Evangelism." Arnold began with reference to Elliot W. Eisner of Stanford University and his book *The Educational Imagination On the Design and Evaluation of School Programs* in which the author states that there are always three curricula present: the explicit, the implicit, and the null (the options students are not afforded). Among other comments was one that speaks of a trend in some circles regarding the meaning of evangelism, in which a shift has been made from salvation to self-realization. As for historical research, he explained that one would do well to take into account the writings of George Marsden, Mark A. Noll, David Bosch, as well as the Wheaton Center for the Study of Evangelism. Some critical issues raised included the following questions: To whom is the teaching of evangelism relegated? to one person or to the whole faculty? Is the teaching of evangelism gender specific? Where are the women teachers? How do we relate evangelism to worship and the contagious power of the Holy Spirit in the world today?

At 2:00 Dr. George Hunsberger introduced our book review program and Mortimer Arias then reviewed book No. 1, *Evangelization from a Liberation Perspective*, by Priscilla Pope-Levison. He called it an excellent text book on the subject, though it needs an evangelical perspective added to the Roman Catholic and Conciliar points of view.

After a coffee break Jerry Handspicker reviewed David Lowe Watson's book, *God Does Not Foreclose*. Jerry called it a theological book based on a strong theology of grace which allows people to enter into evangelism in a healthy way. He commented that the subtitle "The Universal Promise of Salvation" may be a negative factor in the book's promotion.

At 3:40 book No.3, *Evangelism in the Reformed Perspective*, by Arnold Lovell (ed.) was reviewed by its editor. It is a volume that comes out of the Chicago "Congress 88" evangelistic event. The book addresses the issue of integrity in evangelism and is a collection of addresses and sermons by professors in other disciplines speaking to the issue of evangelism. The audience was the Presbyterian Church (USA) seminaries. Dr. Ben Johnson will have a copy sent to each member of the Academy attending this Fresno annual meeting.

At 6:00 p.m. we enjoyed a delicious meal at the Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary, hosted by its president Dr. Larry Martens. After the president's welcoming remarks, Bob Anderson introduced the Academy to Rose Arzoomanian who for twenty years ministered as a singing evangelist with Billy Graham, Youth For Christ and many others. Bob then treated us to a first public hearing of a tape made many years before when Rose sang "Oh, What a Day!" in special meetings in Toronto, Canada. Following the special music the Academy presented Rose with a plaque commemorating her evangelistic music ministry.

The speaker for the banquet was the host seminary's own missiologist, Dr. Hans Kasdorf. After stating that mission and evangelism can never be separated, Hans developed his address around four "Imperatives of the Gospel in a World of Change." He said we must: 1) Discern the times in the light of the gospel; 2) Clarify the nature of the gospel; 3) Consider the centrality of gospel in mission and evangelism work; 4) Redefine the object of the gospel. Adjournment for the day was about 9:00 p.m.

The Saturday morning session was opened at 9:00 a.m. by T. V. Thomas leading us in worship as he developed Ps. 96:1-13 and the relationship that exists between worship and evangelism.

At 9:20 Dick Armstrong called our business meeting to order. The roll of those attending was taken and the written greetings from those members unable to attend were acknowledged. The minutes of last year were read and approved with thanks being expressed to Chic Shaver for his excellent work as secretary.

Ron Crandall presented the Treasurer's report. It was received with appreciation. Ron reported that last year 84 members gave dues. Beginning next year all active members who pay will have their names printed in the *Journal*. The giving of institutions is a little ahead this year with 22 having paid and some saying the check is in the mail. The help of members in keeping the Academy before our respective institutions is appreciated.

As the meeting considered the election of officers for two-year terms, our President, Dick Armstrong, urged the new Executive Committee to give thought to a constitutional change that a slate of officers be presented at the annual meeting while also permitting nominations from the floor.

The president reported the receipt of a letter from David Lowes Watson indicating that he would be unavailable to continue as editor of the *AETE Journal* for a number of valid reasons. It was moved, seconded, and carried (MSC) that the Academy express its great appreciation to David for his years of ardent, devoted and stellar labors as founding editor of the *Journal*.

The following officers who had been nominated by the Executive Committee, serving as the nominating committee, were elected: President—Bob Anderson; Vice President David Hester; Secretary—Henry Schmidt; Treasurer—Ron Crandall; *Journal* editor—Dick Armstrong.

Jerry Reed recommended the following for membership (some with conditions): For full membership: Melan Nel, Philip Roberts, Harold Percy, Michael Knowles, and Ron Johnson; also for full membership pending suitable application and payment of dues—Darrell Guder. For associate membership: Alan Johnson, who is asking to be reinstated, and Marty McMane, both of whom have paid their dues but need to fill out the application forms.

George Hunsberger, the *Journal* book review editor, reported that this past year's experience has served as a kind of "shake down cruise" to get the "bugs" out of the system. Out of 157 letters sent out asking for help he received 49 responses. In other words about 30% of the members are ready, willing, and able to work on reviews. Publishers will be sending books to reviewers in the near future. George encouraged the Academy members to feel free to supply their own books for review as well. He wants our *Journal* to be the place where people go to look for the literature. Finally George reminded the Academy of his role on the *Journal's* editorial advisory committee along with Billy Abraham and Scott Young.

Dick Armstrong reminded us that formal addresses at our annual meeting will normally be printed in the *Journal*. In response to a question about the wisdom of the *Journal's* being published at the same time as the annual meeting, he said there was no sacrosanct date. Past president, Dick Peace, said the original idea was to simply get a trial copy out by a certain annual meeting and ever since then we have had the idea of an annual meeting production date.

MSC that a study be done to consider a constitutional change that would allow for a staggering of elected officers so that there would be continuity on the Executive Committee.

Because of Gordon Turner's move to Vancouver, our original plan of having the annual meeting in Toronto has had to be postponed. MSC that

we accept Dr. Francis Ringer's invitation to hold our next meeting, October 8-10, 1992, at Lancaster Theological Seminary, Lancaster, PA.

Invitations for future annual meetings are always in order.

Marigene Chamberlain has been functioning as the managing editor of the *Journal* and has said she is willing to continue in that role. David Watson's suggestion that she be given the title of Managing Editor was MSC. It was also MSC that Marigene Chamberlain be eligible for associate membership in the Academy.

In response to a letter about a category for retired members it was MSC that we consider both honorary membership and life membership criteria. We were reminded that George Sweazey is a life member of the Academy.

Toward the end of the morning business session the last item under New Business, "other items," prompted a variety of invitations and ideas from the floor of the assembly as follows:

David Wilder extended an invitation to AETE members to attend the next NCC meeting of the Executive Committee on Program Ministry for Evangelization—Dec. 9-11, 1991. Their theme will be "Multiculturalism and the Church." Call David at 1-800-638-3522 for more information. He also suggested that the Academy review Patrick Kiefer's book *Welcoming Strangers* (a book on worship). He thoughtfully mentioned Trinity Lutheran Seminary in Columbus, Ohio as a possible meeting place for the Academy.

Dick Armstrong gave us a helpful model that denominational or seminary administrators could use to enhance attendance at the Academy. Emmitt Johnson (who is ill and needs our prayers as does George Sweazey) organized a meeting for colleagues just before the Academy meeting and in the same place so that denominational funds could be used to get some of his colleagues to our meetings without additional costs.

Henry Schmidt suggested we do a study of the impact of the geographic location of Academy meetings on attendance.

It was suggested that we make available a list of addresses and phone numbers of Academy members to one another. MSC that the Executive Committee pursue the possibility of such a list, including FAX numbers.

Vice President Bob Anderson took the floor and presented a plaque to outgoing President Dick Armstrong as a token of our appreciation for his dedicated, inspiring, and capable leadership during the last two years.

George Hunsberger gave us an update on his newsletter *The Gospel and Our Culture* and then announced a working consultation on February 6-8, 1992 at the Sheraton International Hotel at O'Hare Airport, Chicago.

MSC that AETE express its gratitude to the Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary and to Henry Schmidt for their hospitality and their sharing with us the products of the area.

The business meeting was adjourned at noon.

At 1:30 the afternoon program began which was a continuation of the basic theme presented yesterday afternoon at 1:30 viz "Shaping a Basic Course in Evangelism" again being moderated by Richard Peace.

Jerry Handspicker addressed the second of four sub-themes. His theme, "Course Content," was developed by first making reference to his own context and particular student mix and then designing his course by building off of his strengths as a systematic theologian. He begins with the historical background and Michael Green's book *Evangelism in the Early Church* and then moves ahead with a variety of themes both theoretical and practical including the theological background, anthropology, contextualization of the message, church growth, evangelization of the intelligentsia, what target group should be chosen, etc.

Eddie Gibbs then presented theme #3, "Teaching Methods." Eddie's context for a four-unit course is 60 students, many of whom are Baby Boomers and have no clear idea of the content of the gospel. Five dimensions of methodology were set forth:

- 1) Investigation, working on the assumption that students learn best on a need-to-know basis,
- 2) Contextualization,
- 3) Peer group critiques using small groups, where all share their faith story at least ten times and the others are tested on their listening skills by having to repeat what was said,
- 4) Repetition with a sympathetic audience—he dropped journaling,
- 5) Participation/Reflection—this dimension of methodology he sees coming into play in a couple of years. He cannot find an effective evangelizing church within two hours of the seminary.

Theme #4, "The Process of Course Design" was presented by Dick Peace. He elaborated 10 points:

- 1) Select that avenue that builds on your strengths.
- 2) Use outside resources to complement your strengths.
- 3) Make sure you touch on the key issues.
- 4) Blend the theoretical, practical and inspirational.
- 5) Equip the students to continue learning about evangelism.

- 6) Develop a comprehensive syllabus defining goals, assignments, classes, topics, bibliography.
- 7) Think through your learning goals.
- 8) Think through how to use each class time.
- 9) Think through the nature of the first and last classes.
- 10) Think through the nature of each assignment.

In the panel discussion that followed with all three speakers there were two new topics that surfaced: What is the actual content of our witness? and grading in the class room.

Before our free time Dick Armstrong expressed thanks for a job well done by the presenters of the four themes. Malan Nel then expressed his deep appreciation for the privilege of being invited along with his wife Marlese to participate in the Academy. He asked for our continued prayers in the days ahead in South Africa. Then Elijah Maswanganyi kindly said that he had found that Americans have hearts of gold and a sense of hope that is not found any other place in the world. He said that when students come to America from abroad they often lose their enthusiasm and their Africanism and that maybe as teachers we could work on this so that we might teach without doing harm.

At 7:00 p.m. Saturday evening, outgoing president Dick Armstrong, Professor Emeritus of Princeton Theological Seminary, gave us his final address, in which he told of his quest to make a rational case for normative faith out of an experiential base. His presentation was moving. We participated in his message at our respective tables by telling each other why we believe in God—thus putting into practice Dick's thesis that lay people can learn to talk with authority out of their own experience.

After a short break David Hester led us in our closing worship focusing on the beauty of the feet that share the gospel (Rom. 10:15).

About 9:30 p.m. it was MSC that the annual meeting be adjourned until the next meeting, October 8-10, 1992 at Lancaster Theological Seminary, Lancaster, PA.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jerry Reed  
Secretary

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## ANNOUNCEMENT

The twenty-first annual meeting of the Academy for Evangelism will be held on the campus of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois, October 8-10, 1993.

# Academy for Evangelism in Theological Education

## Active Members 1992-93

This is the list of active members for the 1992-93 academic year. According to the records, these members have paid their dues for the 1991-92 and/or the 1992-93 academic years. Please notify Dr. Henry J. Schmidt, secretary, or Dr. Ronald K. Crandall, treasurer, of any corrections.

Thomas R. Albin  
Robert C. Anderson  
Mortimer Arias  
Richard Stoll Armstrong  
Floyd Babcock  
Ray Bakke  
Claude Marie Barbour  
Timothy Beougher  
Don Bommarito  
Dan E. Bonner  
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Edna Evans  
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## INFORMATION FOR SUBSCRIBERS AND AUTHORS

*The Journal of the Academy for Evangelism in Theological Education* (ISSN 0894-9034) is published annually in October and distributed free of charge to all paid-up members and associate members of the Academy, and to supporting institutions. Copies may be purchased at a cost of \$10.00 per single issue, or \$30.00 per subscription for four issues. Subscriptions, renewals, orders, and change-of-address notifications should be sent to Marigene Chamberlain, Managing Editor, *AETE Journal*, P.O. Box 840, Nashville, TN 37202-0840. Remittances should be made payable to "The Journal of the AETE."

*The Journal of the AETE* was established to provide a medium for the responsible sharing of ideas among those engaged in the teaching of evangelism, primarily at the seminary level, as well as those whose ministries involve them in serious research and writing in the field. In addition to scholarly articles and book reviews, the *Journal* includes the Minutes of the annual meetings of the Academy and occasional items of interest to AETE members.

The Editorial Advisory Committee of the *Journal* is seeking well-written, high-quality articles relating to any aspect of evangelism, and issues relevant to the theology and practice of evangelism, including biblical, doctrinal, pedagogical, and methodological concerns, and matters relevant to evangelism and the cognate disciplines. Responses to articles in previous issues of the *Journal* will also be considered. Manuscripts should be submitted in duplicate to Richard S. Armstrong, Editor, Princeton Theological Seminary, CN 821, Princeton, NJ 08542. Book reviews should be sent to George R. Hunsberger, Book Review Editor, *AETE Journal*, 86 E. 12th St., Holland, MI 49423.

Manuscripts should be double spaced (including endnotes, tables, and appendices), using only one side of a page (8½×11 inches). Articles should be carefully documented, with notes appearing at the end. For style, including the citation of sources, authors should be guided by the University of Chicago Press' *Manual of Style* or K. L. Turabian's *Manual for Writers*. For spelling, punctuation, capitalization, etc., use an up-to-date style manual, such as *The Gregg Reference Manual*, published by McGraw-Hill. For example, pronouns for Jesus and terms like gospel (except when it refers to a book of the Bible), eternal life, kingdom of God, body of Christ, are not capitalized. When referring to persons or groups, black(s) and white(s) are not capitalized. A good rule is, "When in doubt, don't capitalize!" The use of gender inclusive language is expected.

Manuscripts need to be submitted by May 31 in order to appear in the following October issue. The desired length of articles is normally 2500 to 4000 words, with preference on the shorter side. Book reviews are usually in the 600 to 750 range. Authors and reviewers are requested to indicate their present place of employment, complete title, and full name. They may include a brief explanatory statement about their article, if such is needed. Contributors receive no compensation except for five complimentary copies of the issue in which their article appears.

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